



New
Direction

Friedrich von Gentz

**ON
REVOLUTIONS
AND BALANCE
OF POWER IN
EUROPE**





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New Direction

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INTRODUCTION

Tomasz Poręba MEP

Conservatism is primarily associated with opposition to sudden political changes. Such an image is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that its origins, as a separate ideological-political trend, are commonly sought in the actions against the slogans and practices of the French Revolution of 1789, especially in the criticism of the radicalization of revolutionary governments after they were taken over by the Jacobins. Indeed, it was then that with both great talent and extraordinary power of persuasion, the revolutionary theories and practices were attacked by high-class thinkers, like Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, and Louis de Bonald, who laid the foundations for a conservative reflection on reality. Since then, conservatism has been recognized – although for this reason it is assessed in different ways – as the most expressive alternative to radicalism striving to destroy the existing orders, and to the abstract political and social theories ignoring both tradition and experience advocated by radicals. Nonetheless, this is far too narrow a view of what conservatism is and what role it can and should play. Not only in times of revolutions or other disturbances and violent upheavals political community finds useful the conservative moderation, protection of traditional, evolutionarily developed customs, local colour and diversity – and the common sense associated with these values. Even in times of stability, when there are no signs of major threats to the current order, it is worthwhile to prophylactically protect what is valuable. After all, it is better to avoid acute crises than to fight them later.

But it is also a mistake to equate conservatism only with reluctance to change or defending a given *status quo*. Such an understanding would lead to the conclusion that conservatives should protect also the orders that are fully non-conservative as well as threatening to all which conservatives consider valuable in politics, culture or social life. There are situations when a conservative must even be focused on a thorough change of the *status quo*, although carried out with appropriate caution and the awareness of his own limitations, which his opponents often lack. It is not worth defending a given state of affairs at all costs, if there are elements which need improving. Neither does it make sense to idealize the past by force. Though, it is always worth drawing conclusions from it. The legacy of the conservative thought of the past centuries gives a lot of room for expression here, and can still become an excellent inspiration in dealing with the current dilemmas.

Conservatives are facing many such challenges and dilemmas in the present times. In many countries of the Western world, they are pushed to the margins of both political and intellectual life, and those who wish to place them there transform reality in a way that not only disregards the lessons of the past, but is directly dangerous to the harmony of freedom and order, without which the continued successful development of political communities would be difficult. Political correctness certainly limits the freedom of public debate. Opinions, until recently treated as ordinary voices in a discussion, are now stigmatized as inappropriate. Those who preach them not only face ruthless criticism, but often are eradicated from many media, including those introducing themselves as objective and pluralistic. There are attempts to marginalize them also in the academia. The arbitrariness of solutions enforced by the political ‘mainstream’ is often clearly visible also within the European Union, the evolution of which towards left-liberalism is legitimately causing concern among conservative circles. At the same time, the crisis currently affecting the Western world increases the risk of growing popularity of various radical ideas, in facing which this political ‘mainstream’ and its media are either helpless or even naively favourable. In such a situation, conservatives must present a clear alternative to these trends and phenomena – which they need to try to consistently promote and implement wherever possible.

Old conservative books do not contain ready-made solutions on how to deal with these modern threats. To the modern reader, who wishes to find recipes for now, this lack of simple answers may seem disappointing. A conservative, however, if he has learnt well the lessons of the classics of conservatism, is perfectly aware that as the political, cultural, and social conditions change, various political forms gain or lose their value. Therefore, both the dogmatic attachment to certain solutions or the imposition of them on countries and nations that have followed a different path is often a dangerous mistake. On the other hand, a conservative should look for inspiration in the heritage of conservative thought as well as treat it as a great lesson in political thinking. He should also popularize this heritage in order to combat the long-lingering myth that there is no alternative to left-liberal ideas that have largely dominated the political and academic ‘mainstream’ of the Western world.

Based on this belief, New Direction – The Foundation for European Reform of Brussels and the Centre for Political Thought of Krakow undertook the initiative to publish selections of the classics of conservative thought. It includes diverse authors who took different positions on many issues. As this is how conservatism has always been – also before the French Revolution when it was still unnamed. It always drew on different national traditions, emphasized various principles, and referred to various practical experiences. In order to better understand the nature of politics and the cultural processes taking place before our eyes, it is precisely this ambiguity and the wealth of experiences captured by the classics of conservative thought that can be especially inspiring. And it is exactly this decent, reasonable inspiration which, among other things, the Western world needs so very much right now.

PREFACE

Jacek Kloczkowski

The author of famous and controversial articles and books, and of excellent analyses of international politics intended for governments and rulers, unavailable to a wider audience – at least at the time of being written – a student of Kant, at first a sympathizer with the idea of the French Revolution, then its staunch opponent, a critic and political enemy of Napoleon Bonaparte, a participant of behind-the-scenes games that determined European politics in the first decades of the 19th century, the creator of many diplomatic documents, including those announcing the outbreaks of wars or the conditions of peace, the right hand of Klemens von Metternich, secretary of the Congress of Vienna, a propagator of Edmund Burke’s thought in German countries, a conservative, an incomparable companion in intellectual disputes who conducted them with many outstanding minds of his time, a gambler, notoriously struggling with financial problems, even when his services were generously paid by the great European powers as well as less significant players, passionate about love affairs, the cause of a scandal at the dusk of his life when his intimate relationship with a young ballerina became a social sensation – all these undoubtedly was Friedrich von Gentz, an outstanding and extraordinary figure. It is still worth returning to his work, as it brings a most interesting description of the turbulent period in the history of Europe, when the old orders collapsed and new ones were created with extreme violence and extremely long-term consequences. His output is still an inspiring political lesson – although the borderlines within Europe are now completely different, and so are the systemic models or relations between the government and citizens,

human nature has not changed enough to thoroughly transform the essence of politics, also on international level – new instruments appear in it, and new justifications for the actions of its actors are becoming fashionable, but it is still an old game of interests, with all its cynicism and frequently also ruthlessness. Gentz invites us behind the scenes, and there perhaps, if we look closely enough, we will find a particularly disturbing similarity to what we are dealing with nowadays.

1.

Friedrich von Gentz was born on May 2, 1764 in Wrocław (Breslau). His father Johann was a Prussian official – in later years, director of the royal mint in Berlin – and his mother, Elizabeth née Ancillon, came from a family of Huguenot refugees who had once settled in Prussia. Young Gentz was initially educated in his hometown, then in Berlin, where he moved with his parents, and finally in Królewiec (Königsberg), where he participated in seminars conducted by Immanuel Kant, as one of the favourite students of the famous philosopher. In 1785 he started working in the Prussian administration in Berlin. At that time, he was involved in liberally-oriented circles, inspired by the French Enlightenment thought, contemplating democratic reforms coined by academics, journalists, and other representatives of the movement known as the ‘Berlin Enlightenment’. He was in particularly close contact with Christian Garve, a famous philosopher, essayist and translator. A particular diversion from the typical readings of ‘progressive’ youth were for him the works of Adam Smith – it was thanks to them, among other things, that Gentz’s political liberalism went hand in hand with the liberalism in economic matters – as well as of Montesquieu and Edward Gibbon.

Gentz as a young man lived a life typical of his generation. Intellectual discussions in a progressive spirit were part of a rich social life of long disputes, affairs, and gambling – apparently not very successful for him – which, combined with his lavish manner, kept him permanently in debt. Moreover, he did not renounce all that even when he changed both his associations and his views. Gentz was not born into high society, he

could not boast of a noble title⁽¹⁾, which was a certain obstacle in living the life he wanted. However, his remarkable intelligence and fascinating personality allowed him to shine at Berlin soirees and make friendships, which – like those with Wilhelm von Humboldt or Adam Heinrich Müller – sometimes lasted for decades, even at later times when friends of youth were meeting in completely different roles, as prominent figures of intellectual and political life. Their fate, however, might have been different, had it not been for the outbreak of the French Revolution and of what it became after a few years.

Gentz, like many other famous critics of the revolution, welcomed it with hope and joy. He wanted thorough reforms, he counted on changes, and the events in France seemed to have fulfilled these hopes. In 1791, he made his debut in the “Berlinische Monatsschrift” with an article entitled *Über den Ursprung und die obersten Prinzipien des Rechts*, in which he argued with a text critical of the idea of revolutionaries, written by Justus Möser. Gentz’s great talent shone, however, not for the sake of the Revolution. In the same year, a famous book was handed over to him – in many respects, in its theses and ideas, it was quite the opposite to what the young Prussian official believed and was convinced to be right. No wonder that Gentz approached hesitantly Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* – in a letter to Garve he declared that he did not agree with the principles and conclusions set out in the work, although he admitted that the style of its author satisfied him a great deal. This prompted him to take the trouble to translate the work of the British enemy of the Revolution himself, as he considered the existing German translation by Joseph Stahl to be not good enough. Gentz’s work on the translation took two years. The edition of Burke’s work he prepared, however, turned out to greatly exceed the standard. Readers received two volumes, almost twice the size of the original.

(1) In 1804, Gentz was awarded the Order of the North Star by the King of Sweden, Gustav IV Adolf, in recognition of his merits in the fight against Napoleon. During his stay in Greifswald, the monarch awarded Gentz with a knighthood. The Austrian Emperor Francis, however, refused to recognize his nobility as a title which could also be in force in Austria. Gentz appeared on the lists as a knight of the aforementioned order from 1806-1809, but since 1810 he has not appeared on them anymore – he returned the order in protest against the overthrow of Gustav IV Adolf, in an attempt made a year earlier. See B. Stråth, *Europe’s Utopias of Peace: 1815, 1919, 1951*, London 2016, p. 465.

The German author of the translation – fashioned in the style of the well-known work of Friedrich Schiller, *Dreissigjähriger Krieg* – not only provided *Reflections...* with an introduction and footnotes (making other editorial changes in the book, strongly diverging from contemporary standards of maintaining faithfulness to the source text), but also added his own five essays in which, in the spirit of Burke, but with a strong profile of his own, he considered such important issues as political freedom or the ideas underlying the revolutionary Declaration of Right. These texts contained values that would delight readers for the years to come – Gentz’s mastery of style and precision of analysis, but above all, his “new” view on politics, counter-revolutionary, conservative, although still recognizing the need for a certain correction of the existing order. For when he announced his edition of Burke in 1793⁽²⁾, there was no trace of his former distance to the work of the British author – developments in France showed that Burke wrote a book not only outstanding in terms of style, but also extremely prophetic, aptly predicting what will be the results of the implementation of revolutionary theories, and what will be the outcome of the revolutionary practice. In France, as Gentz phrased it many years later, “The levelling club of the revolution has annihilated all the rich variety of local constitution (...), all the rights and privileges of the provinces, their usages, their customs, their statutes, their legal and judicial forms, their assemblies, their independent institutions and public establishments, their separate proprietors, their acknowledged relations with the court, their immediate influence and credit; and has, at last, effaced their confines, and even their very names.”⁽³⁾ It could not be otherwise, because a revolution “which has no other principle than to attack the existing constitution, must necessarily proceed to the last extremities of imagination and of criminal guilt.”⁽⁴⁾ The republic proclaimed in France – this hope of the progressive people of all Europe – turned out to be only “a word without definite meaning, which everyone

(2) *Betrachtungen über die Französische Revolution. Nach dem Englischen des Herrn Burke neu bearbeitet, mit einer Einleitung, Anmerkungen, politischen Unhandlungen, und einem kritischen Verzeichniß der in England über diese Revolution erschienenen Schriften von Friedrich Gentz*, Berlin 1793.

(3) F. von Gentz, *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe*.

(4) Idem, *The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution, Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution*.

believed he might explain, according to his inclinations, and according to the fantastic whims, which he called his principles.” And in the name of such a cause, “France was drenched in blood”⁽⁵⁾, and then the evil spilled over the rest of Europe.

In view of this Gentz, like many other readers of *Reflections...* and observers of events in France, moved from the camp of the Revolution’s supporters to the camp of its great critics. In his case, it meant not only a change of views, but also taking action against it. He expressed his objections through subsequent translations – translations of the works of successive critics of the revolution, Jacques Mallet du Pan and Jean-Joseph Mounier – as well as his own articles, such as the published in “Minerva” *Über die Grundprincipien der jetzigen französischen Verfassung, nach Robespierre’s and St. Jüst’s Darstellung derselben*, or the works appearing in his own magazine, “Neue deutsche Monatsschrift”. The latter included, among others, the article *Historisch-politische Übersicht der Hauptbegebenheiten des Jahres 1794*, printed in the January, February, March and April 1795 issues, which was a review and analysis of international events, among which Gentz also took into account the Kościuszko Uprising⁽⁶⁾. He presented the background and the course of the insurrection, emphasizing the patriotism of the Polish insurgents, but he also considered the dilemma of whether the leaders of the movement had the right to decide about the fate of the nation, bearing in mind the difficult challenge they had undertaken. Their rising gained recognition in Europe, but did not bring any lasting gains. On the contrary, they made the final collapse of Poland violent, thus worsening the already harsh condition of the nation.

2.

In 1795, the fate of the Commonwealth of Poland seemed doomed, but it was a time when in Europe, shaken by successive scenes of battles under the banner of revolution and counter-revolution, uncertainty

(5) *Ibidem*.

(6) See: E. Kipa, *Fryderyk Gentz a Polska 1794-1831* [Friedrich Gentz and Poland 1794-1831], Kraków-Warszawa 1911, p. 5-14.

about the fate of individual countries applied also to those who took part in the Partitions. The wars with revolutionary France did not go as expected by Prussia and Austria. Gentz, from 1792 a secretary in the office of war, probably expected a much greater success than the peace – surprisingly for many observers all over Europe including Prussia – concluded between them and France on April 5, 1795 in Basel, which was preceded by purely ideological negotiations: in the end the arrangements secured by negotiators – François-Marie, Marquis de Barthélemy and Karl August von Hardenberg – were determined not by revolutionary or counter-revolutionary ideas, but by ordinary interests; that is, by what both the sides wanted and were able to achieve. France had much greater causative power and, in the division of lands carried out in accordance with the old rules of diplomacy, it obtained much more – Prussia’s approval of the French rule over the areas on the left bank of the Rhine. Gentz, from the position of a stern critic of the Revolution, could be indignant at such decisions, but the cold analysis indicated that since the agreements were mostly focused on interests, not ideology, and peace brought the Prussia some relief and respite, it should be respected. And should be utilised, if only to make reforms in the kingdom.

In 1797 the King of Prussia, Frederick William II, died. His son, Frederick William III, sat on the throne. Then, Gentz publicised *Sendschreiben an Seine Königliche Majestät Friedrich Wilhelm III bei der Thronbesteigung allerunterthänigst überreicht. Am 16. November 1797*, a speech unprecedented in Prussian realities, but in line with the spirit of the times – when the rulers had to take into account the opinions of their subjects more and more – indicating which principles the new monarch should follow. According to the contemporary views, these principles could appear to be quite liberal. Gentz emphasized the need for the ruler to ensure the welfare of his subjects. He accentuated that “as a result of the situation in which Europe is now, which the nations of this part of the world have created for centuries, as a result of mutual strong ties between states and taking into account the circumstances that one state exerts on another, relations with foreign countries have become the most important internal condition for the welfare of the state and, almost without exception, the first source from which either its success or misfortune stems from it.” Therefore, in these difficult times, the “priority goal” becomes “staving

off the war”, and it is necessary for such a large country as Prussia to “constantly prepare” for it.⁽⁷⁾ On such basis, and pursuing a prudent foreign policy, it is possible to achieve the desired progress in internal affairs, for example, by providing the inhabitants of Prussia with an appropriate dose of freedom (including freedom of the press) and tax relief. However, the hope for reforms did not come true, and the participation of Gentz in the commission appointed to introduce changes in the administration was of no influence. He had the opportunity to closely observe leading Prussian politicians – rival factions, conservative ministers, and the king’s advisers leaning towards more progressive ideas. He was more closely related to the latter, but in his opinion the dominant conviction was that, in their case as well, intrigue and incompetence stood in the way of Prussia’s pursuit of the policy she needed. Thus, he increasingly focused his attention on foreign policy matters, in which he gradually went far beyond the Prussian point of view.

In 1799, Gentz began publishing a new periodical – “Historisches Journal”. He filled its columns with brilliant articles about the international situation, the fate of revolutionary France, and on economic issues. They became famous also beyond the borders of Prussia. They were read with great interest, especially in England, and not only because Gentz devoted his essays to her politics and economy. His fame also reached overseas: the work *Der Ursprung und die Grundsätze der Amerikanischen Revolution*, a comparison of the ideas and practices of the American and French Revolutions, from the May and June issues of 1800, drew the attention of John Quincy Adams, at that time the US ambassador in Berlin and the future US president, who translated and prefaced its Philadelphia edition of the same year. This discourse praised the path the North American colonists had taken in the struggle for their rights, as well as defended their work against allegations that they had contributed to the form which the French Revolution had taken. Gentz noticed the obvious affinity of some ideas, lamented that the Founding Fathers referred ideologically to abstract principles, but emphasized that

(7) F. von Gentz, *Sendschreiben an Seine Königliche Majestät Friedrich Wilhelm III bei der Thronbesteigung allerunterthänigst überreicht. Am 16. November 1797*, [w:] *Ausgewählte Schriften von Friedrich von Gentz*, Fünfter Band, Politische Auflage, Stuttgart & Leipzig 1838.

the similarities of their work with what was implemented in France several years later were far less important than the differences, especially in the practical aspect. Here the German columnist once again brings to mind Edmund Burke – known not only for his ruthless criticism of the French Revolution, but also for defending the efforts of American colonists to protect their rights. Inevitably, the praise for the creators of the United States had to be accompanied in Gentz's essay by critical remarks about British politics. It showed, then, how even the gifted and otherwise sober politicians got carried away by negative emotions and dictated such solutions which, instead of restoring the bond between the British crown and the colonies, had subsequently led to their breaking away. That was the past, however – the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries brought new political challenges, including the need to face France, which under Napoleon Bonaparte turned out to be an even more formidable opponent than ever before. Gentz, an accomplished journalist fully committed to preventing the French threat, was a valuable ally to British politicians. Close cooperation was established, thanks to which the German political writer could count on a generous salary, and the 'payer' – on further journalistic works, memoranda, and analyses⁽⁸⁾.

After the closure of the "Historisches Journal" in 1800, Gentz did not return to a comparatively regular work as a columnist. He continued to write, however, focusing on longer forms – extensive analyses of international politics which made his fame grow in Europe, arousing the admiration of the opponents of both the Revolution and France, then Napoleonic, as well as the resentment and anger of their admirers. In 1801, he published the books *Ueber den Ursprung und Charakter des Krieges gegen die Französische Revolution* as well as *Von dem politischen Zustande von Europa vor und nach der Französischen Revolution. Eine Prüfung des Buches: De l'état de la France à la fin de l'an VIII* and, in 1806, *Authentische Darstellung des Verhältnisses zwischen England und Spanien vor und bei dem Ausbruche des Krieges zwischen beiden Mächten* and *Fragmente aus der neuesten Geschichte des politischen Gleichge-*

(8) It was not only the British Government that used Gentz's services of this kind. Excellent analyses were also prepared, for example, as part of his correspondence with the Wallachian hospodars, starting in 1813, when Jan Caradja was the hospodar. This correspondence lasted until 1828, and his participation in it Gentz owed to Metternich.

wichts in Europa. In these works he considered his concept of political equilibrium in Europe, in which – taking to consideration the expansion of France – he stressed out that "if states system of Europe is to exist and be maintained by common exertions, no one of its members must ever become so powerful as to be able to coerce all the rest put together". He also emphasized that "if ever a European state attempted by unlawful enterprises to attain to a degree of power, (or had in fact attained it), which enabled it to defy the danger of a union of several of its neighbours, or even an alliance of the whole, such a state should be treated as a common enemy"⁽⁹⁾. This system was shaped painstakingly from the beginning of the 16th century, and despite various periodic turbulences, it meant that "till the end of the eighteenth, (when all ancient ordinances were abolished), that none of the independent powers, which originally belonged to the confederacy, had lost their political existence."⁽¹⁰⁾ Not only large states benefited from this situation.

Neither Switzerland, nor Holland, nor any spiritual nor temporal German prince, not the most insignificant imperial town, nor Venice, nor Genoa, nor the small Italian republics, though surrounded on all sides by states of gigantic greatness, nor Malta left to itself, nor the weak, though flourishing Geneva pressed by France on one side, and Savoy on the other; nor even the power of Savoy, at one time threatened by Austria, at another by France; nor Portugal, enclosed on all sides by the Spanish territory; nor Sweden, nor Denmark, both endangered by the prodigious extension and aggrandizement of the Russian and Prussian powers; – not one of all these states disappeared.⁽¹¹⁾

This happy time for Europe – at least in this respect, because otherwise it was not free from long wars – ended with the partitions of Poland, which meant the dismantling of the "system of political counterpoise",

(9) F. von Gentz, *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe*.

(10) *Ibidem*.

(11) *Ibidem*.

because then the “union between several regents”, always considered as “a beneficial barrier against lawless power, and the passions of an individual oppressor”, although “formed for the purpose of bringing about precisely that evil against which it seemed destined as a bulwark of defence.”⁽¹²⁾ “That the mighty of the earth had broken into the sanctuary of national right, not under the impulse of incendiary passions, but deliberately and systematically turned the most respectable political ideas into ridicule without fear or reserve”, and this happened with the indifference of the rest of Europe, which additionally undermined the believe in the hitherto “political maxims”. Barely a handful of “the enlightened and upright of the time,” while “A horde of jabbering sophists who, at that time in France, were striving to shake the foundations of all principle,” and “the multitude (...) sunk every day deeper in the bottomless void, and became more and more accustomed to expect their law from violence, and their salvation from chance.”⁽¹³⁾ Thus, the ground was prepared for a disorder even more dangerous for the condition of Europe – the revolution in France and her expansion, continued with great power and success by her new ruler – Napoleon Bonaparte, of whom Gentz became a staunch and famous critic and opponent.

3.

Gentz’s success as a publicist did not go hand in hand with his success in influencing Prussian politics, and his work as a Prussian official was not lucrative and prestigious enough to part with it with regret. Therefore, in 1802 he began working for the Austrian administration. After a short stay in Vienna, he went to Dresden, a place extremely important for the political games of Napoleonic France and other states, which, depending on the changing economic situation and the current interpretation of their own interests, could join the anti-French coalition, stand by Bonaparte’s side, or try to remain neutral. In the capital of Saxony, Gentz met, inter alia, the novice diplomat Klemens von Metternich and an entire galaxy of

diplomat veterans, gaining very valuable experience in the field. Although he had planned to travel from Dresden to Berlin to close his affairs there, he decided to seize the opportunity that his acquaintance with a British MP Hugh Elliot had created for him, and travelled to England – a place much appreciated, and also an important source of his income. He was greeted there as an important ally, an influential and distinguished figure, valued by such eminent figures as William Pitt the Younger himself. His arrival was noted by the press. He met with leading British politicians. He listened – with great appreciation – to the debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons. In the latter, sited in the place of honour, he had the opportunity to meet another habitué of the English soirées, Louis-Philip, Duke of Orleans – for nearly three decades the king of the French. He was also received at an audience at Buckingham Palace and, although it was not fully successful due to the behaviour of King George III whose indifference to the guest had to be compensated by the attention of the royal wife Sophia Charlotte, it was nevertheless considered another manifestation of the importance of a newcomer from the Continent, a Prussian in the service of the Austrian Empire.

After his return to Vienna, Gentz learnt that his success in Great Britain did not necessarily translate into a strengthening of his position in Austria. The head of Austrian diplomacy Johann Ludwig von Cobenzl was not eager to use his services, as he wanted to remain neutral in the face of the growing tension between France and Great Britain. Gentz, on the other hand, not only because of his close ties with England, opted for Austria’s participation in the war against Napoleon, whom he perceived as a great threat to Europe. It was therefore difficult to consider a memorandum written by the Prussian adviser – in which he argued that it was necessary not to recognize the imperial title conferred by the proud and possessive ruler of France on himself – as consistent with Cobenzel’s line.

However, when the Austrian policy shifted to the paths proposed by Gentz, Austria’s accession to the anti-French coalition did not at first successfully solve the pressing problem of Napoleon’s power and expansion, seizing new territories, changing rulers and state borders with complete discretion, usually without respect or even with ostentatious disregard for any laws and tradition. The loss of the Third Coalition – with the defeat at Austerlitz – then the failure of the Fourth and Fifth

⁽¹²⁾ *Ibidem*.

⁽¹³⁾ *Ibidem*.

Coalitions – shattered all hopes of taming the tyrant. Moreover, Austria, defeated in the war of 1809, was forced to form an alliance with France, symbolized by Napoleon's marriage to the daughter of Emperor Francis II, Marie Louise I. Gentz's political plans and endeavours, therefore, seemed to be leading from defeat to defeat. In these difficult years, he sometimes had to wander around Saxony or the Czech Republic, fearing for his safety (after all, Napoleon was a very famous and fierce opponent), still trying to change the fate of Austria and Europe. He watched as those whom he had valued for years, and even as those with whom he had close contacts, passed over to Bonaparte's side. Therefore, in a bitter letter, he severed the bond that had long connected him with the outstanding Swiss historian Johannes von Müller, unable to forgive him for having decided to serve the French despot.

However, the situation had finally changed. Gentz, already with the title of *Hofrat*, closely associated with Klemens von Metternich being in charge of the Austrian diplomacy since 1809, finally saw the fall of the one with whom he had fought for many years in writing and behind the political scenes. The failure of the expedition to Russia, the anti-Napoleonic upheaval in German states, especially in Prussia, the successive defeats of the great leader, with the one that was particularly painful at Leipzig, finally the allies' invasion of France, and Napoleon's forced abdication – all this seemed to end a tumultuous period of incessant struggles, tensions and a complete destruction of the old orders, not only those symbolized by state borders and those who govern them, but also those seemingly rooted much deeper – in local rights, traditions, hierarchies ruthlessly turned into destruction, whether for the sake of the dangerous ideas of the one who could afford it thanks to his military success, or for the sake of his lust for power itself. When Bonaparte's defeat seemed to be certain, it was possible to start rebuilding order in Europe.

4.

Gentz, as Metternich's right-hand man, then wanted and was able to be exactly in the centre of things. In 1814, he negotiated with the Coalition representatives – including the British Foreign Minister Robert Stewart Castlereagh – on peace conditions for France, arguing that it would be

beneficial for Europe to refrain from severely punishing it. After all, defeating Napoleon did not necessarily mean humiliating France. The stance of Gentz and other supporters of moderate politics took precedence over the aspirations of those who wanted revenge. The peace concluded on May 30, 1814 in Paris, although taking France back to the borders of the beginning of 1792, was difficult to consider as a settlement either unfair or severe – just as certain losses in the colonies to Great Britain – especially since the obligation to pay contributions was not imposed on the defeated. In the presence of Louis XVIII of the Bourbon dynasty, a conciliatory gesture was made to facilitate the further course of political affairs in Europe, which needed France to be a stable and cooperative not only under duress, and certainly not one that would only begin to wait for an opportunity to retaliate. These reasonable calculations were thwarted by Napoleon's return from Elba – the famous 'One Hundred Days', though ended with another defeat, this time definitive. It resulted with another Treaty of Paris of November 20, 1815, which placed on France much more severe conditions: the return to the borders of the beginning of 1790 year, the necessity to pay a contribution of 700 million francs, and to consent for the Coalition's troops to be stationed on her territory for five years. It would still be possible to imagine a more severe penalty for supporting the return of the tyrant, but France's return to the role of a full member of the Concert of Powers had to be delayed.

However, it was not the fate of France that came to the fore of the diplomatic games of the time, in which Gentz, as Metternich's trustee, actively participated. From his point of view, two issues were then crucial: preventing Russia from taking the place of Napoleon's France and becoming a threat to the rest of Europe because of her strength, and preventing the excessive growth of Prussia. The tsar of Russia would be the most likely of all the rulers of the victorious coalition to turn against the emerging new political system. He had after all the strongest army, and – as Gentz wrote in his analysis of this system in 1818 – “none of the obstacles that block or constrain other rulers, divided power, constitutional forms, public opinion” mattered to him

“what he planned yesterday, he may achieve tomorrow”⁽¹⁴⁾. Therefore, Russia’s participation in the new order depended on the will of the tsar. Gentz drew attention to the ambitions of Alexander I. In the above-mentioned analysis, written three years after the Congress of Vienna, he emphasized that the Russian ruler considered himself the “founder” and “creator of the European federation” and wanted to be “perceived as its leader”⁽¹⁵⁾. To act against this federation would, therefore, be an action that would destroy the work “which was supposed to bring him immortality”⁽¹⁶⁾. These considerations, higher than just the Russia’s interests, Gentz attributed to Alexander and his efforts regarding the Polish cause, in which, before Napoleon was defeated, the Russian ruler presented his allies with *faits accomplis*, which they accepted – bearing in mind the overriding goal of defeating Bonaparte, that indispensably needed the Coalition’s unity. If the project pushed by the tsar – “creating a Polish constitutional monarchy out of the Duchy of Warsaw”, with Alexander as its king, were “the result of political calculation”, then “it would be difficult to come up with something more disastrous for the peace and interests of neighbouring countries”⁽¹⁷⁾. However, when Gentz analysed this plan in a memorial of August 18, 1814, he indicated that it had “nothing to do with political calculations; its sole and only source was the misunderstood principles of nobility and justice, a surge of false philanthropy, an impossible degenerate’s lust for fame.” A desire which in the tsar’s ambitions was intensified by the “unanimous critical judgment of Poland’s Partitions and political annihilation” observed at that time in Europe, shared even by those “who benefited or still benefit from the fruits of this act”⁽¹⁸⁾. Alexander’s desire to restore Poland was strengthened by some of his advisers, especially Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. The ruler of Russia were also to wake up to the

(14) Idem, *Considérations sur le système politique actuellement établi en Europe*, in: *Dépêches inédites du chevalier de Gentz aux hospodars de Valachie : pour servir à l’histoire politique européenne (1813-1828)*, publiées par le comte Prokesch-Osten fils, tome premier, Paris 1876.

(15) *Ibidem*.

(16) *Ibidem*.

(17) Idem, *Polen. Eine Denkschrift von Friedrich von Gentz ddo. 18 August 1814*, in: *Oesterreichs Theilnahme an den Befreiungskriegen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte de Jahre 1813 bis 1815*, Wien 1887, p. 383-399.

(18) *Ibidem*.

liberal principles instilled in him in his youth by his educator, the Swiss republican Frédéric-César de La Harpe, who met Alexander after many years and, according to Gentz’s account, “within a few hours regained his former influence on the tsar’s mind”. Whatever the motivations of Romanov, his plans caused dissatisfaction with the allies, and even in Russia itself, the idea of bringing Poland back on the map did not arouse enthusiasm. Its implementation – which was ultimately agreed upon by the Congress of Vienna – meant raising the level of potential Russian threat that European politicians, including Metternich and his closest adviser, had to take into account.

In the case of Prussia, the point of the current game after dealing with Napoleon was firstly the question of Saxony, loyal until the Battle of Leipzig, an ally of Bonaparte, which Prussia wanted to absorb as a whole. This Prussian plan was thwarted – she took over half of the kingdom, which was to be a compensation for the lands she lost to Russia in connection with the creation of the Kingdom of Poland which changed the borders once established during the Partition of the Republic of Poland. But the key Prussian problem was by no means resolved in this way. It is true that Prussia, as an ally of Austria, could have been a valuable link in the system of states capable of preventing possible future hostile actions by Russia and France. However, working with the northern power meant one of two possible scenarios, both with very different consequences. Within the framework of the Holy Alliance forged in 1814-1815, the one that was beneficial for Austria seemed to be implemented, but also the other one could not be overseen by experienced diplomats, who already needed to actively counteract it. Gentz watched with concern how the national sentiment was growing in the German countries, which Prussian politicians wanted to use to their advantage – to build a German state with the dominant role of Prussia. A state fashioned in a new style – centralized, drawing strength from the loyalty of its citizens, just like the recently revolutionary France. In the eyes of Gentz, this posed a double threat: firstly, for Austria, with whose fate he was loyally tied, and secondly, for Europe, for which – because of his own ideas of how it should be politically arranged – he also cared in his own way. Austria was vulnerable to a number of threats, determined by its very borders adjacent to the territories of the German states, Polish

lands, large stretches of Central Europe, the Balkans and northern Italy. Unlike the centralized countries – such as Prussia or Russia – it had to conduct its domestic policy in a completely different way, taking into account its diversity, which, given the unfavourable course of events, could turn out to be a destabilizing factor. German nationalism posed a threat to her, for its beneficiary would be Prussia, which during the Napoleonic brawl was sometimes an ally, but also a contestant in the competition for primacy over the German states, therefore in the future a potential and very likely enemy.

Gentz, although he came from Prussia, found this prospect very disturbing. In the years 1814-1815, when the new political order in Europe was forging on the ruins of the one that Napoleon had previously tried to introduce, his comments from the introduction to the brilliant book *Fragmente aus der neuesten Geschichte des Politischen Gleichgewichts in Europa* were of little importance. In 1806, the bond between the Germans was evoked due to the war defeat, a few months after Austerlitz. Gentz's voice was a call for the liberation of enslaved Europe by the Germans – which neither England nor Russia “can accomplish”, “desirable as both are as allies, invaluable as they are as a counterpoise”, because this liberation is a work that “must be accomplished on German soil”⁽¹⁹⁾. It was the Germany's fault, according to Gentz, that Europe fell under the blows of France. “Our unhappy eternal discords, the division of our force, the mutual jealousy of our princes, the want of unison in our people, the extinction of every generous feeling for the common interest of the nation, the slumber of every patriotic sentiment” – these factors Gentz called “the destroyers of (...) liberty”, “mortal enemies” of Germany and Europe. The united Germans appeared to him as those who were able to “defy every assault” and prevent even “a foot's breadth of German territory” from becoming “a prey to an insolent stranger”⁽²⁰⁾. But it was a call to fight for themselves, which, however, was to lead to the victory of an even higher order: the Germans were to unite in the fight against Napoleon not only to protect their territories and lands, but

also Europe, including its “system”. According to Gentz, the intentions of the followers of the national idea crowned in the vision of building a great German state under the leadership of Prussia were quite different. For them, the goal was their own greatness, their own achievements, their particular success. Gentz rejected this path not only because of his loyalty to Austria. And he actively tried to block it for Prussia.

German patriots from the Prussian school could not forgive him for his abandoning the idea that inflamed their emotions, sometimes even to fanaticism. Their aversion to Gentz did not arise only during the Congress of Vienna, when these games played for the future of Prussia, Germany, Austria and Europe were of particular importance in diplomatic relations. As a Prussian, he had already been accused of such a betrayal, although in moments of anger he was also accused – as Friedrich Schlegel wrote in a letter to his brother Augustus – that he was half-French. However, as the history of the following decades has shown, Gentz was right to see how much of a threat to Europe would be Germany seeking unification under the Prussian dictate, and then fully united and ruled in the Prussian way – with the exception of Austria, which was defeated in this history game.

5.

During the Congress of Vienna, however, things did not look too bad, as Prussian appetites managed to curb, and the dislike of Gentz shared by a large part of German public opinion paled in the face of the glory of his position at that time. He became the ‘Secretary of Europe’. This denomination has a very prosaic origin – he was, after all, the Secretary of the Congress of Vienna. Nevertheless, it is difficult to treat it solely as a technical description of an otherwise important posting. Gentz's position – due to the role he played alongside Metternich, and as the one who tried to merge such a tangle of negotiations, complicated on many levels and fields, in the pursuit of his goal – was indeed very significant. He prepared topics for discussion, wrote drafts of declarations and speeches. He had to balance various, often conflicting interests. It was worth making these efforts, however, to ensure that the struggle to defeat Napoleon and make the situation in Europe as stable as possible

(19) Idem, *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe*.

(20) *Ibidem*.

for the longest possible time was not in vain – after all, he did not believe in “eternal peace”, as demonstrated, for example, in the article, *Über den ewigen Frieden*, published in 1800 in the “Historisches Journal”. There were still many threats. He could discuss many things openly during political negotiations, meetings, and disputes, held in very comfortable circumstances, also at his home, sometimes in pleasant company. He would eat breakfasts with a friend from his youth, Wilhelm von Humboldt, who now played a leading role in Prussian diplomacy. Dinners gathered a larger group of distinguished guests – including the famous princes-diplomats, Metternich and Talleyrand. Gentz worked till late, for there was no shortage of duties. It was neither a disinterested effort, nor one calculated only to gain a glorious record on the pages of history. It was a common practice to come to Gentz to sort out issues and, for arranging them, a proper gratitude was expected as good manners, and not only simple, polite thanks. Such practice was carried out by representatives of various states or nations (for example German Jews), and probably most generously – with the amount of 24,000 guilders – by Talleyrand. However, no sums paid by the Congress participants were high enough for Gentz. Big titles, famous names did not impress him. On the other hand, he pointed to their focus on their own interests, and to their desire to obtain the greatest possible benefits, shrouded in pompous rhetoric about the “restitution of the social order”, or peace. As he watched them closely, he seemed to understand better, why Napoleon had managed to defeat them and subjugate Europe.

The new European order, proudly referred to as the Holy Alliance – although those who created it did not necessarily have to endorse the opinion of its ‘holiness’, let alone attest to it with their policies – in fact a political compromise based on a certain balance of contradictory and common interests of European powers, in the coming years was “updated” at the congresses in Aachen (1818), Opava (1820), Ljubljana (1821) and Verona (1822). Gentz took an active part in all of them, striving for solutions in line with the interests of Austria and his vision of what the European policy should be. There was no shortage of disputes – such as how to reconcile the conflicting interests of great powers in Spain and to resolve the complicated situation after the outbreak of the revolution there, or what to do with the Greeks’ aspirations for

independence. There was also a general question: how to ensure order in Europe and protect it from still strong revolutionary tendencies. Gentz’s answers to these dilemmas made him an even more unpopular figure in liberal or progressive circles. What could he count on when he opted for censorship? Has he already forgotten how he emphasized the importance of freedom of the press in the country, in his address to Frederick William III of 1797? Did he need to be reminded of it by his opponents re-issuing that old pamphlet, with a short and eloquent note added by them that what he wrote there was in place then just as it was now? Has his belittling his old opinions, justifying them with his young age or another context or circumstances, cancelled their legitimacy? How could he also act against the Greeks who wanted to free themselves from Turkish rule, mocking them for their reference to the proud ancient past, because in his opinion the present Greeks had nothing to do with it except the name? Was it fair to go against the great celebrities of Europe, such as Lord Byron, who were involved in the Greek cause, sometimes not only emotionally and rhetorically? Can warnings against the war that such libertarian aspirations may provoke justify aversion to those who want to pursue their rights? After all, he himself once praised the consistency and persistence of the North American colonists that led them to war and independence. Why didn’t he have the same understanding for the Greeks now? Why didn’t he have it for the Poles? But did he truly have none? Or maybe the key issues were not the moral reasons, but the political sense of the uprisings of the oppressed (or at least that is how they perceived their own position) nations and their consequences? After all, in the case of Poland, as he wrote in *Fragmente aus der neuesten Geschichte des Politischen Gleichgewichts in Europa*, he had no doubts that the Partitions were an “abuse”, an evil that turned out to be “incomparably more destructive to the higher interests of Europe than any former acts of violence of apparently a more aggravated character”⁽²¹⁾, while the Poles – as he pointed out in the memorial of 1814 – had a completely different opinion on regaining their independence,

(21) *Ibidem*.

“which was understandable and forgivable”⁽²²⁾, than those who have divided among themselves and still occupied their lands. Is this not reason enough to support their cause, righteous – as one might suppose?

Yes, and for the following fundamental reasons at the least. The first reason – stated in the article *Betrachtungen über die politische Lage von Europa. Nach dem Fall Warschau's*, published at the end of the November Uprising, after the fall of Warsaw – sounds incredibly ruthless for the Poles: “in the Polish revolution” the cabinets of European powers could not see “an act authorized or justified by unbearable oppression”⁽²³⁾. It was a fulfilment of the old warning expressed by Gentz in the memorial of August 18, 1814: “If the projects of Tsar Alexander [recreating Poland under his authority] come true, a volcano will rise on the side of Austria and Prussia, threatening with destruction and devouring everything around it”, a warning supplemented by him with a note that the reborn Kingdom of Poland “will undoubtedly, sooner or later, also attack Russia itself, and thus she will be punished for the madness that is now being born in the Tsar’s head”⁽²⁴⁾. Admittedly, Gentz was mistaken in predicting that “the first storms will unleash over Austria and Prussia, however, and with unprecedented momentum, as the Poles will certainly be supported by Russian forces in their first attempts”⁽²⁵⁾. And even though this part of the scenario was never to be fulfilled, European powers, including Austria, were obligated to “treat the Uprising as an act of indignation, ingratitude and imprudence”. The defeat of the insurrection – in this harsh assessment – even appeared as a “certain lesson” for the Polish society: “at a time when the dreamy politics of the so-called liberal party, relying mainly on the hope of receiving help from outside, broke down because the help did not want to and could not come”, it had to “finally understand how the vain hopes were justified neither by will nor by

(22) Idem, *Polen. Eine Denkschrift von Friedrich von Gentz ddo. 18 August 1814*, in: *Oesterreichs Theilnahme an den Befreiungskriegen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte de Jahre 1813 bis 1815*, Wien 1887, p. 383-399.

(23) Idem, *Betrachtungen über die politische Lage von Europa. Nach dem Fall Warschau's*, in: *Ungedruckte Denkschriften, Tagebücher und Briefe*, Mannheim 1840 (vol. V *Schriften von Friedrich von Gentz. Ein Denkmal von Gustav Schlesier*), p. 196-206. First published in: „Allgemeinen Zeitung”, 27-28 Sept., 1831, p. 436.

(24) Idem, *Polen. Eine Denkschrift von Friedrich von Gentz ddo. 18 August 1814*, in: *Oesterreichs Theilnahme an den Befreiungskriegen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte de Jahre 1813 bis 1815*, Wien 1887, p. 383-399.

(25) *Ibidem*.

power”⁽²⁶⁾. These harsh words from 1831 corresponded to what Gentz wrote in a work published twenty-five years earlier:

The fate of Poland is long ago decided, not only in *fact* but in *right*. By a number of treaties of peace and conventions concluded between the partitioning powers, and all the other European states, their old and new possessions are recognized and guaranteed; the former Polish provinces are now so completely united and incorporated with their old territory as to make it impossible to separate the one from the other; the re-establishment of Poland is therefore impracticable, either in *fact* or *right*.⁽²⁷⁾

So there is no more hope, the facts implicate what is possible. Poles may not agree with it, but they will not be able to change it. At best, Austria can – as in the case of the insurgent troops crossing its borders in 1831 – respect “humanitarian obligations, superior to all circumstances”, but cannot engage on their behalf, regardless of whether “they won or failed”. For Austria “could treat them as dictated by its conventions, its own interests and political calculations”⁽²⁸⁾. In these words – although this was not his intention – Gentz eloquently summed up the hitherto fate of the Polish cause during the Partitions, and anticipated its further course. Besides, he accurately defined the international politics in Europe of that time – and not just in the case of Poland – the primacy of the own interests of its actors’, who considered these interests within the limits of what they thought feasible and beneficial (or, even more so, less evil), bearing in mind moral concerns only when it was advantageous or... free of cost.

But was Gentz himself completely consistent in his attitude? Is not the following remark of Golo Mann made in his excellent biography of Gentz a fracture in this image? Mann wrote that Gentz during the November Uprising “encouraged the French government to mediate ‘in

(26) Idem, *Betrachtungen über die politische Lage von Europa. Nach dem Fall Warschau's*, in: *Ungedruckte Denkschriften, Tagebücher und Briefe*, Mannheim 1840 (vol. V *Schriften von Friedrich von Gentz. Ein Denkmal von Gustav Schlesier*), p. 196-206. First published in: „Allgemeinen Zeitung”, 27-28 Sept., 1831.

(27) Idem, *Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe*.

(28) Idem, *Sur la conduite du gouvernement autrichien relativement au corps de Dwernicky. 2. Juillet 1831*, in: *Aus dem Nachlasse Friedrichs von Gentz, Zweiter Band*, Wien 1868, pp. 264-268.

the spirit of justice' and even pleaded for a certain military action – the appearance of the fleet by St. Petersburg and Odessa – to which he did not manage to convince Louis-Philip, who made sure that the world would not consider him a revolutionist.”⁽²⁹⁾ But, even if this remark may soften the opinion about Gentz's attitude to the Polish cause – at least during the November Uprising – it does not change the essence of his observations with regard to it: the fate of the Polish cause was determined by the interests of the great powers, not by moral principles and reasons.

6.

The Polish Uprising of 1830 was not the only violent disturbance of the order once established during the Congress of Vienna. Its greatest disruption occurred in France – the July Revolution deprived Charles X of power, and elevated Louis-Philippe to the throne. When Gentz once deliberated on the future of this revolution-torn country, he considered the scenario that her fate might be similar to that of the English after the Stuarts were overthrown, restored and overthrown again – when William III of Orleans ascended the throne, having some family ties with the Stuarts, but not being of their main line. The elevation to the throne of a representative of the younger Bourbon line, Louis-Philip, appeared to Gentz as a variant of events not only possible, but also potentially beneficial – he highly appreciated the Duke of Orleans, whom he had known in England at one time. Whether he would maintain this good opinion when being able to observe his rule longer can only be doubted, as any certainty in such speculation is deceptive.

(29) G. Mann, *Secretary of Europe. The Life of Friedrich Gentz, Enemy of Napoleon*, transl. by W. H. Wogolom, Hamden, CT 1970, p. 302-303. Interesting details about Gentz's attitude to the Polish cause during the November Uprising are given in the memories of the Polish aristocrat and political activist Andrzej Zamoyski, who met him in Vienna while seeking Austrian support, and described him in the following way: “Gentz was for a long time Metternich's right hand, now old, of bad manners, and also, he was less used for sorting out tasks, but more as the henchman of Prince Metternich.” („Moje przeprawy”. *Pamiętnik Andrzeja hr. Zamoyskiego o czasach powstania listopadowego (1830--1831)* [‘My crossings’. Count Andrzej Zamoyski's diary from the times of the November Uprising (1830-1831)], ed. by A. Kraushar, vol. 2, Kraków 1906, p. 40). According to this account, in his talks with Zamoyski, Gentz presented the reasons why Metternich did not want and could not support the Polish cause in the way expected by the Poles. Gentz himself, as the Polish envoy wrote, “seems to favour us” (*Ibid.*, p. 59). However, when Zamoyski pointed out in one of their discussions that the Poles needed a warranty to patiently wait for international arrangements in their case, and “without this warranty, despair will prevail”, Gentz interrupted him and said: “Let us calm down [...] Your duty as an envoy is to mediate, not to despair” (*Ibid.*, p. 146).

But it was not only the course of current political affairs, dealt with in a cool, analytical way, that worried Gentz in the last years of his life. He was concerned with the general condition of Europe, he observed how it ceased to be the centre of the world when its former colonies broke away one by one, and proposed an ideological alternative to Europe – especially pointing out to the rising United States, a republic, as he once admitted, so very different from the one made of blood in France. After all, the pessimism accompanying Gentz in this declining period was not then a unique feature among conservatives-counterrevolutionaries who, from the beginning of the 1890s, for twenty-five years (some less than that, because they did not immediately take the right side) tried to stop the decay of the old order taking place before their eyes. Even if they were not great lovers of this order, who recognised the diseases and evil inherent in it – features inevitable to all the human endeavours – they were afraid and disgusted by that, what the revolutionists, as well as the one who came out of their womb but with his own new idea of his own of greatness and glory, arbitrarily imposed on Europe with a fury similar to the Jacobin one, but in a militarily more effective form which they created in place of the old laws, hierarchies and traditions. They hoped that after defeating Napoleon and restraining the revolutionary spirit which, after all, still remained strong, it would be possible to overcome the effects of many years of chaos and decay.

They did not usually think that it would be possible to fully recreate the once broken orders, whether in France or anywhere else. After all, these orders did not always deserve it. They also did not delude themselves that it would be possible to completely eliminate the decomposing factors in politics and culture – they assumed keeping them in check rather effective. Many of them, however, experienced great disappointment when these orders turned out to be much stronger and more durable than they thought, whereas the rulers, seemingly equipped with instruments to tame them, not always were able or wanted to implement them. The question then arose whether the triumph over the revolution – its practical manifestations, but also its ideas and spirit – would prove permanent. In which way will Europe continue to change? Gentz, too, was concerned about these processes and phenomena. And like others – such as Joseph de Maistre or Louis de Bonald – he looked for causes

other than political disorder, although he devoted almost his entire adult life to political analysis, which was very practical. In order to find causes deeper than conflicting interests, it was necessary to refer to human nature, but also to such distant historical events as the Reformation. It is true that Europe has learned to cope with the political consequences of the religious divisions it caused: after all, when it was favoured by the interests or simply the will of those who ruled, Catholics and Protestants cooperated harmoniously. However, it was the Reformation-sanctioned arbitrariness in fundamental matters, and the ensuing overthrow of the most traditional hierarchies, that opened the way to further radical undermining everything on which the order in Europe could be based – the seed of the revolution was sown and immediately began to bear its malevolent harvest. Usually, Gentz was closer to the conservative tradition in the spirit of Burke – he believed that a positive evolution of political, social and economic relations is possible, the tradition does not have to be betrayed and buried because of it. Therefore, problems should be solved primarily in practical manner. There is no need to exaggerate in looking for metaphysical explanations, when the simple ones are at hand – specific circumstances and conditions, interests or the character of certain individuals influencing the course of the history, and sometimes simply a coincidence. But the state of Europe after a wave of revolutions, wars – as well as the unsuccessful attempts to rebuild what they had destroyed – was such that the Prussian thinker might have embraced the works of de Maistre, a Savoyard thinker, who approached these fundamental issues with such a pessimism, that it could have deprived many of the hope that human forces will be able to curb the revolutionary evil, impudent due to decades of success, and – despite the defeat of the war in its French dimension – still rebellious and threatening. This sense of doubt or at least uncertainty was familiar to Gentz, although ultimately in his political writing – or at least the part of it which could have been known to a wider audience, who had no access to his letters or the journal – the cool analysis of the game of interests prevailed until the very end.

The final years of Gentz's life, however, were not limited to contemplating political scenarios and events or reflecting on the fundamental mysteries and principles of history, philosophy and religion.

A social sensation, causing scandal for many, was the relationship he had with a rising star, forty-six years younger than him – the ballerina Fanny Elssler⁽³⁰⁾. He saw her for the first time in the theatre, on November 25, 1829. He wrote letters to her, sent flowers, began to visit her and host her in his house. At her side, he experienced a kind of happiness which did not usually accompany him in his personal life, or at least which he did not find in the bosom of his own family.⁽³¹⁾ He died in his Viennese apartment on June 9, 1832.

Translated by Renata Czekalska

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(30) Gentz's relationship with the young ballerina was commented on in the diary of Andrzej Zamoyski who met him in Vienna during his mission for the November Uprising: "Having returned to my home, I wrote to Gentz that I would visit him the next morning (risking a meeting with a dancer, Miss Elsler, whom I had met once at his door. He did not want to grow old... which, I confess, aroused pity ...)." (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, Kraków 1906, p. 107-108).

(31) He did not maintain relations with his brothers, with his sisters he met only by the end of his life after a long break, his wife, Minna Gilly, whom he married in 1793 – and whom, given his lifestyle, he certainly did not treat in a conservative fashion – he abandoned. He had illegitimate children, as evidenced by entries in his diary. He sought the beauties of family life among the relatives of his servants.



Friedrich von Gentz



On Revolutions and Balance of Power in Europe

New Direction | OMP

MMXXII

PREFACE

The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution, Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution

The Essay, of which a translation is here given, was published in the *Historic Journal*, a monthly print which appears at Berlin; and was written by Mr. GENTZ, one of the most distinguished political writers in Germany. It is for two reasons highly interesting, to Americans: First, because it contains the clearest account of the rise and progress of the revolution which established their independence, that has ever appeared within so small a compass; and secondly, because it rescues that revolution from the disgraceful imputation of having proceeded from the same principles as that of France. This error has nowhere been more frequently repeated, nowhere of more pernicious tendency than in America itself. It has been, here not simply a commonplace argument, as Mr. Gentz represents it to have been in Europe, but has been sanctioned by the authority of men, revered for their talents, and who at least ought to have known better.

The essential difference between these two great events, in their *rise*, their progress, and their *termination*, is here shown in various lights, one of which alone is sufficient for an honest man. 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 *wrongs*.

We presume it will afford a pure and honest gratification to the mind of every truly patriotic American reader, to see the honourable testimony

borne by an ingenious, well informed, and impartial foreigner to the principles and conduct of our country's revolution. The judgment of a native American will naturally be biassed by those partialities in favour of his country, from which it is so difficult for the citizen to divest himself as an historian. The causes of hatred and affection must be more remote from the mind of a foreigner, and his decisions must therefore have a greater intrinsic value. The historian of his own country must always in some, sort be considered as its advocate; but an impartial foreigner is its judge.

The approbation of such a writer as Mr. Gentz is the more precious too, for not being unqualified. The mild censure, which he passes upon certain parts of our proceedings is the strongest proof of his real impartiality; and though our sentiments as Americans may differ from his, upon various points of political speculation, we shall find very few, if any instances, that have incurred his censure, which our own candour will not equally disapprove.

**The Origin and
Principles of the
American Revolution,
Compared with the
Origin and Principles of
the French Revolution**

The Revolution of North America, had, in the course of events, been the nearest neighbour to that of France. A very considerable part of those, who were contemporaries and witnesses of the latter, had likewise survived the former. Some of the most important personages, who made a figure in the French revolution, scarce ten years before, had been active on the theatre of that in America. The example of this undertaking, crowned with the most complete success, must have had a more immediate and powerful influence upon those, who destroyed the old government of France, than the example of any earlier European revolution: the circumstances, in which France was, at the breaking out of her revolution, had been, if not wholly, yet for the greatest part brought on by the part she had taken in that of America. In the conduct and language of most of the founders of the French revolution, it was impossible not to perceive an endeavour to imitate the course, the plans, the measures, the forms, and, in part, the language of those, who had conducted that of America; and to consider this, upon all occasions, as at once the model, and the justification of their own.

From all these causes, but especially because the re-collection of the American revolution was yet fresh in every mind; because the principles to which it had given currency still sounded in every ear; because the preparatory temper of mind, which it had everywhere in Europe excited and left behind, favoured every similar, or only seemingly similar undertaking, it became so easy for those, who felt an evident interest in seeing the French revolution superficially compared, and thereby placed on the same ground, and confounded with that of America, to draw the great majority of the public into this fundamentally false point of view. At the period of great commotions, and of animated, vehement, widely grasping discussions, a very small number of men are able, and, perhaps, a still smaller number willing, with vigorous native energy, to penetrate into the essence of events, and take upon themselves the painful task of forming a judgment founded upon long meditation and persevering study. The similarity of the two devolutions was taken upon trust, and as many persons of respectable understanding and discernment had loudly and decisively declared themselves in favour of the American, it became a sort of accredited common-place, “that what had been just in America, could not be unjust in Europe”. As, further, the last result of

the American revolution had been in the highest degree splendid and glorious; as its issue had been undoubtedly advantageous for America, undoubtedly advantageous for most other states, was undoubtedly advantageous for England herself; as this most important circumstance, and the greater moderation and impartiality which time and tranquillity always bring to the judgments of men, had at last reconciled with this revolution its most violent opponents; an irresistible analogy seemed to justify a similar expectation in respect to that of France; and a second common-place, far more dangerous than the first, because it seized its materials, in the empty space of distant futurity, gathered a great portion of the human race under the spell of the delusive, hope, that “what in America, had conduced to the public benefit, will, and must, sooner or later, in France and throughout Europe conduce in like manner to the public benefit”.

The melancholy experience of ten disasterous years, has indeed considerably cooled down this belief; but it is not yet altogether extinguished; and even those who, have begun to totter in the faith, without, however, renouncing the principles, by which they justify the French revolution, extricate themselves from their perplexity, by recurring to external and accidental circumstances, which have hindered all the good that might have ensued, to the pretence that the revolution is not yet wholly completed, and to other equally nugatory subterfuges. The justice of the origin of both revolutions, they suppose to be taken for granted; and if one of them has produced more salutary consequences than the other, they impute this to Fortune, which here favours, and there abandons the undertakings of men. An equality of wisdom in the founders of the two revolutions, upon the whole, is as much taken for granted, as an equality of integrity.

Hence, it will certainly be no ungrateful task to compare the two revolutions in their essential features, in their originating causes, and in their first principles with each other. But in order to prepare the way for such a comparison, it will not be superfluous to exhibit in a small compass, the principal features of the origin of the American revolution. It may justly be taken for granted, that since the last ten years have almost exhausted all the powers of attention and of memory, the characteristic features of the origin and first progress of that revolution are no longer

distinctly present in the minds even of many of its cotemporaries: there are, besides, some points in the picture of this great event, which, at the time when it happened, escaped almost every observer and which not until a later period, discovered themselves in all their vivid colours to the piercing eyes of meditation and experience⁽³²⁾.

The English colonies in North-America, far from being a designed regular institution of European wisdom, calculated for futurity, had been much more the pure production of European short-sightedness and injustice. Political and religious intolerance, political and religious convulsions, had driven the first settlers from their country: the single favour indulged them was to leave them to themselves. That their establishments were, in less than two hundred years, to form a great nation, and to give the world a new form, was concealed no less to their own eyes, than to the eyes of those who had ejected them from their bosom.

In the apparent insignificance of those settlements, and in the false measure, by which the profound ignorance of the Europeans estimated the value of such distant possessions, lay the first ground of the extraordinary progress which the North American colonies had already made under the second and third generations of their new inhabitants. Gold and silver alone could then attract the attention of European governments. A distant land, where neither of these was to be found, was, without hesitation, abandoned to its fortunes. From such a country was expected no *revenue*; and what increases not immediately the revenues of the state, could make no pretensions to its support, or to its particular care.

Nevertheless, by the peculiar, creative energy of a rapidly growing mass of enterprising and indefatigably active men, favoured by an extensive, fruitful, and happily situated territory; by simple forms of government, well adapted to their ends, and by profound peace, these colonies, thus neglected, and well nigh forgotten by the mother country, sprang up, after a short infancy, with giant strides, to the fulness and

(32) Thus, for example, among all the statesmen and literati, who spoke or wrote, either for or against the American revolution, there were only two, who even then foresaw that the loss of the colonies would be no misfortune to England: The one, Adam Smith, was at that time little read, and, perhaps, little understood: The other, Dean Tucker, was held an eccentric visionary.

consistency of a brilliant youth. The phenomenon of their unexpected greatness, roused the Europeans, with sudden violence, from the slumber of a thoughtless indifference, and; at length, displayed to them a real new world, fully prepared to rivalize with the old; for which, however, at the same time, it was an inexhaustible source of wealth and enjoyment. Even before the middle of this century, every maritime power of Europe, but England more than all the rest, because the foundation of her colonies had accidentally departed the least from good principles, had discovered, that the peculiar and only worth of all external European possessions, consisted in the extended market they opened to the industry of the mother country; that it was not the empty sovereignty over enormous territories; not the barren right of property to gold and silver mines; but solely the increased facility of sale for European productions, and an advantageous exchange of them for the productions of the most distant regions, which gave to the discovery of America the first rank among all the events beneficial to the world.

No sooner had this great truth begun to be so much obscurely perceived than necessarily all the exertions of the mother country concentrated themselves, in giving to their trade with the colonies the greatest extent, and the most advantageous direction; and for this end, even in times so little remote from the present, as those of which I speak, no other means were devised, than a *Monopoly*. In compelling the inhabitants of the colonies to receive exclusively from the mother country, all the necessary European articles they required, and to sell exclusively to her all the production by the circulation of which the merchants of the mother country might hope a certain profit, it was supposed that vast market, whose importance became more evident from year to year, would be improved in its whole extent, and under the most profitable conditions.

The error, which lay at the bottom of this system was pardonable. The genuine principles of the nature and sources of wealth, and of the true interests of commercial nations had scarcely yet germed in a few distinguished heads, and were not even developed much less acknowledged Nay, if at that early period a single state could have soared to the elevation of these principles; on one side had renounced all prejudices, on the other, every paltry jealousy and felt a lively conviction,

that liberty and general competition must be the basis of all true commercial policy, and the wisest principle of trade with the colonies yet could she not, without sacrificing herself, have listened to this principle. For in leaving her colonies free she would have run the risque of seeing them fall into the hands of another, who would exclude her from their market. She was not privileged to be wise alone, and to have expected a general concert, among the commercial powers would have been folly. As therefore a colonial trade, grounded upon monopoly, was yet better than none there remained for a state, in the situation of England, even had she most fortunately anticipated the result of a long experience, and of profound meditation, no other system than that of *monopoly*.

To secure to herself the exclusive trade of the colonies was under these circumstances necessarily the highest aim of England's policy. The establishment of this exclusive trade, which naturally arose from the original relations between the colonies and the mother country, had not been difficult to the state; for the emigrants had never received the smallest support. By so much the more expensive had it been to keep them. The possession of the colonies was the occasion of wars. The war of eight years between France and England, which concluded in the year 1763, by the peace of Fontainebleau, and which increased the English national debt nearly an hundred millions sterling, had the colonial interest for its sole object. The conquest of Canada would not in itself have been worth a tenth part of the sums, which that war cost; the firm establishment of the commercial monopoly was properly the final purpose, for which they were expended.

It is a great question, whether even independent of the unhappy differences, which broke out immediately after the close of that war, its consequences would not have been rather pernicious than salutary to England. The annihilation of the French power in North America completed the political existence of the English colonies, and supported, by the still accelerating progress of their wealth, and of their vigor, gave them a consciousness of security and of stability, which must have become sooner or later dangerous to their connection with the mother country. It is more than improbable that this connection would have been perpetual. It is difficult to believe that under the most favourable circumstances it would have lasted another century. No nation governed

its colonies upon more liberal and equitable principles than England; but the unnatural system, which chained the growth of a great people to the exclusive commercial interest of a country, distant from them a thousand leagues, even with the most liberal organization of which it was capable, could not have lasted forever⁽³³⁾. Yet it would certainly have maintained itself for the next fifty years, and might perhaps have been dissolved in a milder and happier way than has now happened, had not England, under the most wretched of fascinations, fallen upon the idea of procuring in addition to the benefit of an exclusive trade, another immediate benefit, by an American public revenue.

It is hard to decide, which of the secret motives, which on either side were imputed to the ministry of that time first gave existence to this pernicious project. The most pardonable of all, the wish of alleviating the burthen of taxes upon the people of Great Britain, and especially upon the land-holders; a burthen, which the war had so much aggravated, is unluckily at the same time the most improbable. Specie was exactly that in which North America least abounded; to have levied in that country a tax of any real importance could scarcely have occurred to any Englishman with the least smattering of information; and that, amidst the thousand obstacles which must necessarily have opposed the collection of such a tax, its nett produce for the treasury would always have melted to nothing, could scarcely escape the sagacity of any person versed in the subject. If we consider it attentively on all sides; if we carefully remark certain expressions of the ministers of that day, and what were afterwards known to be their favourite ideas, as well as the whole course of transactions upon American affairs, we can hardly avoid the belief, that what is generally considered as the *consequence* of the first treasury plan, the jealousy of the parliament's unlimited supremacy was rather the proper motive for this plan; and the secret apprehension that America might grow weary of her fetters, misled them to the dangerous experiment of fastening still narrower chains upon her.

(33) So long as the colonists had found a paramount advantage in the *culture of the land*, they would probably have borne their dependence. But when the critical period had arrived, when in the natural progress of society, a considerable part of the capitals would have been employed in *manufactures*, the English monopoly would have become insupportable.

The first step in this untrodden career was taken immediately after the peace of 1763, and under the most unfavourable auspices. The minister of finance, George Grenville, else in every respect an estimable and excellent statesman, but whose mind was either not great or not flexible enough to consider the new system in all its points of view, thought he could force down its execution, just at the period when, by various severe acts of parliament, he had brought back the commercial relations between England and the colonies as close as possible to the principles of monopoly; had pursued the American contraband trade, with the most oppressive regulations, and thereby had excited a great discontent in all minds. The tax with which he proposed to make his first essay, was a stamp-tax upon judicial records, newspapers, &c. to which the parliament, at the commencement of the year 1765, gave its assent.

The colonies had hitherto paid no other taxes, than those, which were necessary for the internal administration; and these proportionally insignificant charges had been prescribed and assessed by the several representative assemblies of each colony. In cases of urgency, for instance, in the course of the late war, these assemblies had raised, and presented to the government, extraordinary and voluntary contributions; but of a public tax, raised by act of parliament, there had been in North America no example. If the parliament, in the laws regulating trade, had sometimes introduced a trifling entrance, or clearance duty, the most distant trace had never appeared in any public transaction, of a design to make America contribute immediately to the general exigencies of the British empire.

A long and venerable *observance* had sanctioned this colonial immunity; a thousand equitable considerations, and this above all, that the British commercial monopoly was of itself equivalent to a heavy and invaluable tax, justified this observance; and what was most important of all, even the authority of the parliament to violate this immunity, was controvertible with weapons furnished by the spirit of the English constitution itself. It had always been a favourite maxim of this constitution, that no Briton could be compelled to pay taxes, not imposed by his own representatives, and upon this maxim rested the whole constitutional power of the lower house in parliament. That the inhabitants of the colonies, in every sense of the word, were Britons, no

man questioned; and the parliament, which thought itself authorised to tax them, even in that, recognized them as fellow citizens. Yet had they no representatives in parliament, and, owing to their distance, could properly make no pretensions to it therefore, in respect to them, the constitutional principle retained its force, their, contributions could only be prescribed by their colonial assemblies, and the British parliament was no more entitled to exercise the right of taxation over them, than over the people of Ireland.

But had this right been only questionable, it was at all events a false and hazardous step to bring it into discussion. To raise a controversy, concerning the bounds of the supreme power in the state, without the most urgent necessity, is in every case contrary to the simplest rules of state policy. Doubly dangerous must such a controversy here be, where it concerned a constitution, whose nature and boundaries had never yet been defined, and were, perhaps, not susceptible of definition. The relation between a colony; and the mother country is one of those, which will not bear a strong elucidation; rights of sovereignty, of so peculiar and extraordinary a nature often vanish under the hands of those, who would dissect them. Now, when the mother country has a constitution like that of Britain, it become infinitely difficult to introduce into that relation a harmony, which satisfies the understanding, and at the same, time the idea of right. It had never been examined how far the legislative authority of parliament, in respect to the colonies, extended; thus much, however, the colonies admitted, and would, have continued long to admit, that the parliament was fully authorised to direct and to restrain their trade, in the widest extent of the word. This, alone was clear; but this alone was essential to England. An attempt to go further was manifestly to set all at stake.

The appearance of the stamp-act in America was the signal for an universal commotion. The new laws against contraband trade had already irritated the minds of the people, because they plainly manifested the purpose of maintaining the British commercial monopoly in its greatest vigour; but these laws were received in silence because there was no pretention to the right of complaining against them. Now, a new, and hitherto unexampled system, that of raising in North America a tax for the treasury of England, was to be introduced, and in a form necessarily

odious to the colonies; for a stamp-tax from various local causes, had always been in North America an oppressive tax. The opposition spread in a few days among all classes of people; in the lower, it burst forth in excesses of every kind; in the higher, by a stubborn and deliberate resistance, especially by a general agreement to import no merchandise from Great Britain, until the stamp-act should be repealed. With the temper, which prevailed from one end of the colonies to the other, and with the well known perseverance, bordering upon obstinacy, of the author of the project, perhaps this first, struggle might have ended in the total separation, had not just at that time the administration in England fallen into other hands.

The ministry, which in the summer of 1765, took the affairs of the nation in hand, rejected the new system of immediate taxation in America entirely. The mild principles, and the popular maxims of the marquis of Rockingham, made him averse to a path, in which violence alone could lead to the goal; and the secretary of state, general Conway, had been, when the business was first transacted in parliament, Grenville's most powerful and ardent opposer. The stamp-act, in the first session of the year 1766, was repealed; but to preserve the honour of parliament from sinking altogether, with this repeal was connected a declaratory act, intituled, "An Act for securing the Dependence of the Colonies" in which the right of Great Britain to legislate for the colonies in all cases whatsoever, was solemnly maintained.

This last step could not, in itself, be indifferent to the Americans; yet the joy at the repeal of the stamp-act was so great, that no regard was paid to the possible consequences of the act, which was attached as a counterbalancing weight to this appeal; and probably peace and concord would have been for a long time restored and secured, had not the English ministry, in a luckless hour, brought again to light the fatal project of raising a revenue from America. The marquis of Rockingham's administration had been dissolved, soon after the repeal of the stamp-act and had been succeeded by another, at the head of which was indeed the name, but no longer the genius of the earl of Chatham, Charles Townsend, chancellor of the exchequer, a man of splendid talents, but of a frivolous and unsafe character, who was aiming to attain the highest summit of influence in the state, when an early death snatched him away

from the career, proposed, in the year 1767, a tax upon the importation of glass, paper, painters' colours and tea into the colonies, and this proposal, although several of the ministers, and among the rest the duke of Grafton, who was at the head of the treasury department had silently contended against it, was by parliament adopted as a law. The defenders of this new plan entrenched themselves behind the feeble argument, that although parliament, by repealing the stamp-act, had renounced a direct taxation of the colonies, yet no renunciation could thence be inferred of indirect taxation, which was intimately connected with the right of regulating trade.

Had this reasoning even silenced the opposition in parliament, it was by no means calculated to satisfy the colonies. The hostile object of the new statute could not escape the shortest sight. The taxes prescribed, being announced merely as impost duties, were indeed reconcilable with the letter of that immunity, which lays so near the heart of the colonists, but their secret object could scarcely be any other, than to wrest by artifice, what was not ventured to be maintained by force. The insignificance of the benefit England could derive from these taxes, which would have produced only about £.20,000, but too strongly confirmed this suspicion; and the peculiar character of the new regulations, the iniquity of exacting from a people, compelled to receive all the articles they needed, exclusively from the mother country, a tax upon the importation of such articles, rendered the undertaking completely odious. The imposts of 1767 operated in exactly the same manner as the stamp-act; the general nonimportation agreement was renewed in all the colonies; bitter controversies between the colonial assemblies and the royal governors, violent scenes between the citizens of divers towns and the military resistance on the one part, menaces on the other foreboded the stroke, which was soon to shake the British empire to its foundations.

The ministry seemed however to make one more stand, upon the very border of the precipice. In the year 1769, by a circular letter of the minister for the colonies, the pleasing prospect of a speedy relief from the odious impost duties was opened to the colonial assemblies, and the decided aversion of the duke of Grafton to the taxation of America, seemed to encourage the hopes which this letter had raised. But no sooner

had he, in the beginning of 1770, resigned his office, than the affair took another turn. His successor, lord North, did indeed in the first days of his administration formally propose the repeal of the American imposts, but with the unfortunate exception, that the tax upon tea should be continued as a proof of the legitimate authority of parliament; nor could the most vehement opposition of the united Rockingham and Grenville parties, who painted in the strongest colours the folly of continuing the contest, after the benefit was abandoned, avail anything against this wretched plan⁽³⁴⁾. From that hour it was clear that the ministry had no other object than to make the colonies feel their chains. The first steps in this slippery career had their grounds in false representations and partial judgments; instead of these *errors* dangerous *passions* were now introduced, and the peace and welfare of the nation were to be sacrificed to a mistaken ambition, and a destructive jealousy.

Meanwhile, the disposition to resistance had struck deep roots in all the colonies; and the wider the mother country's undertakings departed from their first object, the more the resistance of the Americans departed from its original character. They had at first only denied the right of parliament to tax them; by degrees, the sphere of their opposition extended, and they began to call in question the authority of parliament altogether. When they had once taken this ground, it was in vain to hope to drive them from it. The consciousness of their stability, and their distance from England, their lawful pride in the rights, derived from their British descent, the recollection of the circumstances which had led their forefathers to America, the sight of the flourishing state into which in a period of 150 years they had turned an uninhabitable desert, the injustice, and the harshness of those, who instead of alleviating their dependence by gentle treatment, were daily seeking to render it more oppressive; – all this encouraged the new impulse, which their ideas and their wishes had taken. The folly of Great Britain in abandoning, for the useless discussion of a problematic right, the undisturbed enjoyment of a connection, which though never analysed and dissected with theoretic accuracy, was even in its undefined state so advantageous, became

(34) Lord North formally declared in parliament, that after what had happened, an entire repeal of all the new taxes could not take place, until America should be brought to the feet of Great Britain.

continually more visible; but far from endeavouring with tender caution to heal the dangerous wound, measure upon measure was taken to inflame it. Almost every step taken by the government during this unhappy period, in respect to the internal administration of the colonies, to the courts of justice, to the provincial assemblies, to the relations between the civil and military authorities, seemed expressly calculated at once to embitter and to embolden discontent; and the spirit of insurrection had long been in full possession of every mind, when a new attempt of the ministry, made it suddenly burst forth with the utmost violence.

The persevering refusal of the Americans to import tea into the colonies, so long as the tax upon it, prescribed in the year 1767, and purposely retained in 1770, should not be repealed, had occasioned a considerable loss to the East India company in whose magazines, great quantities of this article perished unconsumed. They had offered the minister to pay upon the exportation double the trifling tax of three pence upon the pound, which was yet so odious to the colonies; but this proposal, advantageous as it was, and which opened so honourable an issue from the crisis, was disapproved and rejected, as not according with the system of reducing America to unconditional submission. But as the embarrassment of the company was continually growing greater, they sought to help themselves by another project, and concluded to ship the tea for America upon their own account, there to pay the impost by their own agents and then make their sales. As at the same time, by act of parliament, the exportation was made duty free, whereby the tea, notwithstanding the impost in America, would be at cheaper market than it had before been, it was hoped that the Americans would abandon all their scruples, and not feeling immediately the tax lurking in the price of the article, would give up all resistance.

The event soon discovered how vain this hope had been. Time had been allowed the colonies to reflect upon their situation, and to judge of the ministerial proceeding in the point of view which was alone essential. The merchants, who during the American agreement against the importation of British tea, had enriched themselves by the contraband trade of foreign teas, might, perhaps, only from mercantile considerations, abhor the undertaking of the East India company, sanctioned by the government; but the great mass of the people, and

the most enlightened patriots in America, saw and condemned, in this undertaking, nothing but the evident purpose of carrying through the taxing right of the British parliament. The remarkable circumstance, that England had refused the larger revenue which the taxes upon exportation from the British ports would have produced, to secure the levying of the much smaller entrance duty in America, betrayed a bitter passionate obstinacy, which together with so many other symptoms of hostility threatened the colonies with a gloomy futurity.

When the first report of these tea-ships having been sent arrived in America, from New Hampshire to Georgia, universal preparations for the most animated resistance were made. The agents of the company nowhere dared to receive the goods; in New York, Philadelphia, and many other towns, such strong protestations against unlading the ships were made, that they were compelled to return untouched. In Boston, where the spirit of resistance had been from the beginning the most violent, Governor Hutchinson adopted measures to make the return of the ships impossible before the object should be attained; but his rigor only served to increase the evil. A small number of decided opponents went on board the ship, and, without doing any other damage, broke open 342 chests of tea, and threw it into the sea.

The account of these tumultuous proceedings, soon after the opening of parliament, in the year 1774, reached England, where, immediately, the thirst for revenge silenced every other feeling; the zeal to maintain the honour and the rights of government, every other council, not only in the minds of the ministers, but likewise in the general opinion of the nation. In this critical moment it was forgotten, that it was not until after the colonies for ten years long, had been driven by a series of vicious and hazardous measures, by attacks continually repeated, and by studied systematic vexations to the utmost extremity, that their just indignation had burst forth in illegal acts.

The necessity for severe measures was indeed now evident, even to the moderate. But unfortunately, resentment overstepped the bounds of equity, and provoked pride the bounds of policy. The immediate authors of the excesses in Boston, might justly have been punished; the East India company might justly claim to be indemnified by the colonies; the Americans, by their acts of violence, had evidently placed themselves at

a disadvantage; and their faults gave the most favourable opportunity to bring them, with wisdom, back within their bounds. But England seemed herself to spurn all the advantages of her present situation, and to have commenced a war, rather against her own welfare and security, than against the opposition in the colonies. The first measure, proposed by lord North, was a law, to close as long as the king should think necessary, the port of Boston, and to transfer the custom-house of that flourishing and important commercial town to another place. Immediately after, appeared a second law, which struck still deeper at the vital principle of the colonies, which scarcely could be justified by the most exaggerated ideas of the parliament's authority, and which could not but unavoidably drive to despair, men, who had already been almost impelled to insurrection by an impost tax. This harsh law declared the province of Massachusetts Bay's charter void, and subjected this province, which by its wealth, its constitution hitherto, and the sentiments of its inhabitants, seemed to be more dangerous to the government, than all the rest, to a new organization, grounded on an absolute dependence upon the crown. At the same time, another act of parliament ordained, that persons, who during the tumults in America, had committed offences against public officers, in every case, where the governor should have reason to apprehend that they could have no impartial trial there, should be sent to England for trial; a statute, which according to British ideas, deserved the epithet of tyrannical. Finally, the minister brought into parliament a law, giving to the province of Canada, which had been until then under a merely temporary administration, a constitution entirely different from the forms of the other colonial governments; and however the most recent experience might seem to justify the government, in this step, it could not but produce the most unfavourable operation in the colonies, who believed to read their own future destiny in the treatment of that neighbouring country.

As soon as these measures were known in America, the general indignation, irritated yet further by the reinforcement of the royal troops in Boston, and by various unpleasant circumstances and oppressions, inseparable from this event, was raised to the highest and most dangerous pitch. Instantaneously, through all the colonies but one voice was heard; that the contest with England could be decided only by the sword. Preparations for the most resolute defence were everywhere the great

occupation; exercises of arms became the sole employment of the citizens. A congress of fifty-one deputies from all the provinces assembled on the 4th of September, 1774, at Philadelphia, to consult upon the common grievances, and upon the means of averting the common danger. The first measures of this assembly consisted in a solemn declaration, that the unjust and oppressive proceeding of parliament against the town of Boston, and the province of Massachusetts-Bay, was to be considered as the cause of all the colonies; and in a recommendation to the inhabitants of North America to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, until the just grievances of the colonies should be redressed. Hereupon, the congress resolved upon an address to the British nation, and another to the king of England, in which the distressed situation of North America was delineated with boldness and energy, but at the same time with evident moderation, and in a language, which still deprecated a separation from the mother country, as a very great evil.

It could no longer be concealed to the dullest eye, that the contest with the colonies had assumed a new and formidable character, and had spread to such an extent, as threatened the whole British empire. Yet, nothing is more certain, than that at this decisive moment, it still depended upon the parliament to finish it happily. No resolution, less than that of a total repeal of all the laws, promulgated since 1766, was commensurate with the greatness of the danger; but the thought that the immediate loss of America was at stake, should have reconciled every mind to this only remaining mean of salvation. Unfortunately the deep exasperation, the inflexible pride, the false ambition, all the angry passions, which this cruel system had introduced and nourished, maintained now likewise their predominance; and a fatal error, the opinion that the victory over the colonies would be infallible and easy, entered into an unholy league with all those passions. The parliament, at the beginning of the year 1775, in a remarkable address to the king, declared, that both houses, convinced that a formal rebellion had broken out in the province of Massachusetts-Bay, would faithfully support him in every measure, against rebellious subjects. Immediately afterwards, several laws of unmerciful severity, by which the colonies were deprived of all foreign commerce, and, what was yet harder even of that fishery, upon the coasts of Newfoundland highly essential to their subsistence, passed by great majorities. Some of the

wisest and most venerable statesmen, lord Chatham⁽³⁵⁾, lord Camden, lord Shelburne, in the upper house Edmund Burke, colonel Barré and others in the house of commons, exerted in vain against these desperate resolutions, all the powers of an astonishing eloquence; such as perhaps had never been surpassed. The severed plans of conciliation, which they proposed, were rejected, always with displeasure, sometimes with contempt; the only step towards peace that ever was attempted, rested upon a project of lord North, evidently incompetent to the end; which would scarcely have satisfied the colonies at the outset of the dispute, and certainly could not content them in the year 1775.

The congress assembled, for the second time, in May, 1775, and declared, “that by the violation of the charter of Massachusetts-Bay, the connection between that colony and the crown was dissolved”. The conciliatory bills of lord North were rejected; a *continental army* and a *paper currency* were created; colonel Washington was appointed commander in chief of the American troops, &c. The war at this period had, in fact, broken out; it had been opened by the battle of Lexington, on the 19th of April, and while the congress were adopting these resolutions, a second and much bloodier action took place at Bunker’s hill, where the loss suffered by the English army gave a severe, though unfortunately, a fruitless lesson to those, who had treated with so much contempt the resistance, and the military talents of the Americans.

(35) This great man, who, faithful to the principles of antient policy, and animated with the most unbounded zeal for the glory and welfare of his country, which under his administration had reached the zenith of her greatness, considered the separation of the colonies from England, as the greatest of all evils, said among other things, in a most impressive speech, with which on the 20th of January 1775, he introduced the motion for withdrawing the troops from Boston. “I announce it to you now, my lords, we shall one day be *compelled* to repeal these oppressive regulations, they *must* be repealed; you yourselves will retract them. I pledge myself for it; I stake my reputation upon it; I am content to pass for a block-head, if they are not retracted”.

It is furthermore very remarkable, that the disapprobation of the measures against America, was not confined to the then opposition parties, but was equally shown by several of the principal ministers. The duke of Grafton, who from 1766, to 1770, was first lord of the treasury, and afterwards, from 1771, to 1775, keeper of the seals, had at all times declared himself against the prevailing system; the same sentiments were ascribed to the earl of Dartmouth, secretary of estate for America, lord North himself, who from 1770, was considered as first minister, is said to have manifested often in the deliberations of the cabinet, different principles from those he afterwards supported in parliament. But nothing can be more surprising, than that in one of the most violent debates, which took place in the house of lords, in February 1775, even lord Mansfield, a man in high consideration, and of great talents, but whom the whig party considered as an exaggerated partisan of the crown’s rights, and as one of the most decided enemies of the Americans, carried away by the heat of the contest, formally declared, that the introduction of imposts, in the year 1767, was the most *absurd* and most *pernicious* measure that could have been devised, and had been the real cause of all the subsequent misfortune.

Although every hope of peace had now well nigh vanished, the Congress were not however so far discouraged, as to decline venturing, even at this period, a last attempt as conciliation. They resolved a second address to the king, in which the colonies under the most forcible assurances of their submission, and of their unabated wish to remain united with Great Britain, intreated in the most urgent manner, that his majesty would give his assent to any plan whatsoever, calculated to pacify this wretched contest. The address was presented on the 1st. of September 1775, by Mr. Penn, of Pennsylvania, one of the most respectable citizens of North America, who was informed “that no answer would be given to it”. Soon after the minister brought into parliament the law, which prohibited all intercourse with the colonies, and declared their ships to be lawful prize; a law which was justly considered as a declaration of war against America, and by some as a formal abdication of the right of government over the colonies. At the same time, the king concluded alliances with several German princes, who engaged their troops for a great undertaking; and preparations of every kind announced that force alone was to decide the destiny of the British empire. At the close of the session of parliament in February 1776, the bitterness had attained its highest pitch. Even the evident danger, that foreign powers, and France in particular, might take a part in the disturbances in America, and take advantage of England’s embarrassment, made no impression upon the ministers and the parliament. When some members of the opposition at the beginning of the year 1776, asserted that according to very authentic accounts, a negotiation between the Congress at Philadelphia, and the French court, has already commenced, not only the truth, but even the possibility of this but too well grounded fact was denied. It was maintained “that such an unexampled fascination, could not be supposed in any nation, holding colonies itself in any government wishing to retain, the obedience of their own subjects”. A reasoning, which in itself rested upon very just principles, but which lost all its conclusive *weight* in the mouth of those, who, by a fascination entirely similar, had come to the point of setting at stake, from mere stupid obstinacy, one of their most precious possessions and half the existence of their empire.

Since the last months of the year 1775, the war was ringing in the bowels of the colonies. The language and the resolves of Parliament in the winter of 1775-1776 taught the Americans that it would be a war for life and death. Every bond of union was broken. Against the return of the old happy days the iron hand of inexorable destiny had barred every gate. On the 4th of July 1776, the Congress declared the Independence of the Thirteen United States.

It belongs not to the purpose of the present essay to continue further this cursory historical recapitulation, since I am here speaking only of the *origin* of the American revolution. It is however sufficiently known that the *progress* and the *issue* of the war, completely justified the anticipation of those, who would have avoided it at *any price*. It is equally well known, how much the *consequences* of this war, have put to shame the expectations of all parties. The supporters of the war went upon the principle, that everything must be hazarded to maintain the possession of the colonies, its opponents, upon the principle that everything must be *sacrificed* not to lose them; both concurred therefore in the opinion that this loss would give a deep, and perhaps incurable wound to the British empire. Experience has decided. In a few years after the loss of the colonies, England has again become powerful and flourishing, nay – more powerful and flourishing than ever. And whatever of a hurtful nature, that lay in the influence of this event upon the affairs of Europe, has fallen upon *France* alone upon France, who, according to the general opinion, was to derive the greatest advantages from the American revolution.

If we duly meditate upon the series of facts, which have been here summarily exhibited, and upon others equally certain and authentic, which will be touched upon in the sequel, the following points of comparison will arise, to show in its clearest light the essential difference between the American and French revolutions.

1. The American revolution was grounded partly upon principles, of which the right was *evident* partly upon such, as it was at least very questionable, whether they were not right, and from beginning to end upon no one that was clearly and decidedly wrong; the French revolution was an uninterrupted series of steps; the wrong of which could not, upon rigorous principles, for a moment be doubted.

The question, concerning the *right* of a revolution, has by the frivolous way of thinking, by the shallow sophistry; and even by the immense devastations, and the stupid indifference arisen from them, of this revolutionary age, been in a manner discarded among the idle amusements of scholastic pedants; many who hold themselves for statesmen, think it no longer *worthwhile so much as* to start the question; yet in the eyes of the thinking, of the wise and the good, will it ever remain, the first and the last.

The relation between the inhabitants of a distant colony, and the government of the mother country, is never to be compared in all respects with the relation between the government and their immediate subjects. In the former, there lies always something strained, some thing equivocal, something unnatural; for it cannot be denied the firmest foundation of all sovereignty is the wants of the governed, and those wants are weaker, are more questionable, withdrew themselves, express myself so, from the eyes and the feeling, when the government is a thousand leagues distant from the country, which must obey their laws. Besides all the European states, which founded, or encouraged the foundation of colonies in the other quarters of the globe, considered these colonies, more or less as mere instruments to *enrich* and strengthen the seat of their own power, and treated the people, who inhabited them, merely as the means of an happier, or more agreeable existence for their own. A maxim, which could not easily be reconciled with the general purposes of society, for which the colonies must have as keen sense as the mother country, and with the consciousness of independent stability, to which they must sooner or later attain. Hence, the right of an European nation over their colonies must necessarily always be wavering, insecure, undefined, and often undefinable right. If, however, the form of government in the mother country be simple, and the conditions, upon which the colony was founded, were in themselves clear and definite, then that unavoidable misrelation will be less perceptible. The difficulties on the other hand must be much greater, the collisions more frequent and momentous, when the mother country has a complicated constitution, and when the conditions under which the colonies are connected with her, the rights, which they enjoy by virtue of her particular constitution, the place which they are to hold in that constitution, are not in the precisest manner defined at their very origin.

This was in both points the case with the English colonies, in North America. How far the rights and liberties of a new state, founded by Britons, under the British constitution, should extend, and in what particular relation the inhabitants of such a state should stand, with the several component parts of that mixed constitution? This was a question, which at their origin should have been considered with the utmost attention. This question was never once thought of. The colonies originated at a time, when the British constitution itself had not yet attained its last perfection and consistence⁽³⁶⁾. Their charters all proceeded from the *crown*. The parliament had never taken any part in their settlement.

The internal forms of government of these colonies were as various, as the circumstances, under which they had been founded, or formed. Some of the most important had been granted as hereditary property to private persons, so that these, and their heirs, might govern them entirely as they pleased, and were scarcely more than under a nominal dependence upon the crown. In this manner had Maryland been granted to lord Baltimore; North and South-Carolina to lord Clarendon; in this manner Pennsylvania and Delaware belonged to the family of the celebrated Penn. Others, as New-Hampshire, New-York, New-Jersey, and Virginia, were called royal provinces, and in these the king was considered as the immediate sovereign. Lastly, there was a third class of colonies, which were called privileged and in which the power of the monarch was limited by the original charters. Such was the constitution of Massachusetts, of Rhode Island, and of Connecticut.

The relations between the royal governors, and the provincial assemblies, were in every colony differently defined and modified; but the provincial assemblies were accustomed everywhere, whether the province was originally privileged, royal, or hereditary, more or less, to exercise the right of enacting laws for the internal police of the province of levying taxes for meeting the public exigences of the state, and of

(36) Most of the colonies were founded before the middle of the seventeenth century; all before the revolution of 1688. The province of Georgia, the most southern of the colonies, and which was originally part of South Carolina, was the only one, which received her *separate* constitution since the beginning of this century; (in 1732) and was likewise the only one for the settlement and cultivation of which the British government had been at any cost.

taking an essential part in everything belonging to the administration of the country. In no single colony, however its constitution, in respect to its dependence upon the crown, was organized, was there a trace of a constitutional and legal authority, vested in the British parliament. The charters contained none; no definite law, not so much as a partial statute, enacted in Great-Britain, had ever proclaimed, or even made mention of such an authority.

In the beginning, the parliament considered this their absolute exclusion from the sovereignty over the colonies with great indifference; in the preceding century, the bounds of their power in general were so little defined, that not the smallest doubt has been started against the authority of the king, at his pleasure to give, to grant, to constitute, to privilege, to govern, by himself, or allow to be governed by others, an immense continent in America; this distant and uncultivated land, was besides far too much despised for them to concern themselves about its constitution. But when, on the one side, after the revolution of 1688, the influence of parliament upon all the affairs of government had become greater, firmer, and more general; and when, on the other side, the extraordinary importance of the colonies, in their rapidly growing population, in their constantly improving culture, in their unexpected and splendid flourishing state, was daily more evident, the idea by degrees crept into every mind, that so great and essential a part of the British empire could not possibly be altogether withdrawn from the superintendency of parliament, even though nothing should have been said of it hitherto in the public transactions.

In one single, though truly important point, the parliament had always exercised the legislative power over the colonies, in everything which concerned trade, whether of export, or of import. Although this was precisely the seat of that mighty monopoly, which seemed to give the colonies their whole value, and which, on the other side, could never be so favourable to their progress as liberty would have been, yet they willingly submitted to the regulations and restraints of all kinds, with which the parliament in ample measure provided them. It appeared natural and Equitable to themselves, that the supreme legislative power in the empire, should regulate and direct a concern, which interested not exclusively America, but England too, in a much higher degree. The right

of the parliament, therefore, to prescribe laws to the colonies relating to commerce; and to everything connected with it, was never called in question.

But, as soon as the parliament determined to overstep this right, and to levy taxes in America, without the consent of the local representatives, the most vehement resistance could not fail to break out, and this resistance could as little fail to increase, when, in the progress of the contest, the pretention to bind America by act of parliament, in all cases whatsoever, was advanced, and formally derived from what was called the legal supremacy of parliament. The *omnipotence* of parliament, so often, and so loudly, then resounded by the antagonists of the colonies, was a very just principle for England, but a very invalid one for America. With the parliament, bating the trade laws, to which the colonists submitted from reason and necessity, America had not the least to do. America sent no representatives to parliament, nor did it ever occur to parliament to offer her that power, which would indeed not have been without great difficulties carried into effect. The colonies, nevertheless, possessed all the benefits of the British constitution, and even the greatest part of their forms. Almost in every one of them, there was a *representative assembly*, which supplied the place of a lower house, and a senate, which answered to the house of peers. These assemblies transacted, under the sanction of the monarch, all the affairs, which in England and Ireland were done by the parliaments. They enacted laws, levied taxes, deliberated upon the exigencies, and upon the administration of their provinces. They formed, in concurrence with the king and his governors, a complete government, organised altogether in the spirit of the English constitution, and needed no cooperation of the British parliament. The constitutions of the several provinces, knew only the king, and the provincial representative bodies, and had no more reference to the parliament of Great Britain, than to the parliaments of France. They had existed more than a century without knowing anything of the English parliament, otherwise than by its commercial regulations, which had not always been to them the most agreeable. The pretended right of parliament to prescribe laws and taxes for them, was an arbitrary assumption against which the colonies, according to all legal principles, might proceed exactly as Great Britain would have done, had any of the provincial assemblies undertaken, with

the concurrence of the king, to levy taxes in England or Scotland, or to overthrow the municipal constitution of London or Westminster, as the parliament had overthrown the charter of Massachusetts-Bay.

The resistance of the colonies, and the unavoidable insurrection, which was finally produced by the continuance of the attack, were, therefore, inasmuch as they respected the parliament, perfectly *right*. The parliament was, in regard to the colonies, to be considered as a *foreign power*. So long as this power had remained within the bounds of its silently acknowledged sphere of operation, the colonies had submitted to it. To give laws beyond those bounds, it was as little authorised, as would have been the legislative power of any other nation. The Americans could resist it with the same right, as they might have resisted the States-General of Holland, or the council of the Indies in Madrid, had these undertaken to impose upon them their manufacturing regulations, or stamp taxes.

The question seems to be more difficult, with what right the colonies could likewise resist the king, who, at any rate, was their legal and acknowledged sovereign? But, if in this respect the lawfulness of their conduct be doubtful, it would at least remain a great point, that its unlawfulness could not be clearly proved, and a closer examination will lead us to a result yet far more favourable to the justification of this conduct.

For there is a very evident distinction between an insurrection in a *simple*, and one in a *complicated* or *mixed constitution*. In a simple government, every resistance against the supreme power, is absolutely illegal, and requires no further examination to be condemned. In a mixed government, cases may be imagined, in which the matter is very intricate, and therefore problematic and dubious.

In a mixed government, the supreme power, or the proper sovereign, consists always of several component parts connected together and regulated by the constitution. Each of these parts has its constitutional rights and prerogatives; and those of any one part, though in themselves more important, cannot be more sacred than those of any other. When either of them exceeds its legal bounds, and oppresses, or endeavours to destroy another, this latter, unless the constitution be an empty name, must have the right of resisting; and, unless the war, arising from this

resistance, be not averted by some fortunate expedient; if the old balance cannot again be restored, the contest must necessarily, and *legally* end with the dissolution of the constitution. For between two independent component parts of the supreme power in a state, there can no more be a judge, than between two independent states. That this is a most unfortunate situation for the whole nation, interested in it, is self-evident. The most dreadful circumstance it brings with it, is unquestionably this, that the people in such a controversy never know whom to obey, and whom to resist; for whom to declare, and against whom to act; that all rights and duties are thrown into confusion, and involved in obscurity, and that it becomes a problem, who is within, and who is without the line of insurrection. This evil is inseparable from mixed forms of government⁽³⁷⁾; and however great it may be, its possibility can never be excluded from such constitutions. If, for example, the two houses of the British parliament should make the attempt to enact laws, without the sanction of the king, or the king, without the concurrence of parliament, the injured party would beyond all doubt resist, and resist with energy; nor could any one deny that this resistance, even though it should end in civil war and the ruin of the constitution, was perfectly lawful.

The American colonies were precisely in this, or at least in an extremely similar situation. Their constitution before the revolution was evidently a monarchy, more or less limited by the influence of their provincial assemblies. The legislative and executive powers were divided between the king and the provincial assemblies, as in England, between the king and the two houses of parliament. The king and his governor had only a negative upon acts of legislation, and the provincial assemblies in most of the colonies had a considerable share in the government. In all the provinces (Pennsylvania since 1700 excepted) these assemblies were divided into two houses, closely corresponding in their functions, with the two branches of the British parliament. The lower house, or

the representative assembly possessed everywhere the exclusive right of prescribing taxes. In some colonies, for instance, in Maryland, the king, by the charter, *had expressly* renounced all right of taxation. In several others he had, in the literal sense of the word, only reserved the empty title of sovereignty. Connecticut and Rhode-Island were perfect democracies. The colonial assemblies of these provinces chose their governors without the confirmation of the king, and dismissed them at pleasure; they allowed no appeals from their courts of justice; their laws required no royal assent; nay, what is more remarkable, and a proof of their absolute independence, their charters granted them even the right of peace and war.

The king's power was, therefore, in all the colonies, more or less limited; in some, to such a degree that it could not be compared with his legitimate power in Great Britain; and the colonial assemblies had a constitutional right to resist him, when he violated their constitutional powers. Now, the measures of the ministry, from 1764, were evident attacks, upon those powers. Whether the parliament had advised, or confirmed those attacks, was, as we have before shewn, nothing to the colonies; they had to do only with the king, and the king, according to their constitutions, could levy no taxes, but such as the provincial assemblies proposed. The stamp-act of 1764, was, therefore a violation of their rights; the impost act of 1767, was a violation of their rights; the act of 1770, which maintained the tea-tax to support the supremacy of parliament, was a gross, and what was worst of all, an insulting violation of their rights. To punish them for their constitutional resistance against these unconstitutional resolves, was a revoking injustice; the mode of punishment (the Boston port-bill, the bill to abolish the Massachusetts charter, &c.) was not merely a violation, it was an entire dissolution of their rights. It was nothing more, than the proclamation of a *fact* when the congress, in 1775, declared, "that by the abolition of the Massachusetts charter, *the connection between that province and the crown was dissolved*". No resource was left but that of repelling force by force. The convocation of their first congress, was in itself not an illegal measure. This congress exercised originally only the same rights, which were unquestionably within the powers of every provincial assembly. It represented a legal resistance, and sought the means of preserving to

(37) This is undoubtedly the greatest failing that can be objected against mixed governments. Fortunately, however, it must be acknowledged, that the probability of such a dissolution is more remote in proportion as the constitution approaches nearer to perfection. For the more easily one of the constituted authorities can resist the other, by its appropriate weight, the less will be the necessity of appealing to arms. On the other hand, the more imperfect the balance is, the greater will be the danger of a civil war. In this lies properly the decided superiority of the British constitution, above all other complicated forms of government, that ever were, or probably ever will be devised.

America the constitution she had hitherto possessed. It was not until after the ministry had spurned at peace, rejected every proposal of conciliation, and finally required unconditional submission, that is, had *dissolved the constitution* that the congress proceeded to the declaration, which substituted a new government, in the stead of that which was destroyed.

Had the colonies had the design (and it cannot be denied that they manifested it clearly enough) in this whole contest to separate the king completely from the parliament, all the means were taken away from them of regulating their conduct, according to a system founded upon such a separation. The most intimate union subsisted between the ministry and the parliament; nor was it possible to resist the one, without quarrelling with the other. The king confirmed the hostile acts of parliament; he ceased to be the constitutional monarch of the colonies, and entered into an alliance with those, whom they considered as usurpers in a legal point of view. Had the king of England allied himself with a foreign power (and in a constitutional sense the parliament was no other to the colonies) against the parliament of Great-Britain, how would it be possible for the parliament to arm against this foreign power, and yet spare the king of England? Or rather, would not the mere undertaking of such an alliance include within itself an immediate justification of every defensive measure taken by the injured party, and an absolute renunciation of the constitution.

I think I have here sufficiently developed the first point in the comparison I proposed, that which relates to the conduct of North-America; there now remains only the easy task of exhibiting the second, which relates to the conduct of France.

The single period of the disturbances in France, when mention was made of militating rights was that in which the parliaments took part, in 1787 and 1788. If the prerogatives of these parliaments were not so great and so unquestionable, as they would have represented them, yet their appeal to them gave at least a colour of lawfulness to their undertakings. That period, however, is to be considered only as preparatory to the real revolution.

From the breaking out of this revolution, the question as to the *lawfulness* of what the popular leaders did, was never (an extraordinary,

yet an indubitable fact!) starred. The word *right* would have vanished from the French language, had not an imaginary right of the *nation* to do whatever they, or their representatives should please, appeared as a sort of substitute for all other rights.

This is not the place to analyse this *right of the nation* sometimes likewise called *right of man* a sort of magic spell, with which all the ties of nations and of humanity were insensibly dissolved. Those, who were serious in advancing, grounded it upon the chimerical principle of the sovereignty of the people, which I have endeavoured upon another occasion to elucidate. Thus much is certain, that the leaders of the revolution, under the shelter of this talisman, spared themselves and others the trouble of enquiring into the lawfulness of their proceedings; for in their system, all was right, which they resolved upon in the name of the *people*, or in the name of mankind.

In order to judge of their actions, according to their deserts, they must be snatched away from the tribunal they have erected for themselves, and placed at another bar, whose laws accord better with the dictates of uncorrupted reason, and the eternal prescriptions of *real right*.

When the deputies of the states, assembled together in the year 1789, they had beyond all doubt the *right*, to undertake great reforms in the government, and even in the constitution of the French monarchy. This right, however, they could exercise only under the three following conditions. First, that they should observe the general forms of an assembly of the states in France, until these forms should in a *lawful* manner be abolished, or changed. Secondly, that their laws should not have the force of laws, until assented to by the monarch. And, thirdly, that they should follow the instructions, given them by their constituents.

In less than six weeks, they had broken through these three fundamental conditions. The deputies of the third state, without the least authority, and with a shameful violation of the rights of the other states, declared that themselves alone constituted the national assembly.

When the king endeavoured to bring them back from this monstrous usurpation to their proper limits, they declared to him that they persisted in it, formally renounced obedience to him, and reduced him finally to the necessity of commanding the two other estates to acknowledge the usurpation.

That in the immeasurable carrier, which these two first successful acts of violence, had opened, they might no longer meet resistance from any quarter, they declared that the instructions of their constituents were not binding upon them.

They had proceeded thus far, when, partly by their influence and example partly by faults of the court, which need not be considered here, where the question only relates to *right*, the general rebellion broke out in Paris and in all the provinces. Far from *disapproving* this rebellion, which, in perfect contrast with the rising of the people in America, had not the most distant connection with the lawful objects of the national assembly, they cherished and fostered it, gave it legislative force and consistence, conferred civic crowns upon its authors, called it an holy and virtuous insurrection, and took care to have it maintained in a continual flame, during the whole period of their government.

Under the shadow of this insurrection, they, who had placed themselves at its head, and taken upon themselves all responsibility, in a period of two years ran through the most remarkable circle of violation of all rights public and private, that the world ever beheld. They drew up, without ever so much as *asking the free assent of the king*, a constitution so called, the incompetency, the impracticability, the ridiculous absurdity of which was so great, that, even among its authors – (another unexampled yet indubitable fact) not a single man would ever have seriously defended it. This constitution they compelled the king, upon pain of being immediately dethroned, to subscribe and swear to.

Scarcely had this happened, when their successors, who by virtue of this constitution alone, had a sort of legal existence, and held something resembling an authority to shew, instead of governing and quieting the state according to this constitution, directed all their secret, and what was still more revolting, all their public measures to its destruction. In less than a year they succeeded in effecting this new usurpation. Without so much as having a *legal pretext* they suspended the constitution, dethroned the king, assumed to themselves, still forsooth *in the name of the people*, the power of calling a *national convention*, and proclaimed the republic, with fewer formalities, than a man would use to change his dress. By long habit dead to every sentiment of *right*, tormented by all the furies, plunged by their frantic measures, by crimes, and calamities

of every kind into the lowest depth of criminal fool-hardiness, they now proclaimed against humanity and all its rights, a formal, irreconcilable war; and to shut behind them every door for return, and to snap the last thread by which they still held together with a lawful existence, they finally murdered justice herself, in the person of the most conscientious and upright monarch, who had ever adorned a throne.

The French revolution, therefore, began by a violation of rights, every step of its progress was a violation of rights and it was never easy, until it had succeeded to establish absolute wrong, as the supreme and acknowledged maxim of a state completely dissolved, and yet existing only in bloody ruins.

2. The American revolution was from beginning to end, on the part of the Americans, merely a *defensive revolution*; the French was from beginning to end, in the highest sense of the word, an *offensive revolution*.

This difference of itself is essential and decisive; upon it rests, perhaps more than upon any other, the peculiar character, which has distinguished these two revolutions.

The British government began the revolution in America by resolves, for which they could shew no right; the colonies endeavoured by all means in their power to repel them. The colonies wished to maintain old constitution; the government destroyed it. The resistance, which the colonies opposed against the mother country, was, in every period of this unhappy contest, exactly commensurate with the attack; the total separation was not resolved, until the utter impossibility of preserving the ancient condition was proved.

The stamp-act threw America into the most violent commotion; tumultuous scenes, though attended with no acts of bloody violence, broke out in all the provinces⁽³⁸⁾. But they were nowhere formally sanctioned by the approbation of the legislative authorities. The little congress of 28 deputies of several colonies, who in the year 1765 assembled at New-York, and served as the model for the subsequent larger assembly, passed no other resolution than that “the colonies could only be taxed by their representatives”, and expressed this perfectly lawful resolve, in *petitions*

(38) In many places the public officers appointed to collect the stamp-tax, were hanged up, or beheaded; but all, only in *effigy*.

to the king. The single general measure, which was then offered, the non-importation agreement, was a voluntary engagement, sanctioned by no public authority.

The *declaratory act*, which appeared in the year 1766, together with the repeal of the stamp-tax, could not possibly be agreeable to the colonies since it expressly and solemnly maintained the right of the British parliament to bind them by law in all cases whatsoever. Yet was this act received with great and remarkable tranquillity; and had the British government, from that time forward, given up forever their unhappy innovations; had they continued to govern the colonies, according to the old constitutional principles, there never would have been uttered a complaint against the declaratory act. It was long afterwards, and when the colonies had been provoked by repeated attacks of every kind, to the utmost extremity, that the provincial assembly of Massachusetts-Bay, declared that statute, an oppression.

The resistance against the impost taxes of 1767, was of the same nature, as that which the stamp-tax had experienced. This new grievance of the colonies, was accompanied with circumstances of the most odious kind: the augmentation of the troops, the conduct of a part of them, the hardness of some governors, the frequent adjournments and violent dissolution of the provincial assemblies, all was calculated to put the patience of the Americans to dangerous proof. And yet they never overstepped the boundaries, which the constitution and the laws prescribed to them; and in their numerous addresses and protestations, adhered rigorously to what was allowed by law. When in the year 1770, a violent quarrel arose between some of the royal soldiers, and certain citizens of Boston, which ended in the first bloody scene the colonies had in their contest with England yet witnessed, the courts of law with a glorious impartiality, acquitted the greatest part of the accused and indicted soldiers.

The continuation of the tax upon tea in the year 1770, had no other consequence than to strengthen the voluntary agreement against the importation of English tea; the resolve in the year 1773, which authorised the East-India company to the exportation of their stores of tea, free from duty, and the actual execution of this resolve, could not, indeed but produce a still more unfavourable operation. This measure was

altogether calculated to provoke the colonies to a general insurrection. Yet did they keep themselves rigorously within the limits of a necessary defence. The destruction of the tea at Boston was, in fact, no other than a defensive operation. The sale of this tea, or only a part of, would have involved the compulsive levy of a tax, by the payment of which the constitution of the colonies and all their rights would have been lost. Yet, even then, they proceeded not beyond what was unavoidable, and measured the resistance as exactly as possible by the attack. The tea was thrown into the sea, and not a single hostile step followed upon this undertaking. Nay, although the public authorities of Boston, and of the whole province, held it for necessary, as much as every single citizen, yet they always undeniably discovered themselves ready to grant the fullest indemnity to the East-India company.

Had the ministry, at this period, been contented with an equitable satisfaction; had they, if they must punish, been content to inflict tolerable and proportionable punishments, there is no doubt but America would have remained with her old, constitution. Although a great part of the inhabitants of the colonies, in expectation of a distressing and stormy futurity, urged for energy and for arming, yet was this temper still far from being common. It is, for example, a certain fact, that in the important province of Pennsylvania, the majority of the citizens would have voted against taking a part in the measures at Boston, had not the excessive and unwise harshness of the parliament, in a short time, inflamed and united all minds.

The appearance of the act, which dosed the port of Boston, of that which, immediately after, took away the Massachusetts charter, the account of all what had passed in parliament upon that occasion, the visible impossibility of eradicating peaceably such deep rooted bitterness – all these circumstances concurred to render a sudden explosion probable; many of the resolves of parliament were indisputably of a nature to furnish sufficient motive for such an explosion. But the provincial assemblies contented themselves with sending deputies to a general congress. Not one over hasty step disturbed the pacific and lawful character of their conduct in this hard and trying period.

The congress, which assembled at Philadelphia, spoke with energetic freedom of the constitutional rights of the colonies, and of the oppressive

measures of parliament; but their first resolves were more moderate, than perhaps England herself had expected. An invitation to a general agreement against all trade with Great-Britain was the only active step they allowed themselves; and after all what the parliament had done, this step was of little importance, how far they were remote, even then, from a total separation, and how much the conduct of the colonies deserved the name of a lawful defence, may be learned from the following conclusion of the remarkable address, which this congress immediately before separating, sent to the king.

“We ask only for peace, liberty and security. We wish no diminution of royal prerogatives, we demand *no new rights*. From the magnanimity and justice of your majesty, and the parliament, we promise ourselves the redress of our grievances; firmly convinced, that when once the causes of our present complaints are removed, our future conduct will not be undeserving of the milder treatment, to which we were in better days accustomed. We call that Being, who tries the inmost heart, to witness, that no other motive, than the fear of the destruction, which threatens us, has had any influence upon our resolutions. We therefore intreat your majesty as the loving father of all your people, bound to you by the ties of blood, by laws, affection, and fidelity, not to permit, in the uncertain expectation of a result, which never can compensate for the wretchedness by which it must be attained, any further violation of those sacred ties. So may your majesty in a long and glorious reign, enjoy every earthly bliss, and this bliss, and your undiminished authority descend upon your heirs and their heirs, till time shall be no more”.

The American agents in London, Bollen, Franklin and Lee, petitioned to be heard in support of this address, at the bar of the parliament. Their request was rejected.

Soon after, this cruel act, which deprived the colonies of all navigation, and even of the fishery, obtained the force of law; and the very moment, when this harsh law was past, was chosen to make the only proposal of conciliation, which the parliament had ever offered. According to this proposal, which is known by the name of lord North's Conciliatory Plan, every colony, whose representatives would engage to deliver their proportional contribution to the exigencies of the

empire, and raise besides the costs of their internal administration, *provided* their offers should be approved by the king and parliament, was to be secured in the exemption from all further taxation. Not to mention that the only object of this plan notoriously was to divide the colonies, that it was offered them by an armed hand, that the *suspicious proviso* made the favourable consequences of its acceptance extremely doubtful, it properly decided the true point of contest, in a manner wholly contradictory to the principles of the Americans. The parliament renounced a right which notoriously did not belong to them. But they renounced it, only to exercise, once for all, what they had wished to exercise by piecemeal. The injustice and inconsistency of this proposal could not for a moment escape the notice of the colonies. The second general congress, which assembled on the 10th of May, 1775, rejected it upon grounds, the force of which must be felt by every impartial mind. “Should we accede”, say they, in their answer to this proposal, “we should expressly declare a wish to purchase the favour of parliament, without knowing at what price it would be set. We hold it superfluous to extort from us, by violence or threats a proportional contribution, to meet the general exigencies of the state, since all the world knows, and the parliament must themselves acknowledge, that whenever thereto required, in a constitutional manner, we have always richly contributed. It is unjust to require permanent contributions of the colonies, so long as Great-Britain possesses the monopoly of their trade; this monopoly is, in itself, the heaviest of all contributions. It is unjust to wish to tax us doubly. If we must contribute in like proportion with the other parts of the empire, allow us, like them too, a free trade with all the world”. These unanswerable arguments were at an immeasurable distance from the language of insolent rebellion.

When, finally, the congress resolved upon the general arming of the country, *defence* was still their single, and exclusive object. The constitution had been long since, without their fault, torn to pieces; they might have proclaimed immediately a new one upon its ruins; but they appealed to arms, to maintain the same constitution, of which the colonies had been, with so much violence, deprived.

The surest proof of this glorious moderation was, that they themselves, after the actual breaking out of hostilities, and when a great

part of the inhabitants of America, urged for more energetic measures, did not omit another attempt by petitions, and remonstrances, to attain the end of their wishes. In the midst of the most vigorous preparations for a desperate defence, they resolved, in the month of July, 1775⁽³⁹⁾, another address to the king, to which was given the inviting and significant name of the *olive branch*. Even in this last address, we read with astonishment, among other things, as follows; “Devoted to the person, the family, and the government of your majesty, with all the attachment, which only principle and feeling can inspire, connected with Great-Britain, by the strongest ties that can unite human societies together, deeply afflicted at every event that may weaken this connection, we most solemnly assure your majesty, that we wish nothing more ardently than the restoration of the former harmony between England and the colonies, and a new union, founded upon a lasting basis, capable of propagating that blessed harmony to the latest generations, and transmit to a grateful posterity your majesty’s name, surrounded with that immortal glory which was in every age bestowed upon the saviours of the people. We protest to your majesty, that notwithstanding all our sufferings in this unhappy contest the hearts of your faithful colonists are far from wishing a reconciliation upon conditions, which could be inconsistent with the dignity, or the welfare of the state from which they sprung, and which they love with filial tenderness. If the grievances, which now bow us down with inexpressible pain to the ground, could in any manner be removed, your majesty will at all times find your faithful Subjects in America, willing and ready, with their lives and fortunes to maintain, preserve, and defend the rights and interests of their sovereign, and of their mother country”. This was the address, which Mr. Penn, on the 1st of September, 1775, delivered to the earl of Dartmouth, upon which, some days after, he was informed, *that no answer could be given*. It was not until after this last attempt had proved

(39) Shortly before, the congress are said to have resolved upon a declaration, by virtue of which, the colonies offered, „not only for the future, in the time of war, to pay extraordinary contributions, but likewise, provided they were allowed a free trade, for an hundred years, to pay an annual sum, sufficient in that period to extinguish the whole British national debt”, and to have been deterred from giving their last sanction to this declaration, only by the account of new hostile measures of the parliament. This highly remarkable fact I mention however only upon the authority of a single writer, a very severe antagonist of the ministry, though otherwise very well informed. Belsham’s Memoirs of George III. Vol. 2. p. 166.

fruitless, after an unmerciful statute had outlawed American ships, and the levying of foreign troops left them only the choice between the dissolution of their constitution, with unconditional submission, and the same dissolution with the free choice of a new one, that the congress passed the resolve, which reason and necessity prescribed, and declared the colonies independent, because independence was a smaller evil than dependence upon arbitrary will; and their painfully maintained, and painfully defended dependence upon the old laws, was lost forever.

The revolution of America was, therefore, in every sense of the word, a revolution of necessity: England, alone, had by violence effected it: America had contended ten years long, not against England, but against the revolution: America sought not a revolution; she yielded to it, compelled by necessity, not because she wished to extort a better condition than she had before enjoyed, but because she wished to avert a worse one, prepared for her.

Exactly the contrary of all this, was the case in France. The French revolution was *offensive* in its origin offensive in its progress, offensive in its whole compass, and in every single characteristic moment of its existence. As the American revolution had exhibited a model of moderation in defence so the French one displayed an unparalleled example of violence and inexorable fury in attack. As the former had always kept the vigour of its defensive measures in rigorous proportion to the exigency, so the latter, from the weakness of the resistance made against it, became more and more violent and terrible, the more cause it had to grow milder.

Could the destroyers of a throne, could the teachers and heroes of a revolutionary age, themselves have formed the character of a prince, under whom they would begin their dreadful experiment, they never could have succeeded better, than in that, which a cruel destiny delivered into their hands. Lewis the 16th promoted the revolution by all the good, and by all the weak sides of his character. He was certainly not equal to the circumstances, under which he had to act, and to the dangers, which he was to overcome, but what rendered his want of energy truly fatal, were his virtues. Had he been less honourable, less benevolent, less humane, less conscientious, perhaps he might yet have saved the monarchy. The unhappy certainty that it was impossible for him so much

as for a moment, to be a tyrant, made him and the state the victims of the most shameful and most revolting tyranny that the world had ever seen. His noble readiness to encourage everything which assumed the name of reform, drew him into the first false steps, which shook his throne. His horror of violence tore the sceptre from his benevolent hands. His integrity was the best ally of those, who plunged France and him into the precipice.

He looked with satisfaction towards that assembly of the states, whose effects had in the council of the wicked been long prepared. They rewarded him by the decrees, which excluded him from the government of the kingdom. He would not suffer his troops to use force against the first insurgents. They rewarded him by the general insurrection of the capital and of all the provinces. He endeavoured, even after having lost all his power, and tasted the bitterest afflictions, such as a dethroned monarch only can know, still to turn the evil to good. They improved this insurmountable royal temper, this pure and real civism, to be guilty with less interruption, while he continued to hope; and to crush him with the load of their present crimes, while he looked forward to a better futurity.

It may boldly be maintained almost everything that has been said of the resistance of the court and of the great, of their conspiracies, of their cabals against the revolution, was merely a wretched fable. That the injured, the oppressed, the plundered could be no friends to their oppressors and plunderers is self-evident; as far as mere hatred is resistance, there was an enormous mass of resistance against the revolution; the leaders had themselves created these internal, these secret hostilities, of which they so often complained. They must have extirpated human nature herself to secure to themselves forgiveness, or a disposition to favour their cruel operations. But, throughout their whole career, they met with no active resistance, and the only circumstance, which could spread a varnish of credibility over their incessant fictions of plots, counter-revolutions, &c. was, that they *deserved* all, that they pretended to suffer.

If we follow this revolution through all its periods, we shall find that the strongest motive for effecting any greater usurpation, for maintaining any greater injustice, for committing any greater crime, constantly was, that a smaller one had immediately before succeeded. The single motive

for using persecutions, was, that the victims had already suffered others. This was the character of the French revolution, in wholesale and in retail. The sufferers were punishable, merely because they had suffered; in this bitterest of all offensive wars, they seemed so cautiously to shun everything that made a shew of resistance, that they sooner forgave a struggling, than a defenceless, enemy.

The relics of the old constitution were not so much boundaries to the omnipotent desolating power of the revolution, as land-marks, designating its victorious progress. The constitution, of 1791, was only a short and voluntary pause; a sort of resting point, at which nobody meant long to wait. The second national assembly did not make a pass, no, not one, which was not an attack upon some ruin or other of the monarchy. The establishment of the republic did not satisfy its authors, the execution of the king scarcely appeased the ravenousness of his butchers, for a single instant. In the year 1793 the thirst for destruction had gone so far, that it was at a loss for an object. The well known saying, that Robespierre meant to reduce the population of France by one half, had its foundation in the lively sense of the impossibility of satisfying the hitherto insatiate revolution, with any thingless, than such a hecatomb.

When there was nothing more left in the country to attack, the offensive frenzy turned itself against the neighbouring states, and finally declared war in solemn decrees against all civil society. It was certainly not the want of will in those, who then conducted this war, if Europe preserved anything, besides "bread and iron". Fortunately, no strength was great enough long to support such a will. The unavoidable exhaustion of the assailants, and not the power or the merit of the resistance made, saved society; and, finally, brought the workshops themselves, where the weapons for its destruction were forged, within its beneficent bonds again.

As the American revolution was a defensive revolution, it was of course finished, at the moment, when it had overcome the attack, by which it had been occasioned. The French revolution, true to the character of a most violent offensive revolution, could not but proceed so long as there remained objects for it to attack, and it retained strength for the assault.

3. The American revolution, at every stage of its duration, had a fixed and definite object, and moved within definite limits, and by a definite

direction towards this object. The French revolution never had a definite object; and, in a thousand various directions, continually crossing each other, ran through the unbounded space of a fantastic arbitrary will, and of a bottomless anarchy.

It lay in the very nature of a defensive revolution, like that of America, to proceed from definite objects, and to pursue definite ends. The peculiar situation, and the peculiar character of the North-Americans confirmed and secured this moderate and beneficent quality to the progress of their revolution.

In the course of it, two principal periods may be observed; *that*, from the first breaking out of the contests in 1765 until the declaration of independence in 1776, and *that*, from this declaration, until the peace with England.

In the first period, the single towns and provinces, and afterwards the members of the general congress, had for their declared and sole object the salvation of their constitution, and of their rights and liberties, as they then stood, from the oppressive usurpations of the British parliament. And I think I have clearly shown, in the former sections of this essay, that every step they took, during that critical period was calculated for preservation, not for conquest, for resistance against innovations, not for ardour after them; for defence, not for attack.

In the second period, indeed, a new object came in the place of that, which they had until then pursued: the British parliament had compelled the congress to proclaim the independence of the colonies; but, even this decisive measure by no means threw America into the precipice of lawlessness, into the horrible gulph of an unmeasurable interregnum, or into the slippery career of wild and chimerical theories – The machine of government was, and remained, completely organized: the revolution had taken from the king his negative upon legislative acts, almost the only essential prerogative, which as sovereign of the colonies he immediately exercised: but every province took care that this important function should be performed by another authority, distinct from the legislature, and Georgia and Pennsylvania, were the only ones, which entrusted the legislative powers to an undivided senate. The royal governors, who till then had stood at the head of the executive power, were replaced by others, chosen, by the provinces themselves; and as the former governors,

owing to their great distance from the mother country, had always held powers in the highest degree discretionary and independent, this alteration could not be much felt – The great and immediate exigences of social life, the local administration, the police, and course of judicial proceeding were continued as before. Nothing but the loose tie, which had connected America with England, was broken; none of the internal relations were discomposed; all the laws remained in force; the condition of persons and of property suffered no other revolution, than that, which was necessarily brought with it! “The people, says that very well informed American historian Dr. Ramsay, scarcely perceived that an alteration in their political constitution had taken place”.

As the founders and conductors of the American revolution, from the beginning, knew exactly how far they were to go, and where they must stop; as the new existence of their country, the constitutions of the several provinces, and even the organization of the federal government, at least in its principles was definitely prescribed to them; as their purpose was in no sort to create, but only to preserve, not to erect a new building, but to free the old one from an external, burdensome, straitening scaffolding, and as it never occurred to them, in the rigorous sense of the word, to *reform*, even their own country, much less the whole world, they escaped the most dangerous of all the rocks, which in our times threaten the founders of any great revolution, the deadly passion for making political experiments with abstract theories, and untried systems. It is of the utmost importance, in judging the American revolution, never to lose sight of this point, and by so much the more important, as certain expressions in the early resolves of congress, the maxims of single writers, but especially the frequent appeals of the first leaders of the French revolution to the example of their predecessors in America, have encouraged, and spread abroad the opinion that these, in truth, opened the wide field of revolutionary speculations, and of systematic anarchy – True it is, that the declaration of independence published by the congress, in the name of the colonies, is preceded by an introduction, in which the *natural* and *unalienable* rights of mankind are considered as the foundation of all government; that after this assertion, so indefinite, and so exposed to the greatest misconstructions, follow certain principles, no less indefinite, no less liable to be abused,

from which an inference might be drawn of the unlimited right of the people to change their form of government, and what in the new revolutionary language, is called their *sovereignty*. It is likewise true, that most of the constitutions of the United States, are preceded by those idle *declaration of rights*, so dangerous in their application, from which so much misery has at a later period been derived upon France, and the whole civilized world. Much, however, as it were to be wished, that the legislators of America had disdained this empty pomp of words, that they had exclusively confined themselves within the clear and lawful motives of their resistance; a resistance at first constitutional, and afterwards necessary, and within the limits of their incontrovertible rights, yet it cannot escape the observation of those, who attentively study the history of their revolution, that they allowed to these speculative ideas, no visible influence upon their practical measures and resolves – They erroneously believed them necessary to justify their first steps⁽⁴⁰⁾; but here dominion of empty speculation, was forever abandoned – Never, in the whole course of the American revolution, were the *rights of man* appealed to, for the destruction of the *rights of a citizen*; never was the sovereignty of the people used as a pretext to undermine the respect; due to the laws, or the foundations of social security; no example was ever seen of an individual, or a whole class of individuals, of even the representatives of this, or that single state, who recurred to the declaration of rights, to escape from positive obligation, or to renounce obedience to the common sovereign; finally, never did it enter the head of any legislator, or statesman in America, to combat the lawfulness of foreign constitutions, and to set up the American revolution, as a new epocha in the general relations of civil society.

What was here and there occasionally said by single writers, must carefully be distinguished from the principles and way of thinking of those Americans, who were acknowledged and revered as examples and authorities, but especially from those, who took an active part in the new government. There certainly was in America, a Thomas Paine; and I will

(40) I believe that in the first section of this Essay, I have completely shown the lawfulness of the American revolution upon legal principles; and yet in that analysis, it will be found, that the sphere of unalienable rights of man, and the sovereignty of the people, and the like principles, are not once touched upon.

not deny but that his celebrated work had influence among certain classes of people, and so far contributed to promote the revolution⁽⁴¹⁾. But to judge of the spirit and principles of the American revolution by this work, would be as unjust, as to confound the efficaciously active heads in the English revolution of 1688, with the authors of some popular lampoon against the house of Stewart; or the opposition of lord Chatham with that of Mr. Wilkes. When Paine's work appeared, in the year 1776, the American revolution had long since assumed its whole form and consistence, and the principles, which will forever characterize it stood firm. In no public resolve; in no public debate, in no state paper of congress is the most distant expression to be found, which discovers either a formal, or a tacit approbation of systematical revolutionary policy. And what a contrast between the wild extravagant, rhapsodical declamation of a Paine, and the mild, moderate, and considerate tone in the speeches and letters of a Washington.

(41) The general opinion, and the unanimous testimony of all the known writers upon American affairs, leave scarce room for a doubt of this fact, though for the honour of the Americans I would most willingly call it in question. His "*Common Sense*" is a pamphlet just as contemptible, almost throughout just as remote from sound human sense, as all the others by which, in later times, he has made himself a name. To appreciate the character and tendency of this work, which, perhaps, has never been judged as it deserves, and to obtain a full conviction that it was solely calculated to make an impression upon the mass of the people, and especially upon certain religious sects very extensively spread in America, the reader has only to remark the spirit of the author's favourite arguments, which are all drawn from the *Old Testament*, and the absurd reasoning, with which he attacks, not the king of England, but monarchy, in general, which he treats as an *ungodly* invention. If *such a work* could have produced the American revolution, it would have been best for reasonable men to concern themselves no longer with that event. But it was certainly at all times, by the wiser and better men, considered, endured, and perhaps encouraged, only as an instrument to gain over weaker minds to the common cause.

The difference between this writer and the great authorities of the American revolution, such as Dickenson, John Adams, Jay, Franklin, &c. will be still more apparent, if we remark a similar difference between the two parties in England, which accidentally concurring in the same object, but differing infinitely from each other in the choice of means and arguments, declared themselves there in favour of that revolution. Whoever, compares, for example, the writings of Dr. Price, (who notwithstanding his numerous errors, deserves not, however, to be put in the same class with Paine), with the speeches and writings of Burke during the American war, will sometimes be scarcely able to convince himself that both were contending for one and the same thing. And, indeed, it was only nominally, and not substantially, one and the same thing, for which they argued.

Another indirect, but not unimportant, proof of the accuracy and necessity of the distinction here pointed out, lies in the unquestionable aversion of most of the great statesmen in America to the French revolution, and to all what since 1789, has been called revolutionary principles. A remarkable anecdote occurs, testified by a witness unobjectionable upon this point, by Brissot, a man afterwards but too famous; an anecdote which proves how early this aversion had taken place. In a conversation which, shortly before the breaking out of the French revolution, he had with Mr. John Adams, now President of the United States, this gentleman assured him he was firmly convinced, that France, by the approaching revolution, would not even attain the degree of political liberty enjoyed by England; and what is most important, he denied, in perfect consistency with his pure and rigorous principles, that the French had a right to affect such a revolution as they intended. Brissot attempted in vain by appeals to the original compact, to the imprescriptibly of the rights of the people, and the like revolutionary rant, to combat him. – P. Nouveau Voyage dans les Etats Unis de l'Amérique, par Brissot. Vol. I. p. 147.

The preciseness of objects, the uniformity of means, and the moderation of principles, which distinguished the American revolution through all its periods, gave likewise to the war, which was carried on for its establishment and completion, a precise and definite, and, therefore, a less formidable character. With this war indeed, the whole train of evils, which usually attend upon war in general, and especially upon civil war, were connected. But as it had only one object, and that was clearly known, and confined within narrow bounds, its possible results, its possible consequences, and its possible duration, could in every case be calculated. America had either to maintain or to give up her independence; in this single alternative was included the whole fate of the contest; and whatever consequence either event might operate upon a distant futurity, neither the victory of the British parliament, nor that (which very early became more probable) of the American congress, could discompose the balance of Europe, or threaten its peace. The governments of our hemisphere could, with all the tranquillity of a perfect neutrality, look forward to the issue of a remote contest, which, without further danger to their external and internal political relations, opened an advantageous prospect to the European commerce. The congress might even form an alliance with one of the greatest European monarchies; for as they only wished to maintain clear and definite rights, as they owed their existence to a revolution, which was forced upon the colonies by external violence, as they had at no time, and in no way, so much as called in question, much less attacked, the lawfulness of other constitutions, and as they had declared war, not against monarchical principles, but only against the oppressive measures of the British ministry, there was, *in itself* nothing unnatural, nothing revolting, nothing plainly irreconcilable with the maxims of the law of nations, and the laws of self-preservation, in the alliance, which France contracted with them⁽⁴²⁾.

(42) I purposely say, there was nothing of *itself* illegal in this alliance. For France found the independence of the colonies already founded, when she contracted an alliance with them, and might besides not shrink from the question as to the lawfulness of this independence. Nothing of *itself* unnatural, or self destructive; for the principles of the Americans contained immediately nothing, which could in any manner be dangerous to the existence of the French monarchy: and the political and commercial interests of this monarchy seemed in a manner to force its taking a part in the American revolution.

All this however notwithstanding, I believe, with the most intimate conviction, that a more profound

The peace, which concluded the American war, secured that existence independent of England, to the new federal republic for which she had alone and exclusively contended, and immediately after, this republic entered into those peaceable and beneficent relations with all other states, and even with England herself, which the common wants, and the common laws of nations have founded between civilized states. It is true; the American revolution had in latter times a decisive influence upon the great devastations under which Europe groans to this hour; but it would be the highest injustice not to acknowledge that this influence was only accidental. In the origin of that revolution there was nothing that could justify another, or even revolutions in general; no state, other than one, in which all the extraordinary circumstances concurring in the case of the colonies, should again concur, could consider the conduct observed by these, as legitimating a similar conduct, and adopt the principles upon which they proceeded. The precision and lawfulness of their object refused every application of these principles to revolutions, which could not exhibit an object equally definite, and a right equally clear, to the pursuit of that object. The wise moderation, which the leaders of the American revolution introduced into all their declarations, and into every step they took, their glorious abhorrence of every extravagance, even of those proceeding from the most pardonable enthusiasm, the constant distance at which they kept from everything that may be called proselyting and propagandism – all these happy characteristics of their undertaking must in a legal point of view forever secure humanity against all evil consequences of this revolution; whose

policy than that of the count de Vergennes, and a larger and more comprehensive view into futurity, would have prevented France from contracting that alliance. Not to mention the false calculation which burdened with a new debt of one thousand millions of livres, a state already very much disordered in its finances, in order to do its rival, in the most favourable contingency, an uncertain damage. The whole undertaking was resolved on without any real political regard to its remote consequences. The lawfulness of the American revolution, might be ever so clearly demonstrated to a man capable of judging of its origin and of appreciating the grounds upon which it was supported; the time might come, when without regard to the particular situation of the colonies, the general indefinite principle of insurrection might be taken alone, from their revolution, and applied to justify the most dangerous crimes. The Americans might ever so cautiously keep within their rigorous limits; and neither maintain, nor care for the application of their principles to other states; at the first great commotion, those whom the French cabinet had sent into the republican school, might with the forms consecrated in America, put all the European governments to the ban, and declare lawful and even virtuous *under all circumstances*, what had been allowable only *under certain circumstances*. These possible consequences of the co-operation of France would not have escaped the penetration of a truly great statesman, and the world has paid dearly enough for their having been overlooked.

only traces remaining, should be in the growing prosperity of a great people, spread over extensive and fertile regions, and above all in the wholesome lesson it gave to the powers of the earth against every attack upon the rights and constitutions of states, from ambition, or a spirit of innovation. The harshest injustice alone could impute to the Americans, what the ill-understood and misused example of their revolution has produced of evil in latter times; it was the work of an hostile demon, who seems to have condemned the close of the eighteenth century, to see the buds of destruction shoot from the most beneficent events, and the most poisonous fruits from the blossoms of its fairest hopes.

The contrast between the French and American revolutions, when you compare them with each other in respect to their *objects* is no less striking than that which has resulted from the comparison of their *origin* and *progress*. As the utmost precision of object, and consequently of principles and of means, distinguished the American revolution through its whole duration, so the utmost want of precision in the object and consequently a perpetual mutability in the choice of the means and in the modification of principles has been one of the most stubborn, one of the most essential, and certainly one of the most terrible characteristics of the French revolution. Its history was nothing but a long series of uninterrupted developments of this extraordinary phenomenon; single and unexampled in its whole compass as this circumstance may be, it will not much astonish the man, who shall reflect upon its origin, and its nature. For so soon as in a great undertaking, a step is taken wholly out of the boundaries of definite rights, and every thing is declared lawful, which imaginary necessity, or unbridled passion inspires, so soon is the immeasurable field of arbitrary will entered upon; and a revolution, which has no other principle than to attack the existing constitution, must necessarily proceed to the last extremities of imagination and of criminal guilt.

When, by the impotence and the faults of the government and by the success which crowned the hardiness of its first antagonists, the old constitution of France was dissolved, all those who took an interest in favour of the revolution (and their number was infinitely great, precisely because no one knew exactly what he meant by a revolution) concurred, that an essential and wide spreading alteration must be effected in the whole political constitution of the state. But how far

this alteration should extend, how far the old order of things should be preserved, and how the new one should be organized, with regard to all this, no two persons of the legions, who thought themselves called to public activity, were agreed. If we confine ourselves merely to the opinions of those, who in this interval of unbounded anarchy, publicly wrote, or spoke, we shall soon be convinced, that there were then in France, not three, or four, or ten, but thousands of political sects and parties. The impossibility of taking notice of so many individual variations, distinctions, sub-distinctions, and shades of every kind, compelled the contemporaries, and especially those immediately interested in the great spectacle, to class the infinite mass of opinions under certain known principal titles, and thus erase the names of pure royalists, of whole and half *monarchists*, of *feuillants*, of *jacobins*, of every degree, &c. Each of these parties, however, could have exhibited almost as many subordinate parties as it contained members.

In this number of political systems, some were built upon a limited monarchy, in the British sense of the word, others upon a thousand-fold new modification of a constitution, monarchical only in name; some wished from the beginning, to treat the revolution merely as a passage to the utter abolition of the monarchy. These pronounced sentence of death upon all the privileges of the higher orders; others wished to leave them the prerogatives of rank. One was for reforming the constitution of the churches; another for extirpating religion; one would have shewn mercy in this general overthrow, at least to the rights of property; another was for passing all positive right, under the sickle of equality. The constitution of 1791, was a desperate and impotent attempt to reconcile together, by a sort of general capitulation, all these contending theories, and the infinitely multiplied motives of interest, of ambition, and of vanity, connected with them; this attempt of course failed, for in the absolute and total indefiniteness, and I might add, the impossibility of ascertaining the last object of the revolution, every individual in France felt but too well, that he had as much right to maintain his private opinion, and to carry through his private purposes, as the members of a committee had to establish theirs; it was, besides, more than doubtful, whether, even the immediate authors of this impracticable constitution, seriously considered it as a last result.

Under the shelter of the inexpressible confusion, in which the storm of these first debates involved the whole country, arose, at first, more timid, but from the last months of the year 1791, growing constantly bolder, and more powerful, the only consistent party; that which had always been of opinion, that it was folly to prescribe to the French revolution, any bounds whatsoever. This party had, indeed, like all the rest, a multitude of subdivisions, and of systems peculiarly modified, and often at violent strife with each other; but all who declared themselves for it, concurred in the great and decisive point of view, that the revolution was to be considered, not as a local transaction, but as one of those, which give a new form to civil society, and which must draw all mankind within its vortex. For the ambition, or for the enthusiasm of this insatiable party, the theatre, which France offered to their thirst for destruction, was too small; they wished to tear up the world from its poles, and commence a new era for the whole human race. That this was their purpose, from the very breaking out, and even before the breaking out of the French revolution, we need not learn from proselyting tales and imaginary cabals of the illuminati; the writings in which they have unfolded their principles in plain terms, have proved it beyond all contradiction.

To draw nearer the execution of so gigantic a plan, they had first of all to destroy the last trace of a monarchical form of government in France. It would be hard to maintain, that, after all what had happened since 1789, they had not nearly about the same right to found a republic, as the monarchists, so called, had to introduce a royal democracy. The only thing which seemed against them in point of right, was the oath which, in common with all the rest, they had taken, to support the constitution of 1791. But, after so many bands had been torn, none but weak heads could flatter themselves, that an empty form would arrest the torrent in its course. At the very time, while, with the cry of "The constitution or death!" they hushed a few credulous souls to repose, they were working with restless activity the mine, which in one instant was to blow up the whole fabric.

But, precisely at this great and important moment, the absolute indefinitude of object, that inextinguishable character of the French revolution, discovered itself in a new and terrible light. The republic had

been proclaimed; but this republic was a word without definite meaning, which everyone believed he might explain, according to his inclinations, and according to the fantastic whims, which he called his principles. There were just as many republican systems contending for the mastery, as there had been monarchical parties. France was drenched in blood, to decide the great question, whether Brissot, or Marat, the federalists, or the unitists, the Girondists, or the mountaineers, the Dantonians, or the Hebertists, should prescribe a republican constitution. Force alone could determine the issue of this horrible contest; and the victory must necessarily remain to the most resolute. After having torn, for nearly a year, the inmost bowels of their country, without being able to agree upon the form of their republic, a daring faction, at length, fell upon the strange expedient of settling and organising the revolutionary state itself, as a provisional government, and, under the name of a revolutionary government, brought into play what was called the system of terror; a monstrous and unexampled monument of human error and human frenzy, which in the eyes of posterity will almost degrade the history of our times to a fable. A less cruel faction overthrew and murdered the inventors of this gigantic wickedness; not long afterwards, another devised a new code of anarchy, which was called the constitution of the third year. It is well known, by what an uninterrupted series of revolutions, and counter-revolutions, this constitution was likewise conducted to the unavoidable catastrophe of its destruction.

Just at the period, when the republican party obtained possession of the supreme power, the bloody contest broke out between them and the greatest part of the European states. They had denounced the destruction of all governments, they had declared, that between their revolution and those who rejected it, no further intercourse could exist; they had solemnly absolved all subjects from obedience to their governments. The revolution prepared against Europe, and Europe against the revolution, a war, with which only the most dreadful religious wars, that ever scourged the world, can be compared. On the side of the coalesced powers, the proper object of this war could not be doubtful; and if, unfortunately, it often was, at least it ought never to have been so. But, on the side of France, it was always as indefinite as the object of the revolution itself. Some, as for instance, Robespierre, wished for

the present, only to maintain the right of turning their own country into a butchery, with impunity, and to reduce by one half the number of its inhabitants; others had projected extensive plans of conquest, and wished to realize for French republic, all the dreams, which the ambition of Lewis the XIVth, had formerly inspired; others yet had sworn never to lay down their arms, until they should have led the principles of the revolution in triumph over the whole civilized world, or *have planted, at least*, the tree of liberty, from Lisbon to the frozen sea, and to the Dardanelles.

This war has now, with short and local internals of insecure and treacherous peace, already desolated the earth eight years long; it has, undoubtedly, for some time past, lost much of its extent, and very much of its original character, and has now nearly declined to a common war; yet when and how it will end, is still a problem, which puts all human penetration to the blush. The fate of the French revolution is, in a great measure, connected with the fate of this war; but its last result depends, besides, upon an infinity of other combinations. There has, perhaps, never yet been a man, who could even imagine, with any clearness, what this result will be. When one of the great masses of the physical world is suddenly started from its quiet centre of gravitation, and hurled with a prodigious impetus into the empty space of air, the point at which it will stop is much harder to conceive, than the continuance of its motion. And, in truth, after the serious question, Who could have a right to begin such a revolution? Has remained unanswered, nothing is more difficult than to answer that, which is equally serious; to whom belongs the right of ending it?

4. The American revolution had a mass of resistance, comparatively much smaller to combat, and, therefore, could form and consolidate itself in a manner comparatively much easier, and more simple: the French revolution challenged almost every human feeling, and every human passion, to the most vehement resistance, and could therefore only force its way by violence and crimes.

The American colonies had already, before their revolution, attained a high degree of stability; and the supremacy of the British government in America, was the relation, not so much of an immediate sovereign, as of a superior protector. Hence, the American revolution had more the appearance of a foreign, than of a civil war.

A common feeling of the uprightness of their cause, and a common interest in its issue must necessarily have animated a great and overpowering majority of the inhabitants of North America. The royal governors, the persons more immediately connected with them, and the inconsiderable number of royal troops constituted the only permanent and great opposition party. If a certain number of independent citizens, from principle, or from inclination took the side of the ministry, they were however much too weak to become dangerous to the rest; and their impotence itself protected them against the hatred and intolerance of their countrymen.

There were in the interior of the colonies no sort of real or personal prerogatives, and no other distinction of ranks, than what proceeded from the exercise of public functions. Property owing to the novelty of civil society in the country, was much more equally distributed than can be the case in old countries, and the relations between the wealthy and the labouring classes were more simple and therefore more beneficent. As the revolution altered little in the internal organization of the colonies, as it only dissolved an external connection, which the Americans must always have considered rather as a burden, than an advantage; there was nobody, except the few, who took a share in the administration at the head of the country, who was immediately and essentially interested in the preservation of the ancient form. What this form contained of good and useful remained untouched; the revolution only removed that in which it had been oppressive.

How infinitely different was in this point of view the situation of France! If the French revolution had been content merely to destroy with violent hands the old Constitution, without making any attack upon the rights and possessions of private persons, it would, however, have been contrary to the interest of a numerous, and in every respect important class of people, who by the sudden dissolution of the old form of Government, having lost their offices, their incomes, their estimation and their whole civil existence, would of themselves have formed a powerful opposition – But, when in its further progress, it no longer spared any private right whatsoever, when it declared all political prerogatives to be usurpations, deprived the nobility not only of their real privileges, but likewise of their rank and title, robbed the clergy of

their possessions, of their influence, and even of their external dignity; by arbitrary laws took from the holders of estates half their revenues; by incessant breaches of the rights of property, converted property itself into an uncertain, equivocal, narrowly straitened enjoyment, by recognizing publicly principles of the most dangerous tendency, held the sword hovering over the head of everyone, who had anything to lose, and aggravated the essential wretchedness, which it everywhere spread by the ridicule and contempt it shed over everything that bore the name of possessions, or privileges – then truly it could not fail to accumulate against itself a mass of resistance, which was not to be subdued by ordinary means.

Should the friends of the French revolution declare this important circumstance to be merely accidental; should they impute solely to the good fortune of the American nation, that they found no domestic impediments in the way to their new constitution; and to the ill fortune of the French, that they had to struggle with so many obstinate antagonists; should they consider the former case only as enviable, and the latter only as deserving compassion, yet will the impartial observer, never forget how much merit there was involved in that good, and how much guilt in this ill fortune. The Americans were wise enough to circumscribe themselves within the bounds, which right, on one side, and the nature of things, on the other, had drawn round them. The French in their giddiness no longer acknowledged the prescriptions of the clearest right, nor the prescriptions of nature. They were so proud as to think they could bend impossibility itself, under the arm of their violence, and so daring that they thought the clearest right must yield to the maxims of their arbitrary will. The resistance of which they complained, was with perfect certainty to be foreseen; it lay in the unalterable laws of human feelings, and human passions; it was just, it was necessary; it was impossible to believe that it would not take place. Those, who had called it forth by the most cruel injuries, did not fail to be sure to declare it punishable, and did punish thousands, whose only crime consisted in refusing to rejoice at their own ruin. But this double injustice prepared a new resistance, which could be overcome only by new acts of violence. Thus at last, in the barbarous law book of the revolution, suffering itself was made an unpardonable offence; the fear of a just reaction drove the authors of these oppressions

to measures of still deepening cruelty against the victims of their first crimes; and the presumption of the natural and inevitable hatred, which these crime must everywhere rouse against them, was a sufficient ground to them to treat as an offender deserving death, every man, who did not immediately and actively associate with them.

Although the American revolution never involved itself in this horrible labyrinth, where voluntary iniquities can only be covered by necessary misdeeds, and where every earlier crime became the only justification of an hundred later ones; yet did it not altogether escape the misfortune, which seems inseparable from all sudden and violent changes in the civil and political relations of society. The smallness of the resistance it met with, and the moderation of those who conducted it, preserved it from a multitude of cruel, desperate, and dishonourable measures, which have sullied other revolutions; but its warmest friends will not venture to maintain that it was wholly exempt from injustice and violence. The bitterness against the English government, often degenerated into a spirit of persecution, and involved those, who were suspected of a punishable indifference, or of secret connivance, in the sentence of proscription pronounced against tyranny. The hatred between the friends of independence, and the partisans of the ministry, the whigs and the tories, as they were distinguished by names taken from old English parties, broke out, especially amidst the dangers of the war, sometimes in violent scenes, which tore to pieces the internal harmony of neighbourhoods, and sometimes even of families. The reciprocal cruelties, which from time to time were practised upon prisoners, called to mind the peculiar character, which had never wholly abandoned a civil war. The rights of property likewise were often violated by single communities and single states, and, in some few instances, with the cooperation of the supreme authority. The history of the descendants, of the great and benevolent Penn, driven from the paradise, which he had created, and compelled, like other loyalists, to take refuge in the generosity and magnanimity of England, is no honorable page in the annals of North-America.

But what are all these single instances of injustice and oppression, compared with the universal flood of misery and ruin, which the French revolution let loose upon France and all the neighbouring countries.

If, even in America, private hatred, or local circumstances, threatened property or personal security; if here and there even the public authorities became the instruments of injustice, of revenge, and of a persecuting spirit, yet did the poison never flow into every vein of the social body; never, as in France, was the contempt of all rights, and of the very simplest precepts of humanity, made the general maxim of legislation, and the unqualified prescription of systematic tyranny. If in America, the confusion of the moment, the impulse of necessity, or the eruption of the passions, sometimes inflicted misfortune upon innocence, never at least, never as in France, did reason herself, abused, desecrated reason, ascend the theatre of misery, solemnly to justify, by cold blooded, criminal appeals to principles and duties, these revolutionary confusions; and if in America, single families and districts, felt the heavy hand of the revolution and of war, never at least, as in France, were confiscations, banishments, imprisonments, and death, decreed in a mass.

When the American revolution was concluded, the country proceeded with rapid steps to a new, a happy, and a flourishing constitution. Not but that the revolution had left behind it many great and essential ravages: the ties of public order, had, in a long and bloody contest been on all sides more or less relaxed; peaceful industry had suffered many a violent interruption; the relations of property, the culture of the soil, the internal and foreign trade, the public and private credit, had all considerably suffered by the revolutionary storms, by the insecurity of the external relations and especially by the devastations of paper money⁽⁴³⁾. Even the

(43) In no one point is the analogy between the conduct of the revolutionary leaders in America and in France, so striking as in this; yet it must not be forgotten, that the Americans failed partly from inexperience and partly from real necessity; whereas in France they knew very well what they were about, and opened and widened the precipice with design.

The history of the American assignats, is almost word for word, only upon a smaller scale; and not attended with circumstances of such shocking cruelty, as the history of the French ones. The sudden start from two millions to two hundred millions of dollars; the credulity with which the first assignats were received, the undeserved credit which they for a time enjoyed, their subsequent rapid fall, so that in the year 1777, they already stood with specie in the proportion of 1 to 3; in 1778, of 1 to 6; in 1779, of 1 to 28; in the beginning of 1780, of 1 to 60; fell immediately afterwards to that of 1 to 150, and finally would pass for nothing at all; the attempt to substitute a new emission of assignats, instead of those which were worn out, continued until at last it became necessary to establish a formal depreciation; the harsh laws made to support the value of the paper; the regulation of the price of provisions (the maximum) and the requisitions, which they occasioned; the general devastation of property, and disturbance of all civil intercourse; the wretchedness and immorality which ensued upon them – all this goes to compose a picture, which the French revolutionary leaders seem to have taken for a model. It is remarkable, that they closely copied the Americans only in two points, of which one was the idlest, and the other the most objectionable of any throughout their revolution; in the declaration of the rights of man, and in paper-money.

morals and the character of the people, had been essentially, and not in every respect advantageously affected by the revolution. Although we can draw no conclusion from this circumstance with regard to futurity, yet history must remark with attention, and preserve with care, the confession which comes from the pen of a calm and impartial witness, the best of all the writers upon the American revolution hitherto (Ramsay): “That by this revolution, the *political military* and *literary* talents of the people of the United States, were improved, but their *moral* qualities were deteriorated”.

A picture of the condition in which the revolution has left France, is by far too great, too complicated, and too formidable a subject to be touched upon even transiently here. The idea itself of a final result from such a revolution as this, must still be in some sort an indefinite, and perhaps a hazarded idea. Thus much, however, may be asserted with confidence, that between the results of the American and those of the French revolution, no sort of comparison can so much as be conceived.

I might have continued the above parallel through many other respects, and perhaps into single points of detail. I believe, however, that the four principal points of view in which I have treated it, with regard to the *lawfulness of the origin*, *character of the conduct*, *quality of the object*, and *compass of resistance*, sufficiently answer the purpose, I proposed to myself, and it appears, at least to me, evident enough, that every parallel between these two revolutions will serve much more to display the *contrast*, than the *resemblance* between them.

Gentz Friedrich von, *The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution, Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution*, Philadelphia 1800.

On the State of Europe Before and After the French Revolution

(fragments)

PART I.

**Of the political Situation of Europe before and
at the breaking out of the French Revolution**

The question, *Is a system of public law necessary for Europe?*⁽⁴⁴⁾ (that is, a constitution among nations, founded upon treaties, and as much as possible defined and fixed by mutual compact), seems, in the present state of the science of politics among all civilized nations, to require no further discussion. The very nature of the social constitution; the tendency of the human mind towards law and order, in preference to anarchy and confusion; the bare idea of independent states bordering on each other, sufficiently answer such a question. I may therefore, without any danger, pass over what the Author has said upon this subject; to all which I shall not hesitate to subscribe in common with every civilized being.

The following will therefore be the only questions requiring our attention in proceeding to examine the system of our Author.

1st, How far did the treaty of Westphalia establish, as he asserts, a system of public law in Europe?

2nd, How far have any subsequent events contributed to dissolve the system of public law, founded by the treaty of Westphalia; particularly those events in the eighteenth century, to which the Author ascribes such pernicious effects?

3rd, Did there exist any system of public law in Europe, at the commencement of the French revolution?

(44) Vide Note A.

Chapter I.

How far did the Treaty of Westphalia establish a System of public Law in Europe?

The two following conditions are indispensably necessary to any treaty intended to be the basis of an universal and perpetual system of public law, even were it only to comprise the nations lying within a certain large circle; such, for example, as the extent of Europe. In the first place, it must comprehend all the states of this circle in all their several relations; and, in the next place, it must contain provisions, whereby all future revolutions in the internal situation and external connexions of these states should be foreseen, considered, and taken into the account of the whole political system.

It is only necessary to state these two conditions, to point out the impossibility of fulfilling them. The difficulty of defining to the satisfaction of all, in one and the same negotiation, in one and the same treaty, the various and intricate relations, wants, and pretensions of so great a number of independent nations as Europe alone contains, is evident; and even though this difficulty should not be considered absolutely insurmountable, it will hardly be thought extraordinary that no serious attempt should yet have been made to overcome it. The treaty of Westphalia had only to encounter a part of it; yet, seven years were continued in negotiation before it was brought about; and the formation and conclusion of this treaty was, and is still, esteemed a masterpiece of diplomatic ability.

But even supposing that all the states of Europe could enter into such a compact, as would serve for the basis of a general federative constitution; would ascertain all their rights, and define all their relations; yet, there

would still be wanting the means of ensuring the everlasting duration of such a compact, or of providing with any degree of certainty for its future existence. The fate of empires is no less subject to vicissitude than that of individuals: owing to the inequality of their respective progress, to the unexpected growth of new branches of industry and power, to the personal and family connexions, and, still more, to the opinions, the characters, and the passions of their rulers, there must necessarily happen many changes which no human wisdom can foresee, much less provide against. Each of these changes occasions new wants, new plans, and new pretentions; endangers or destroys the former equilibrium; presents fresh difficulties to the statesman, and renders it necessary to revise the system, and define the respective rights anew. Impossible as it is for the code of laws of any nation to provide for every possible future variation in the character and manners, the civil, moral, and domestic condition of its inhabitants; even so impossible is it to establish an eternal system of public law, by means of any general treaty, however numerous the objects which it may embrace, with whatever care and ability it may have been combined.

The treaty of Westphalia could not be expected to perform that which is beyond the reach of any treaty. It was so far from justifying such expectations, that it did not even fulfil the first condition of a compact deigned to be the basis of a federative system; it did not include all the nations even then important; and still less did it embrace all the relations of the states which it did include. Indeed it was hardly possible that it should; for at the time when this peace was negotiated, the science of politics was a perfect stranger to the greater part of those important problems which presented themselves for solution in the following century; it was not then suspected how fruitful a principle of social improvement lay concealed in the darkness and confusion of those times; and the meritorious statesmen who immortalized their names by this treaty, having only the experience of the age in which they lived, contemplated the situation and wants of Europe in a comparatively confined and imperfect point of view. It did not even come within their intention, much less was it the object of their pride, to lay a solid foundation for the public law of Europe.

There can be no doubt but that the treaty of Westphalia has been

misconceived, as often as it has been considered in this light. The peculiar merit of this famous treaty is, in fact, entirely confined to *Germany*. It was by fixing the uncertain relations between the Emperor and the states of the Empire; by determining the extent and limits of the sovereign authority of the German princes; by defining more accurately the competency of the tribunals of the Empire; and, above all, by deciding, in a manner equally just and wise, the most important question at that period – the differences between the two religious parties, and assuring to each its rights, its freedom, its possessions, and its due share in the constitution of the Empire, that this treaty became a beneficial and fundamental law for *Germany* and such it has remained, notwithstanding the vicissitude of events, even until the moment when, according to the assertions of modern politicians, “*there no longer existed any fundamental law or law of nations*”.

But if we proceed to consider the treaty of Westphalia as the basis of a federal system of Europe, it will come before us in a far less perfect, and, to say the truth, in a very imperfect shape. Of the nations at that time the most powerful, there were only three, viz. France, Austria, and Sweden, which took an immediate part in that treaty. Spain refused to accede to it. England was not even taken into consideration: neither Denmark, nor Poland, nor the Hates of Lower Italy, had any direct share in it. Some of the most important stipulations of this treaty, the independence of Switzerland, and that of the United Provinces, were, in fact, mere formalities, since the fate of the nations to which they related, had long before that period been completely decided. Others, such as the cession of some maritime districts to Sweden, had very little influence on the great political system, or on the events of later times. In various treaties less celebrated than that of Westphalia, more considerable changes of territory and dominion, more important revolutions in the general state of politics, have been either effected or sanctioned.

Of all the articles of this treaty, the most important with respect to the general law of nations, was undoubtedly that which determined the indemnification of France; and if this article has ceased to be a fundamental law, it has certainly not been the fault of the Germans. Upon the whole, it still remained entire at the breaking out of the French revolution: but, alas! France had in the meantime given more

than one melancholy example of a truth, long since well known to every statesman, – that the most solemn treaties are weak and ineffectual barriers to the passions of princes and their ministers. Twenty years had scarcely elapsed after the treaty of Westphalia, when a new war was kindled by the ambition of Lewis XIV. which occupied nearly the whole theatre of the thirty years war; and the *grand fundamental law of 1648*, was insufficient to prevent a series of violence and bloodshed, which almost every ten years called for new negotiations, and new treaties; while, to preserve entire even a fragment of the treaty of Westphalia, it became necessary to support the sinking balance of Europe, by the treaties of Nimeguen, of Rysswick, and of Rastadt: and it was *France*, and *France only*, whose conduct occasioned the necessity of such supports! It was *France alone* that offered the first violation to this sacred principle of the federal constitution of Europe!

Whoever then expected that the treaty of Westphalia would be the foundation of an universal political system to last for ever, must have expected more from it than any treaty ever could fulfil. It has effected all that it could or was intended to perform: and, what is more, its fundamental principles have endured longer, and with less alteration, than has, perhaps, been the case with respect to any other treaty. Among its fundamental principles, however, I only reckon those which immediately refer to the *constitution of the German Empire*, and those which regard the relations between France and Germany. Before we can determine what subsequent events have overturned or materially endangered the treaty of Westphalia, we must proceed to examine how far either of these fundamental articles have been affected by them.

Chapter II.

How far has the Treaty of Westphalia been subverted by subsequent Events?

After having decided in the foregoing chapter, in what sense the treaty of Westphalia could be called the foundation of a federal constitution, and pointed out what was properly *fundamental* in that celebrated compact; we now come to inquire, how far the changes which have since happened in Europe, have tended to weaken or destroy it, and particularly those three events to which the Author principally ascribes such effects. – These are, 1st, The formation (as the Author calls it) of a new empire in the north of Europe; or, more properly, *the intervention of this northern empire in the intercourse and relations of the rest*; 2nd, *The elevation of Prussia to a power of the highest rank*; 3rd, *The rise and progress of the commercial and colonial system*.

The civilization of Russia, and the intervention of this powerful empire in the federative connexions of Europe, could not but produce very great and important effects on the whole political system. These effects, like most of the changes which happen on the great theatre of the world, have been in some respects beneficial, in others pernicious.

The progress of civilization among nations before immersed in barbarism, is obviously a very important advantage, not only to those whom it immediately affects, but to the general mass of civilized mankind. It multiplies the points of contact among men; it enlarges the sphere of their connexions, their activity, and their knowledge; opens a new field to industry and commerce, and creates additional opportunities of communicating ideas. Taken in this point of view, the advantages are incalculable which have arisen to Europe from the *civilization of the*

Russian empire; which is, perhaps, the greatest event after the discovery of America, in the history of modern times. This empire has established a new connexion between the most civilized, and some of the most uncultivated, though in themselves the richest and most fertile parts of the world. The way has been opened by Russia, which will in future lead Europeans into the interior of Asia; and we have now the pleasing prospect of one day seeing those happy regions (the cradle of all civilization, perhaps in every sense of the word, the cradle of the human race) returning to a participation of all those truly valuable blessings which have so long been withheld from them. Lastly, the Russian empire has for ever removed and placed in the remotest degree of possibility, the danger of a future irruption of the barbarous nations into Europe; which, not very long ago, was a subject of apprehension to many an enlightened friend of humanity.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied, that the formation of this new empire has served to render the political relations of states more intricate, and their combinations more difficult; to multiply plans and counter-plans, pretensions and oppositions; wars offensive and defensive; and to give a new impulse to that restless activity which so particularly distinguishes the present times. The desire of the Russian princes to obtain an immediate influence in the federal arrangement of Europe, incited them to many bold measures, which filled their neighbours with anxiety and consternation; alarmed the more powerful for the balance of Europe, and made the weaker nations tremble for their very existence. The plans of conquest and partition, of which a great part must be laid to the account of this empire, were less hurtful in their immediate, than in their remote consequences. They attacked the foundations of all political and social security; they loosened and invalidated all principles; they made it doubtful whether the law of nations was not an empty name, invented as a cloak for power, and secretly despised by the powerful: they were the model, the pretence, and the excuse for all future usurpations; and so much did they corrupt the public opinion, that the terms, *sound policy, system of equilibrium, maintenance or restoration of the balance of power*, were too often applied, to what, in fact, was only an abuse of power, or the exercise of arbitrary will.

But none of the changes produced by Russia in the political relations of Europe, were within the sphere of the system sounded and established

by the treaty of Westphalia. They related almost exclusively to the northern states, and to the fate of Poland and Turkey. The two great fundamental articles of that treaty, the *internal political organization of the Germanic empire*, and *the relations between France and Germany*, were not in the least affected by them.

The Russian monarchs endeavoured, indeed, on more than one occasion, to procure a certain degree of influence in the domestic affairs of the German empire. But until the commencement of the French revolution (and we must not forget that hitherto we have only been speaking of the time which elapsed between the treaty of Westphalia, and that great event), their efforts remained entirely without success. Those who are acquainted with the history of the present times, will remember with what determined opposition the greater part of the German states encountered the pretensions of Russia to the title of *guarantee of the treaty of Westphalia*, which she claimed by a forced interpretation of a passage in the *treaty of Teschen*, and that too at a time when the maintenance of the constitution founded on that treaty, was become extremely problematical, and when it was well known that the intentions of Russia were to *preserve*, and not to destroy it.

The relations existing between France and Germany, suffered no alteration whatever from the aggrandizement of Russia. They rather received from this event, a greater degree of consistency than they had ever before possessed: for as the attention and politics of the two great states of Germany, especially of Austria, were always principally, and often exclusively, directed towards the undertakings of Russia; France had on her part the less to dread from theirs.

It may on the whole be safely asserted, that, of all the leading states of Europe, France was the least endangered by the increasing greatness of Russia; and that, under certain conditions, that event would have been less prejudicial to her than to any other. If we except the relations of commerce (which the French government, if it had known and attended to its own interests, might have cultivated as well as the English⁽⁴⁵⁾), there was no immediate point of contact between France and Russia;

(45) The treaty concluded at Petersburg in 1787, by an able negotiator on the part of France, is a sufficient proof of this.

and so far was the mere existence of the latter power from disturbing the political system of Europe to the disadvantage of France, that, on the contrary, it strengthened in a considerable degree, the just and beneficial influence of the cabinet of Versailles, in the relations of all the western and southern states. Considered in this light, she was a tacit and uniform, though negative guarantee of the system established or confirmed by the treaty of Westphalia, instead of contributing it its distribution.

It must be confessed that even those distant revolutions which Russia projected in Turkey, and actually accomplished in Poland, could not be indifferent to France: but it was owing to accidental circumstances, and to the weakness and mistakes of those who then managed the affairs of that country, that those revolutions could be attempted, and in a certain degree executed. It is now well known and generally acknowledged, that the partition of Poland might have been prevented by the timely interference of France and that Austria herself would have opposed that partition, if the French ministry had not expressly declared that they beheld it with indifference. It is no less certain, that France might have prevented the breaking out of the last war with Turkey, or otherwise have powerfully supported the Ottoman Porte, had not the beginning of her internal dissensions at that time, weakened her efforts, and diminished her influence.

The intervention of Russia in the political constitution of Europe, is not, therefore, one of the events which have weakened the principles of that constitution, and undermined the groundwork of the federal system. The most important provisions of the treaty of Westphalia remained unaltered; France, in particular, continued exactly in the situation in which she had been placed by that peace, and by the subsequent treaties which confirmed or modified it. The general political relations were, indeed, rendered more extensive and more intricate, but were not irreparably overturned, or materially and necessarily disturbed, by the intervention of Russia: on the contrary, it is certain, that if the advantages to be derived from this new weight had been attended to with wisdom, the law of nations, and the federal constitution of Europe, would have received from it an additional support, and the means of bringing them nearer to perfection.

The elevation of Prussia from a subordinate state to a power of the first rank and influence in Europe, is the second of those events to which

the Author ascribes the dissolution of the system founded on the treaty of Westphalia, with all the evil consequences, in his opinion, resulting therefrom. This event has certainly produced a more material and decisive effect upon the two principal objects of the treaty of Westphalia, than the aggrandizement of Russia. It has occasioned great changes in the internal condition of Germany; and likewise materially altered the relations between France and the German empire. The only remaining question is, whether, after having candidly considered these changes in a proper point of view, we shall pronounce them prejudicial; and whether they can, with any appearance of truth, be reckoned among those which have confounded, disordered, and overturned the public law of Europe; have converted it into a chaos of contradiction and anarchy, and at length put an end to its exigence. Before we answer this question, we must turn our attention to those consequences which the Author derives from the elevation of Prussia; partly with respect to the fate of *Germany in particular*, partly with regard to the political state of *Europe in general*.

With respect to the affairs of the German empire, the following are the effects it is said to have produced.

1st. It is asserted that “the disputes between the Emperor and the states of the Empire, have more frequently occasioned war”. This assertion is contradicted by history, provided we do not confound the *formation* of the greatness of Prussia with its *consequences*. The first of these was certainly accompanied by one of the most destructive wars of the eighteenth century. But since the time when Prussia rose triumphant out of that war, not only has she never once disturbed the peace of Germany, but, on the contrary, has by turns protected the rights, and reconciled the differences of the smaller states by her great preponderance in a considerable part of the Empire. If we except the short campaign of 1778 (in which she was evidently engaged with views of *preservation*, not of *destruction*), Prussia has not once taken arms in any of the disputes between the states of the Empire. From the year 1763, to the present day, no dissensions among the German princes, or between the chief of the Empire and its members, have terminated in open war: and so little has the power of Prussia tended to sow division in Germany, that, on the contrary, many domestic quarrels have been amicably concluded by its intervention.

2nd. That “France has been estranged from the interests of the *German empire*, and the *German empire* from those of *France*”. This undoubtedly has been the consequence of the increased influence of Prussia: but have its effects in this instance been prejudicial? If France was not ambitious of *ruling* in Germany, there were only two reasonable objects which she could seek to obtain by her arms, or her treaties; *security for herself, and protection to the weaker princes of the Empire, against the attempts of the more powerful, particularly of the Emperor*. That the safety of the French frontiers has not been endangered by the elevation of Prussia, is a truth sufficiently confirmed by experience; and the greatness of the Prussian monarchy has even proved an additional and very considerable security to France, against Austria, the most powerful state of the Empire. But that with respect to the protection to be given to the smaller states of the Empire, the part should now be allotted to *Prussia* which had hitherto been acted by *France*, was certainly a fortunate change for those countries themselves; and if judged according to the true principles of politics, by no means an unfavourable one for France. She was now at liberty to devote to other undertakings, the force which had formerly been employed in giving this protection. She might now banish for ever from among the objects of her political attention, all anxiety for the fate of Germany, and every dread of the preponderance of Austria: the only justifiable motives for her interference in the thirty years war. If France had nothing more in view than her own safety and the protection of Germany, in her endeavours to maintain the treaty of Westphalia; if she did not seek (in contradiction to all the principles of just and liberal politics) to make her influence in the Empire a pretence and a cloak for ambitious plans of usurpation; she could not but consider the elevation of Prussia as an event in every respect advantageous to her; and as the surest and most natural guarantee of the treaty of Westphalia: because it created a power always ready and able to resist every attempt injurious to the constitution.

3rd. That “*the disputes on the constitution of the Empire being no longer adjusted by a third party, have been decided by force, and by the agreements or arbitrary will of the most powerful*”. The interference of a third party cannot surely be advantageous to any constitution in the disputes that may arise on the interpretation of its provisions; and

history refutes the assertion, that force alone has prevailed in the Empire since France ceased to take a part in its internal affairs. The truth is, that the office of umpire, which France so often exercised with partiality, and so seldom for the advantage of the whole, became superfluous by the elevation of Prussia; and that since that event an *internal* protector of the German constitution has taken the place of a foreign one: but if ever the question should arise, whether FRANCE or PRUSSIA *be the most proper guarantee of any great national interest?* No true and well-informed friend of the German constitution could hesitate a moment to which to give the preference.

But, even supposing the great influence which France possessed in the affairs of Germany to have been beneficial to the Empire, and agreeable to the general system of politics (which, after the preceding observations, I never can assent to), it must not be forgotten that the loss of this influence to France was the effect of her own choice. It was not when the King of Prussia rose to be a formidable rival of the greatness of Austria; but from the moment when the French ministry formed a new alliance with the Emperor, that the connexion between France and the princes of Germany was dissolved for ever. The treaty of 1756 has been often represented, even by enlightened statesmen before the revolution, and by a multitude of very violent, and often very ignorant writers since that period, as the first cause of the weakness and decay of the French monarchy⁽⁴⁶⁾. All that we can say of the judgments of those statesmen, and of the declamations of these authors, is, that their ideas are highly exaggerated. Although true policy may have much to urge against the treaty of 1756, and still more perhaps against the time at which it was concluded; it is, nevertheless false (being in evident contradiction to history) that this treaty was a positive evil for France. A great part of the bad consequences attributed to it, must be deduced from very different sources; and those who blame the measure, seem quite to have forgotten the great advantages France derived from it. However that may be, the treaty of 1756 was a formal renunciation on the part of the French ministry of the office of umpire in the affairs of Germany; the name at

(46) Vide Note B.

least of which it had till then endeavoured to support. France could not possibly be at the same time the confederate of the Emperor, and the ally of the Empire against an abuse of power on the part of the Emperor. If, determined by motives of political prudence, France chose to prefer the certain advantages of an alliance with Austria to the doubtful benefit of a protecting influence in the Empire, she surely has no right to complain of the loss of it. It was her own determination, her own policy, the immediate consequence of a change in her own system, and not the elevation of Prussia, or certainly not that alone, which deprived France of the part she once had in the internal affairs of Germany.

4th. That “*the PROTESTANT LEAGUE no longer retains, as such, even the name, which denoted a community of rights and interests; and having affirmed that of the power whose influence supplanted France, it is now only known by the title of the PRUSSIAN PARTY*”. Here the Author evidently lays down, as the consequence of a single event, what is in fact the result of much greater and more general changes. The Protestant party has certainly not suffered in the least in its rights and liberties, or lost any of its weight in the general affairs of the Empire since Prussia has been its patron. The diminution of its natural weight by the aggrandizement of that power, would be a very extraordinary and incomprehensible phenomenon. So far as there still exists in Germany a distinct Protestant interest, that interest must necessarily find itself more secure under the protection of a powerful Protestant state, intimately connected with it, than under that of a foreign power, only occasionally active in its behalf; a power, which, while defending this Protestant party, was acting in open contradiction to its own principles of internal policy; a power whose support often secretly disgusted the most determined enemies of the Imperial court: as no one could help observing, that it persecuted with fire and sword at home the religion it protected in Germany. The advantage to the Protestant states of exchanging the support of such a power for that of Prussia, was surely undeniable.

But it was not without reason that I expressed myself doubtfully as to the exigence of a distinct Protestant interest in Germany. If it should be asserted that the Protestant party scarcely continues to exist even in name, the assertion would be at variance with the history of the present times, with the actual situation of the Empire and its present constitution.

But it is certain, that much, very much, perhaps the greater part of what formerly characterised its existence, has been lost in the revolutions of society. It is the spirit of the times alone which has brought about these changes, and not the elevation of Prussia, which would rather have had a contrary tendency. The differences of religion have lost the importance which was formerly attached to them: the deep shades they cast upon the face of society, a century ago, are now softened down. Opinions and articles of faith, which in former times have armed one half of Europe against the other, are now looked upon with coldness and indifference: the flightiest political connexion binds men and states more firmly now than all the professions of religion in the world; and without entering here into any comparison of the merits of what now interests us, and of the objects that formerly used to agitate mankind, and occasion the most important events; it is a truth established by history, that the manners, interests, politics, factions, and enthusiasm, the wisdom and folly of the present, are not those of former times.

I think I have proved that the consequences of the aggrandizement of Prussia, with respect to the *internal relations of Germany, and those which formerly existed between France and the Empire* are either not such as the Author describes them; or ought certainly not to be considered so unfavourable as he appears to think them. I conceive the constitution established by the treaty of Westphalia, as far as it was in its nature capable of it, to have derived additional confirmation and support from the elevation of Prussia; and it now terrains for me to examine, whether the influence of that event upon the general system of Europe, has, in fact, been so detrimental as the Author's representation would incline us to believe.

Because Prussia, in order to improve, and afterwards to maintain her situation, had recourse to a new system of war and government; because she invented new tactics, and had recourse to the art of accumulating treasures; and because fear or jealousy induced the surrounding nations to adopt, on their parts, the same instruments of power; therefore, it is said, has Prussia, by her principles and example, been the cause of those unnatural efforts, and of that total enervation of all the European states which has been the consequence thereof. To maintain great armies, and to fill their coffers, they oppressed their subjects so much by levies of men and money, excited such universal discontent, and strained all the

springs of power so immoderately, as to occasion the general disorder which ensued, and “*of which the war against the revolution was only the lost result*”.

Whether this statement of the case is really true; whether the general efforts were so overstrained; the oppression so intolerable; the debility so great and universal; and whether the revolution, with the war excited against it, was really the consequence thereof, will be examined in another place. The question here, is only, whether, and how far, all these effects, if they do exist, and so far as they are supposed to exist, have been occasioned by the elevation of Prussia.

It is evident that Prussia, with a territory comparatively small, and intersected on all sides, could never have risen to a state of the highest rank, and been able to maintain herself there, without new and extraordinary resources. Whether the system of amassing treasure, and that of military conscription, are the bed, according to general speculative ideas, is a question I have nothing to do with. The situation, the wants, and the objects of *Prussia* considered, they were wise and useful for her. For *Prussia* they laid the foundations of a power which she could other with never have attained; of a greatness, not merely, dazzling and transitory, but solid and durable and, what is more, the example *Prussia* has proved, that a truly good administration, that a high degree of industry and wealth, that the prosperity of the state, and the happiness of individuals, are by no means incompatible with such foundations of power Prussia has really united them all: a fact which must put every theory to silence. At the breaking out of the French revolution (for that is still the period to which all our considerations are at present directed) there existed no state in Europe, at once so powerful and so happy as that of Prussia; governed with so much energy and wisdom; so prepared for every foreign undertaking, and so safe from all internal commotion; so capable of the greatest exertions, and so guarded against all disorganization. If it be true that *Prussia* pointed out to all Europe the way to ruin, it must at least be confessed, that it took great care not to be itself the first to proceed upon it.

This ruin did not, however, originate in imprudent and untimely imitations of the Prussian system of administration. Such an assertion is immediately refuted by history. The first and principal part of that

system, the *amassing of treasure* was not imitated by any one power of the first rank, – was not even attempted. And though certain forms of military conscription, and particular principles of tactics, may in some instances have found imitators, it is nevertheless an undeniable fact, that everything which essentially, characterizes these methods, has remained exclusively peculiar to Prussia. The strength of the Prussian army was in due proportion to the rank and influence universally conceded to that state since the seven years war; nor did it give occasion to any unnatural efforts even among its immediate neighbours, much less in countries at a distance from it.

If it be really true, that many governments in the eighteenth century exceeded their strength in the efforts they made, the cause of this evil must be looked for in more early and less remarkable revolutions. The origin of the extensive military system, and, of course, of all the consequences resulting from it, is to be found in *France*. The mighty armies, the brilliant administration, the splendid enterprises, the resources, and the system of finance of Louis XIV; were models for all the states of Europe. At the time of the elevation of Prussia, the system founded by Louis XIV. had arrived at maturity; the great outlines were laid down which every nation was; obliged to fill, in order to maintain its importance in the general system. It is the most remarkable circumstance the fate of Prussia, that she was exalted by the superior genius of one man, to a situation which seemed to have been originally denied to her. As soon as she had attained this place, there no longer remained any choice with respect to her future conduct; she was compelled find the means of maintaining it in a lasting and honourable manner.

But if we take a more comprehensive view of this subject, we shall find ourselves much, inclined to acquit even Louis XIV. of the greater part of those reproaches which the short-sightedness of the present age has so abundantly heaped upon him. It was not Louis XIV. but the natural course of things, that produced those great armies – that enlarged system of administration – those extensive political plans. They were necessary consequences of the progress of civil society. In proportion to the advancement of civilization, of industry and riches among nations, the measure of their wants, their desires, their expenses, their domestic and public existence, is increased; the sphere of their

activity, their propensity to extend their limits, the ambition and the power of their governments, are enlarged. A rich individual has more servants, more houses, more horses, more plans, and more caprices than a poor one: a rich and cultivated people have more public institutions, more ministers of state, more soldiers, more luxury, and a greater spirit of enterprise, than one which is poor and uncivilized. This is all in the natural order of things. There may, no doubt, exist in the most opulent nation, a dangerous disproportion between the means and the will; between the strength and the desires of such a people; and, especially, the military force, that great instrument of influence and dominion, may be but of all proportion to its foundation – the population and revenues of the country. But, whatever particular inflames may be adduced of the transgression of these rules of proportion, and of the errors of some governments; there was, on the whole, no such disproportion to be seen in general at the commencement of the revolution. The military force had advanced in a degree; and to a state coinciding with the progress of society. The sudden aggrandizement the influence and the example of the kingdom of Prussia, did not push them beyond their just and natural limits. In all human probability the armies of the remaining nations would have been no smaller their systems of finance no less complicated, the relations between their efforts and their strength no other than they actually were, had this new meteor never risen in the political firmament of Europe.

The elevation of Prussia has therefore, in no respect, been productive of pernicious consequences. It has in no shape tended to subvert the system established by the treaty of Westphalia. As to the first fundamental object of this treaty, the internal confutation of the Empire, so far has it been from destroying it, that it has, on the contrary, more than ever confirmed and secured it. With regard to the next principal object which it had in view the relations between France and Germany; it has occasioned no other changes in these than such as were generally beneficial, and not essentially prejudicial to France; such as France herself desired and contributed to effect by her own political measures. It is equally untrue, that Prussia has disturbed the general balance of Europe: she has only kept pace with the continual progress made by other nations, without forcibly or unnaturally battenning it; she has only

displayed in a peculiar degree, the art of making this progress with more regularity, more order, and more firmness than others, perhaps than any others engaged in the same career.

If after all this we consider, that Prussia, from the moment when she was firmly established, became a bulwark to all the west of Europe, against the attempts of Russia, and a necessary counter-balance to that empire, after its intervention in the general affairs of Europe; that a power so happily situated in the centre of the rest, and in the midst of their principal connexions, presented a constant barrier to every violent usurpation; that if the safety of France could require any additional support, it received a new one from the elevation of Prussia; that the powers of Europe, if duly sensible of their true and common interests, must have found it necessary to create such a state, if fate or genius had not anticipated them; if we further consider what extensive benefit has been produced during half a century, by the influence of a nation governed with so much energy and wisdom, with respect to the general cultivation of mankind, industry, literature, the art of government, and everything exalted and valuable among men; and what useful lessons, what glorious examples, it has afforded to its cotemporaries, and to posterity: – it will not be easy to conceive how the elevation Prussia can ever be ranked among the immediate, or even collateral causes of the decay and disorganization of Europe.

The third great event, which, according to the Author, invaded the system established by the treaty of Westphalia, and at length totally subverted it, was the prodigious increase of the commercial and colonial system in all parts of the world.

This event (if that may properly be called an event, which is in reality no more than a gradual and still progressive expansion of human activity) has attested the interests of society, more than any other which has taken place in the political world since the treaty of Westphalia. It has opened an immense field to the industry, the arts, the ideas, the enjoyments, and the passions of mankind: it has multiplied the instruments of power, the combinations of politics, and the objects of desire; and by adding to the charm and splendour of dominion, it has been the cause of jealousies, dissensions, and, doubtless, of wars. It has even been the groundwork in the interior of states, of a great revolution

in all the relations of society. The only question is, whether, considering all this in the most comprehensive point of view, it will appear to be an evil; and particularly, whether the maintenance of a political balance in Europe, is absolutely incompatible with all these changes; whether the existing political constitution must necessarily have been subverted by the increased commercial and colonial system; whether it really was so, and whether the extension of European commerce, and the multiplication of trans-European connexions, led to the decay and disorganisation of all nations, and finally paved the way for their future subjection.

I shall only here examine the general relations of this question: the Author has entered upon it with a view almost exclusively to *England*, which has given him an opportunity of introducing at the beginning of his book, in a very ingenious and brilliant manner, his favourite theme: – “That during the last 150 years, England has oppressed the industry of all other countries, has threatened their independence, and encouraged their mutual dissensions; and that, in fact, the only danger which menaces Europe, arises from the tyrannical pretensions of the commercial politics of GREAT BRITAIN”. He has used this favourable opportunity in its utmost extent. I intend to follow a different method. – The question, What has England hitherto been in the general system of Europe? What may, or should it continue to be? Or (as it has been the custom to express it of late) “the problem, How to render the exigence of the British empire compatible with the interests and existence of the remaining states?” is, without doubt, one of the most important which at the present moment can occupy the politician. It is on this account that it appears most advisable to me, to unite, as much as possible, under one head, all that relates to this great question, which I shall endeavour to comprise and arrange in some general points of view, in a chapter devoted to the present relations of the leading powers. I promise, however, in the meantime, not to pass over a single observation of any consequence made by the Author; nor to leave unexamined any argument to be found in his work.

It is my opinion, that the extension of the commercial and colonial system cannot have been a *necessary* cause of the subversion of the federal constitution of Europe, and that it could only have proved the

accidental cause of such a subversion, by means of accidental errors or misfortunes, which might in any other circumstances have been made or experienced. This rests upon the following grounds:

1st. The commercial and colonial system has not disordered the fundamental articles of the treaty of Westphalia. This point, after what has been said in the preceding pages, will not require an elaborate investigation. The groundwork of the German constitution was hardly in any respect affected by the extension of the system of commerce; neither did it occasion any important alteration in the relations between France and Germany. The new relations which it created, were all of them such as had never been thought of at the treaty of Westphalia; such as were then neither foreseen nor conjectured; and such as in every respect were beyond the sphere of the system of public law, established by that treaty. Of these unavoidable circumstances, those only can complain who consider the treaty of Westphalia as the foundation of a general federal constitution, which it never was, nor ever could be. That which it did really establish, remained entire to the end of the eighteenth century; but it was not in human wisdom to make regulations for what did not exist at the time.

2nd. The extension of the commercial and colonial system was not the immediate effect of the avarice or ambition of any particular European state; it was a general, necessary, and unavoidable result of the expansion of the human mind; and every event derived from that source, must be, in some way, compatible with the objects of social existence, and of course with the maintenance and security of a federal constitution and a law of nations.

I am here engaged in the discussion of a particular object, and not writing a general history of human nature. But whoever has thoroughly investigated this subject, will readily allow me, that, in a state of society, the different branches of human activity are gradually and successively developed, each at its proper period; that when agriculture and manufactures have arrived at a certain degree of perfection, the desire of foreign commerce is naturally awakened; that although the object of this propensity may be retarded or accelerated by, adverse or favourable circumstances, the persevering activity of mankind will sooner or later accomplish it; that it will at length gain access to distant and unexplored regions and succeed in its unremitted endeavours to conne all the parts

of the earth; that the produce of remote countries becomes new spur to industry, and industry, so excited, explores and cultivates those lands; so that the productions of new regions operate to increase the activity and to multiply the commercial relations of the old; that this gives new life even to the interior of the more civilized countries, and multiplies the objects of traffic; that industry produces riches, and riches reproduce industry and thus commerce at length becomes the foundation and the cement of the whole social edifice.

This is not determined by the presumption or caprice of man; it is founded on the eternal order of human nature, and is the effect of that irresistible impulse, by which every great and beneficial change, every truly universal and important event in the history of mankind, is produced. To this principle we must refer not only the origin but the progress and extension of commerce. Hence too the important discovery of America; for we may confidently assert, that it could not ultimately have escaped mankind, had it not been accomplished so early by the adventurous spirit of a few extraordinary and enterprising men⁽⁴⁷⁾. Hence the system of commerce and colonization, with all its actual and possible ramifications and extent. Hence the independence of remote climes, not created nor cultivated for us only, and the new sources of opulence to which Europe is invited by their freedom and independence. Hence too humanity will hereafter derive many invaluable blessings, will behold many a splendid æra, if the free display of this active principle be not checked by blind authority, and if human ingenuity do not aspire to be wiser than Divine Providence.

If we consider the subject in this point of view, which to me appears the only proper one, we shall not easily be persuaded to attribute the origin or the extension of the system of commerce to any particular law of any single state, or to any individual, be it Cromwell or Colbert, whom hatred or partiality shall fix upon. Adhering to the plan which I have proposed, to myself, it will be the province of a subsequent chapter to prove, and I hope there to prove most satisfactorily, that the English Navigation Act is neither the only nor the principal cause of the commercial greatness

of England; that this celebrated law is not rightly understood, when supposed to be creative, since its nature is, in fact, restrictive; that it is in no wise unjust, tyrannical, or hostile towards other nations; and that, when judged upon the true principles of commercial right and policy, it is nothing like “the foundation of a continued conspiracy, and an eternal warfare against the industry of all other countries”. I will return at present to my general reasoning.

If it be true that the system of commerce and colonization was one of the fruits destined to, grow and ripen, in the foil of society the roots of this system must be somehow connected, with those of the whole social constitution. The natural propensities of man, particularly, those of which the general and constant influence determines the fate of society, are seldom found in contradiction to each other. That there should be any great spring of human action in its nature inimical to society; tending to involve nations in endless hostility; to subvert the law of nations, and even render its existence impossible; and finally to bring about the decay and ruin of empires; would be extremely unnatural, and is therefore very much to be doubted. The system of commerce, with all its errors, could not produce such effects, and in fact never has: that in some instances it has been the cause of wars, is certain; but what has not been the cause of war? That it has sometimes created discord in the federal constitution of Europe, will not be denied; but can such a constitution be expected to exist without periodical disturbances? Upon the whole, the system of commerce, with all its consequences, the preeminent riches of some countries, their naval power, their foreign possessions, and their new influence (disproportioned to the extent of their European territory), had adapted itself exceedingly well to the former social relations of Europe; and if extraordinary and unexpected convulsions had not, from the year 1789, shaken the whole edifice to its foundations, and loosened every part of it, the question, Does there still exist a law of nations? Would probably, at this time, have been absurd, notwithstanding all the changes occasioned of hastened by that system. This will, I hope, appear more plainly from the observations that will follow in the next Part of the work, in which the situation of Europe, at the commencement of the French revolution, will be more particularly discussed.

3dly. The influence of the commercial and colonial system was not

(47) Vide Note C.

confined to any particular countries; all of them were more or less engaged in it.

The European establishments in all quarters of the world, which necessarily promoted the extension of commerce and industry; were very far from being a monopoly in the hands of the nations immediately interested in them. They were a general advantage, of which, by degrees, every county in Europe received its share. Those which, by their situation and habits, were devoted to navigation, were the first to enjoy these advantages but however desirous they might have been of preserving them exclusively the natural course of things presented insurmountable obstacles to the accomplishment of such wishes. The vent of their produces awakened on every side, and in the most inland parts of the continent, the same activity, the desires, and the same arts as those, which stimulated, inspired, and assisted the maritime states in their undertakings. These nations were even sometimes, as in the examples of Spain and Portugal, only the channel, between whole, uncultivated and unfruitful banks the enlivening stream of industry and riches flowed to happier regions. The condition of society was in every respect advanced and refined. With the wealth and improvement of individuals, the sum of those means and resources which constitute the strength of nations, was increased. All countries were benefited; but all nearly in the same proportion. The whole became more rich, more powerful, and more civilised; but the proportions between the component parts remained the same.

I do not mean to assert, that this participation of advantages arising from the system of commerce and colonization, amounted to an absolute equality among all the parties concerned. The progress must naturally have been greater and more rapid in those countries where the new seeds of industry, commerce, and riches found a soil prepared to receive them; or, where a favourable situation, the dispositions and capacities, of the inhabitants, or the peculiarities of their civil and political constitution, promoted their growth in a more remarkable degree. The consequences of the general change were certainly more perceptible in France than in Germany, in England and Holland, than in Russia or Poland; and the effects produced on the proportions of their national strength, must have operated more rapidly and immediately in the former than the

latter. That these inequalities should disturb the general balance, is an effect which the system of commerce only has in common with every other cause of social improvement. No federal constitution on earth can preserve the states which compose it during centuries exactly in their original relative situations. No federal constitution can ensure an unaltered continuance of the precise mass of respective strength, which was the groundwork of its formation, or even the preservation of the same proportions in the extension of that mass. Even if the system of commerce had never existed, the varieties of national character and industry, the different constitutions of the states of Europe, and many accidental circumstances, would have created a diversity in their several attainments; and accordingly the machine of government, which always follows the progress of individuals, would have been more or less complete in each. Foreign trade was only one of the many and various springs which set this great machine in motion. If commerce, with all its attendant benefits, had remained the exclusive property of a few states; and had these favoured nations alone attained to a higher degree of civilization and wealth, and acquired despotic influence in the fate of Europe, while other countries continued in barbarism, poverty, and relative weakness; it would then, perhaps, have been allowable to say, that the colonial system had subverted the federal constitution of Europe. But since the case is otherwise; since, in the extensive scene of activity, industry, and opulence, which the progress of commerce has displayed, no state whatever has remained an idle spectator; since all have taken a lively part in it, and all have been in a great, though, perhaps, not altogether equal measure, gainers by it; it is not possible that this system should have been a cause of the general decay or dissolution of the federative constitution.

4thly. Even the superior advantage accruing from the *immediate* possession of commerce and colonies was divided among several nations and therefore established in the general balance of Europe, a new and distinct balance of the maritime and commercial states.

Nations enabled to found colonies and monopolize their commerce; to carry on an extensive navigation, and to supply the neighbouring states with the productions of the remoted parts of the earth, must have derived a more direct and of course a greater benefit from the system of

commerce and colonization, under circumstances otherwise equal, than those excluded by the nature of their situation from such undertakings. The fate of Spain and Portugal diffidently evinces that this rule is not without exceptions; for they possessed the finest colonies in the world and yet fell into a state of poverty and decay unknown to any other continental power; which shows, that the advantages of commerce and colonization are only conditional, depending on the industry, morals, legislation, and polity of the mother-country. But where it is established under a wholesome government, and supported by the native industry, the character, and civil constitution of the country; there the system of commerce is soon productive of striking advantages. Had all these favourable circumstances been united in a single nation, it would necessarily have attained an extraordinary, and perhaps dangerous pre-eminence; but they were, fortunately possessed by several at once, and particularly by three, France, England, and Holland.

It is a circumstance somewhat extraordinary, that a French writer should speak of the system of commerce and colonization in terms as if it had only benefited other nations, to the prejudice of France; as if England alone had derived advantages from it, to the detriment of the rest of Europe; and as if his own country had not been one of the most successful in the acquisition of all those advantages. If the possession of colonies, and the habits of commerce, have disturbed the general balance of Europe, it cannot have done this in a manner unfavourable to France, who had a principal share in that commerce; but, on the contrary, to her advantage, and unfavourably for the remaining states of the continent. I will say nothing here of the trade to the Levant, always so large a source of industry and riches to France; but France ruled in the East Indies till the middle of the eighteenth century, and even retained, when that dominion had ceased, some valuable possessions there; France possessed the finest and most fertile provinces on the continent of America; France is, even at this day, in the possession of the best of all the islands in the West Indies, which, in the year 1789, was equal in value to the rest of the Antilles taken together. It is indeed true, that the advantage derived from these great possessions, was not always equal to their importance, and that false principles and errors of administration, as well as unfortunate wars, considerably diminished their value. But

France, nevertheless, long remained the first, and always continued to be the second commercial and maritime state in Europe: there was no sea unfrequented by her vessels; no coast unoccupied by her factories and establishments; no branch of any consequence in the whole sphere of commerce, in which she did not vie with the other maritime nations. Her navy was sometimes reduced to a comparative insignificance; but it always recovered itself again; and only ten years before the revolution, had arrived at such a pitch of greatness as to be able to cope with that of England. Her commerce with all parts of the world was so flourishing, and the profits of it so great, that the quantity of specie in circulation generally exceeded the wants of the country; and St. Domingo alone, upon the respectable authority of Mr. Neckar, did not add less than seventy millions per annum to the balance in bullion. Surely a man has no just ground of complaint against the system of commerce and colonization, who belongs to a nation deriving such extraordinary advantages from it.

It is not here worthwhile to inquire whether the ignorance or the avarice of individuals in other countries may have made them look with an evil eye on this state of things; but it is certain, that no enlightened person in Europe could have envied France the advantages she enjoyed. That the commerce of the world should be divided between three, nearly equally favoured nations, was the most fortunate circumstance the others could have desired: it ensured to them an extensive competition; it occasioned variety and activity in the relations of commerce; it provided, in the most natural manner, against that abuse of power, which might have been favoured by the undivided sway of a single nation. No one will entertain a doubt, but that, had it not been for the revolution, this beneficial competition, would not easily have been destroyed; it would have lasted; it would have been still further improved; and nothing but the shocks which France has experienced in the ruin of her monarchy, could have annihilated it, as they have done for a time.

5thly. The strength which some countries derived from the system of commerce and colonization, produced a new weight in the general balance, to be occasionally opposed with advantage to the preponderance of any continental nation.

The federal constitution of nations can never be so completely organized, so carefully and exactly balanced, as to prevent every attempt

to destroy the equilibrium and oppress the rest, on the part of powers invited by favourable circumstances, or impelled by enterprising princes. In these periods of danger, it is fortunate for the political system, if there exists a counterbalance of a distinct nature, which may be used to counteract the dangers of the federal constitution, and which, by a proper application, may resist the attempts of an ambitious power upon the security and independence of its neighbours.

A counterbalance of this nature was formed as early as the end of the seventeenth century by England and Holland, in consequence of the progress of the commercial system. These two nations, that could not then vie with any of the principal states of the continent, in extent of territory, population, or military force, acquired a degree of influence and importance by their riches and naval strength, that enabled them to make head again the most powerful. They more than once defended and maintained the balance, when Europe had reason to tremble for its safety. I shall here only mention the reign of Lewis XIV. and particularly the time which clasped between the treaties of Nimeguen and of Rysswick; partly because that period presents a most remarkable and instructive example, and partly because it has pleased the Author to adduce this very example in illustration of his opinions respecting the prejudicial influence of the maritime states.

His reasoning on the subject of the league of Augsberg in 1686, would induce us to believe, that the founder of that league only sought, wantonly, and without cause, to disturb the peace of Europe; to weaken the French monarchy; and, by uniting England and Holland, to concentrate in his own hands, all the springs of that preponderating naval strength, which, as the Author expresses himself, “had rendered his former country so dangerous to Europe”.

This representation of the case appears to me not less arbitrary than new: it is certainly at variance with all former opinions concerning the relations and events of that time. Whether the Prince of Orange was influenced in secret by interested views, when he brought about the coalition of Augsberg; whether the desire of ascending the throne of England, or personal enmity to the King of France, were the true motives of his conduct are questions not to be discussed in this place.

We have nothing to do with the measure of his private worth; we are considering the public merit and political good effects of his actions. To assert that the tendency and result of his plans, the able and persevering opposition which he made to Lewis XIV. undermined the security of the federal system, and sowed the seeds of anarchy and disorder, is no less paradoxical, than it is absurd to say, that the maritime power of Holland was ever dangerous to Europe.

We need only throw a hasty glance upon the circumstances under which the league of Augsberg was formed, to discover the object and the nature of that league; completely explained by the history of its origin. Lewis XIV. had not only threatened, but actually violated, the integrity of all his neighbours. He had invaded the Netherlands, only eight years after the peace of the Pyrenees, and secured a considerable part of his conquests by the treaty of Aix, which nothing but the tear of the triple alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden, induced him to accede to. He had immediately after that, under a pretext still more futile, commenced a war against Holland, by which that flourishing republic was reduced to the brink of ruin. The treaty of Nimeguen increased his dominions, his influence, and the terror of his name in Europe: but this was not sufficient for his ambition; he was a conqueror in the midst of peace; by judicial sentences he adjudged to himself lands, cities, and the right of sovereignty; explained the treaty of Westphalia according to his own opinion, and forced the town of Strasburg to capitulate. Such was his conduit towards the Emperor, the Empire, Spain, the Italian princes; and thus did he force all his neighbours, whatever might otherwise be their principles or opinions, to seek protection in common measures, against a common enemy.

By proceedings of another, though not less odious nature, he awakened the spirit of religion, so powerful at that time in a considerable part of Europe. The revocation of the edict of Nantes, and the cruel persecution of the Protestants, excited the greatest anger and abhorrence in all Protestant countries; England and Holland, especially, took the alarm; they beheld the French monarch armed with double terrors; one common ruin threatened their independence and their religion; and William of Orange became what his ancestors had formerly been, the hero and guardian angel of religious and political liberty.

Under these auspices the league of Augsburg was formed; and if ever the conduit, the plans, and the progress of any power, could justify the rest in making preparations in common for the safety of the whole, that league was justified. The confederates, moreover, confined themselves strictly to the real and just object of their truly defensive alliance. The maintenance of the treaty of Westphalia was the basis of all their conferences; the only aim which they had in view, was to compel France to be just.

The Emperor, many of the princes of the Empire, the King of Spain, the Duke of Savoy, all engaged in this confederacy. These, for the most part Catholic princes, were assembled under the standard of a Protestant Stadtholder of Holland; of a prince who was on the point of driving the Catholic line of the House of Stuart from the throne of England. These facts are not a little strange and surprising, when we consider the temper of those times: but the more they are strange and wonderful, so much the more strongly do they express the danger in which the balance and independence of Europe appeared to the allies of the Prince of Orange. It was a confederacy dictated by necessity, and not a matter of choice or inclination. The allies beheld in the person of the Stadtholder, the protector of their common rights against the common enemy; they saw in the Catholic possessor of the English throne, an open or secret ally of that common enemy. All other considerations yielded to this important one. They declared themselves against the prince who favoured the disturber of the general balance; they took part with him by whole prudence and activity they were assured of its preservation⁽⁴⁸⁾.

That, at that time, "*France alone* conducted herself in conformity to the true principles of the federal system, and the universal maxims of the political balance, while all other nations made no scruple of violating them", is an assertion that requires no refutation; because, to point out its falsehood in the clearest manner, it is only necessary to mention it; and because the history of those times confutes it in every point. If Lewis XIV. had met with no opposition, the treaty of Westphalia would already have been an empty name at the end of the same century in which it was

formed. To save the independence and federal constitution of Europe from total ruin, to preserve and secure the general balance, was the work and the merit of the coalition of which the Prince of Orange was the founder and director.

I think I have efficiently proved that the extension of the commercial and colonial system is by no means incompatible with the principles of the federal constitution of Europe, The nature and character of that system contained no essential cause of any dreadful revolution; and we are taught by experience, that, so far from having occasioned such an one, it has, on the contrary, added such power to some nations, as to form a beneficial counterpoise; whereby the federal constitution has more than once been defended against dangers that threatened its security.

The influence of the system of commerce and colonization in the improvement and aggrandizement of the maritime states, was not, therefore (any more than the elevation of Russia and Prussia), a cause of the dissolution of the federal union, and of the subversion of public law. These three great events of the eighteenth century have had important consequences, but have no connection whatever with those assumed by the Author. If the condition of Europe at the breaking out of the French revolution, was really so desperate as he has painted it, we must search elsewhere for the cause of that misfortune.

If I have been successful in attempting to show that history does not confirm the Author's assertion of the influence of those three events; and that a due consideration of their immediate and remote consequences, will even justify conclusions almost directly opposite to his; I conceive that I have already made much progress against the groundwork of his system: the assertion, "that at the time of the revolution there no longer existed a vestige of the law of nations, and that Europe was on every side in a state of the greatest disorder". For if those events from which he endeavours to deduce and explain this general disorganization, neither have had, nor in their nature could have such an effect; this erroneous induction gives a very suspicious appearance to the whole fabric of his reasoning; and the well-founded supposition arises, that these facts may probably never have existed at all, which such changes in the relations of the political system were incapable of producing.

(48) Vide Note D.

But it is now time to meet that first assertion of his in a more direct manner; it is time to attack it in its leading points, and to proceed immediately to examine the question, "In what state was the federal system of Europe at the commencement of the French revolution?"

Chapter III.

Did there exist at the Beginning of the French Revolution any public Law in Europe?

The Author is not satisfied with giving a decided negative to this question. He goes farther, and draws a gloomy and depressing picture of the social constitution of Europe, in the last years which preceded the revolution. "It was impossible not to observe" (such are the expressions he makes use of), "that there had long since ceased to exist any maxims of government, any federal union, any fixed political principles in Europe; that an imaginary principle of aggrandizement, in fact nothing more than a forcible, unnatural, and definitive exertion, had fascinated all governments; that the powers of Europe were involved in general misery; that bankruptcy stood at the door of every government; and that a single nation, grasping at the riches of all the rest, converted the misfortune of the whole to its own exclusive advantage: that the same causes which produced the disorganization of society in France, had sown the seeds of political anarchy throughout the whole of Europe; that the law of nations no longer existed, except in appearance; and that the revolution was only a loud and formal annunciation of its long-determined dissolution".

It is of the greatest importance that we should examine carefully every feature of this picture. If the pencil has here been guided by truth, and if the political state of Europe, the internal and external relations of all countries, were really such; then the French revolution will appear not only completely explained, but justified, and more than justified. It would, in that case, only be the natural end of a long series of evil, the breaking out, the decisive crisis of a disorder which had long preyed

upon the constitution of society; a violent but salutary fever in a body long diseased. We should then cease altogether to deplore a revolution, to which we are indebted for the only chance of recovery remaining; which discovered to us the abyss into which we were plunged, and the means of extricating ourselves; which has convinced us of the extreme defectiveness of all our former principles of government and maxims of policy; of all former systems of administration and public law. This revolution, then, has been a beneficial and active principle of general renovation, “by putting to the proof the little strength which yet remained to us”. It has subverted everything, that all might be ordered anew; by the sufferings inflicted, it has awakened a sentiment of despair, which ought long before to have existed for our own safety; it has made us acquainted with our situation, our wants, our dangers, our strength, and our means: it has overwhelmed us, in order to raise us again to a more exalted state, and to secure us for ever against all future errors.

Such is the aspect of the revolution, as painted by the Author in the whole train of his reasoning. He has not expressly described it thus; for it was a part of his plan to pass over as much as possible in silence, the *revolution itself*, and only to speak of the *war against the revolution* as of a thing altogether distinct from and independent of it. But I am induced to conclude, that he considered it only, or at least principally, in this point of view, by the general course of his argument, and by a number of occasional observations in different parts of his work; besides, anyone who will affirm that the war against the revolution was a necessary consequence of the disordered state of civil society, will not, and cannot indeed, with any consistency, forbear to ascribe the revolution itself to the same source.

Of the whole of this account of the causes and consequences of the revolution, the two following are the only points to which I can assent: first, there existed in the internal, social, and domestic state of most European countries, and particularly of the French monarchy, certain discordances, such as might lead to great convulsions, and which, when those convulsions did take place, might in general be looked upon, with reason, as the preparatory causes of them; and secondly, the revolution has had the accidental good effect of discovering and pointing out,

in the clearest and most impressive manner, to all governments, the imperfections existing in their former constitutions, or in the ancient federation of Europe.

On the other hand, I am convinced, and I trust that all enlightened persons will now agree with me, that the condition of Europe in the latter times preceding the revolution, was not so desperate either in a social, a domestic, or a federative point of view; as to lead immediately to violent convulsions, or to render such convulsions desirable; that the French revolution, though facilitated, and in that sense prepared, by many social and political discordances, was by no means a necessary or unavoidable consequence of the state of France, much less of Europe; that this event, with all its dreadful consequences, was occasioned by some obvious errors of the former French government – was continued and completed by the untimely zeal, the ill-advised activity, the inability, the presumption, or the wickedness of those who, in consequence of these errors, were intruded with the direction of the public affairs – and was converted into a principle of definition for all Europe by the improvident measures of the surrounding nations; that, far from furthering the improvement of the condition of civil and political society, this revolution, on the contrary, has interrupted and arrested its progress at a moment when it appeared particularly promising; and that, when considered in a more extensive point of view, the greatest and most lamentable of the evils which accompanied it, was this: before the revolution there only needed a few wise reforms in the internal constitutions of states, and some happy combinations for ameliorating and confirming the federal system, to have railed Europe to a high degree of prosperity and happiness*, whereas now all the means of attaining to this desired object must be sought for amidst a heap of ruins, and drawn forth, as it were, from chaos again.

In this series of important truths, the principal one is that to which the reasoning of our Author immediately conduits us. That we may judge with accuracy what Europe owes to the revolution, we must, before all things, be acquainted with its situation when the revolution broke out; we must have before our eyes the leading features, at least, of the true picture of society, as well with respect to the internal condition of states, as with regard to their external relations.

Very great improvements had been made by all the governments of Europe, in everything relating to the management of public affairs, and the principles of administration, since the middle of the eighteenth century. As the last remains of the feudal system were abolished, the fetters were destroyed by which the hands of sovereigns had long been confined and restrained in the free exercise of their authority. The increasing wealth of their states presented new objects for their activity, and fresh incitements to various undertakings; while, at the same time, it afforded the means of accomplishing them. The progressive improvement of the minds of men contributed likewise to the general advancement. It has been asserted, that all the favourable changes brought about in this period, were owing to the labours of public writers. But these writers were themselves, in fact, the creatures of the general improvement; I mean the great mass of them, those who had a wide and extensive influence on the minds of their contemporaries; not those men of extraordinary genius, who sometimes burst, like splendid meteors, through the deep gloom of an age of barbarism. The productions of genius only become the daily occupation of mankind, and a powerful aid of social advancement, when the increase of wealth has promoted the progress of civilization; when the desire of more refined enjoyments has been awakened; and, above all, when governments have attained a certain liberality of principle, and have been enlightened and improved.

Without inquiring, however, which was the first, or the last, in the chain of causes that produced these great changes, the event is clear and undeniable. There arose in all the principal states without exception, and more or less in most of the smaller ones, a spirit of advancement and improvement, extending to every branch of the public administration, which the body of the people communicated to the governors, and which these again re-impacted to their subjects. The necessity of a revision of the existing laws, and particularly of the criminal code, was everywhere felt. Measures were taken for encouraging industry, for promoting agriculture, for extending commerce: while high roads, and canals, and plantations, and public edifices of every kind, began to enrich and embellish all countries. In the place of the ancient system of taxation, often oppressive and unjust, much pains were everywhere bestowed to introduce a more simple and equitable one, showing a better insight

into the true sources of wealth and the real springs of industry. The employments of civil society were everywhere freed from a number of burdensome constraints; and the beneficial principle of general competition supplanted a pernicious monopoly, looked upon, in the infancy of society, as the only encouragement and reward of activity. Exclusive privileges were diminished; inequalities softened down and the advantages of individuals made subordinate to the good of the whole. The education of youth began everywhere to be attended to as a great national concern; to become an object of the care and protection of government; and, by the adoption of more effectual methods to be brought nearer to the sphere of practical life.

I am far from intending to assert, that this happy progress of society was anywhere as perfect and confident as I have here described it. There were still many dark and uncouth parts in the great picture of the age, from which the observer turned away with sorrow or disgust. There still appeared frequent traces of barbarism in the manners, laws, and governments of the most polished nations. The abilities and characters of the men in power were not always proportioned to the degree of maturity and refinement which their subjects had attained, or to which their hopes and endeavours were directed. The impediments likewise arising from particular circumstances and local relations, which opposed the execution of beneficial plans, must naturally have been more frequent and considerable in some countries than in others: but the general tendency of all nations and all governments was directed to a progressive, persevering, and systematic improvement of the state of mankind, more than in any other period of ancient or modern history. The good actually accomplished, was not brought about, as in former, even the brightest and happiest periods of antiquity, by irregular, partial, insulated, and transient measures; but with order, consistency, and method; principles clearly understood; having a great and lasting object in view; and comprehending the interests of all mankind.

The most important of the causes that prepared the dreadful storms which closed the eighteenth century, will be found in this tendency to a general and always progressive reform; which constitutes the prominent and distinguishing feature of the social and political character of the age, especially in the last twenty years before the revolution. The elements

of the desolating tempest were fostered, as in the natural world, in the same fertilizing atmosphere that gave a rich and wholesome nourishment, a rapid and luxuriant growth, to the noblest plants in the soil of society. The new opinions of the governed combined with the altered dispositions of the governors, to bring on this dreadful phenomenon. On the one hand, the consciousness of a higher degree of happiness and freedom, of increased strength, and of greater individual importance, produced a number of wishes, desires, and pretensions, hitherto unknown: with the increase of wealth arose discontent; with freedom, arrogance; with the progress of knowledge, the propensity to idle and extravagant speculations: a spirit of disorder, of uneasiness, and censoriousness, was the prevailing temper of all the leading states of Europe. On the other hand, those invested with power, were not always sufficiently cautious and circumspect in the reforms and alterations they wished to make. They were too hasty in the execution of their plans; they drained the springs of power till they risked their breaking; they irritated the minds of their subjects by rash and violent measures; they increased the dangerous fermentation of the times, instead of using every endeavour to appease it; they often gave ear to rash, enthusiastic, and even suspicious counsellors, who, under the seductive pretext of the general good, and of immortal fame, led them by untimely, ill-combined, chimerical projects, into a labyrinth of errors and troubles, and brought them to the brink of ruin.

It may with truth be asserted, that so far as any causes of the revolutions we have seen, may be ascribed to the condition of civil society, they will be found in that very propensity to improvement, that very progress towards perfection, which was the pride and merit of the last century. Our greatness occasioned our fall; our insatiable desire of advancing was the cause of our enervation; our meritorious ambition led to our present humiliation. That there no longer existed any maxims of government, any principles of politics in Europe, was not the root of the evil: no, it was the abuse of those maxims and principles in measures too confident, too rash and enterprising, in reforms too sudden and too general at once, in attempts to rise from the safer paths of experience into regions yet untried of speculative politics. It was presumption, not indolence; enthusiasm, not aversion to reform; that involved

Europe in all the misfortunes it has since experienced; and led to a total disorganization, then and then only, when the real authors of those calamities received from the accidental errors of a feeble government, the signal for a general subversion.

This hasty sketch of the internal state of Europe before the revolution, is drawn with more truth than that which the Author has presented us. Every attentive observer of the progress and condition of mankind, in the last twenty years preceding that event, will admit the justice of it. But, leaving this general reasoning, we must now take a rapid view of the map of Europe; and consider briefly, the internal state of each of its component parts during that period; in order to show, by historical facts, that no nation was excluded from this bright career of amelioration and advancement; and that the same spirit, the same propensity, were everywhere awakened and manifested, though not always in the same manner and degree.

RUSSIA experienced its second political and moral regeneration, under the sceptre of an extraordinary woman. The thirty-four years reign of the Empress Catherine, was an almost uninterrupted series of great and important reforms in the internal state of her immense empire. It requires no extraordinary talents, no extraordinary pains, to discover many unfavourable parts in objects of such stupendous magnitude as that empire and government; and, like many modern writers, wholly regardless of the true point of view, to represent, even now, in the darkest colours, and perhaps to turn into ridicule, a nation which a hundred years ago was buried in the deepest barbarism; but every candid judge, if he be capable of distinguishing how much was attainable, and what means there existed of attaining it, will confess that the state of Russia, from 1780 to 1790, compared with the condition of that empire at the decease of Peter the Great, presents a difference truly astonishing. The new system of legislation of the Empress, her wise and humane regulations of police, her endeavours to promote industry, her new arrangement of the Russian dominions, her measures for ensuring the public safety, the education, the improvement, and the health of her subjects; the hospitals of different kinds which she established for the reception of the sick and poor; the unwearied zeal which she displayed in the service of the arts and sciences; the

liberality of opinion, the taste, and refinement in the habits of social intercourse diffused around her throne by the influence of her own accomplished mind – these are not symptoms of a government without energy or principles; are not indications of the decay and fall of nations. Even those restless projects of aggrandizement, which rendered the government of Catherine so dangerous to the repose of Europe, arose in a great measure (though not indeed altogether) from endeavours to carry her work to a degree of perfection, for which the time was not yet arrived. She attempted to supersede the necessity of a slow and gradual civilization of her immense empire, by bolder measures; she wanted to become a European power in the utmost extent of the word, and in the shortest way; her plans were greater than her means; she endeavoured to redouble those means, that she might accomplish, in a few years, what would, perhaps, in the common course of things, require a century. The reigning character of the age appeared even in her ambition.

The AUSTRIAN monarchy, under the government of Joseph II presented the remarkable spectacle of a severe and obstinate contest between a monarch inspired even to enthusiasm with the spirit of reform, and nations who rewarded his philanthropic zeal with ingratitude and resistance. The idea of an uniform system of legislation, of one common administration, for a state composed of so many heterogeneous parts, was indeed more like a philosophic dream, than a rational and practicable system of government. But, however blameable, this evidently proceeded from an excess of praiseworthy intentions, and was no sign of indifference to good. Those men whose interests were connected with the maintenance of ancient abuses, cried down the system of the Emperor; but all enlightened persons admired it. Posterity, more just, will at all events admire him. Many errors and much harm resulted from the hastiness of his conduit, which sometimes degenerated into violence and severity. Many of the complaints of his subjects were well founded: he more than once sacrificed to his speculative ideas of reform, the respect due to existing rights and consecrated prejudices, which frequently border on the most solid truths, and hold by the most respectable feelings. But his undertakings were often marked with the stamp of true wisdom, and sometimes produced noble and lasting fruit.

His name has been gloriously immortalized by many very important reforms in the religious, legislative, and domestic condition of his dominions, by many excellent establishments for public education, for the internal police, for the support and care of the poor and sick, and for the improvement of industry in the states he governed. It is a very remarkable circumstance, that all disturbances which arose in different parts of this monarchy, and especially the serious events in Hungary and the Netherlands, were excited by the too hasty execution of his benevolent intentions, by the impetuosity of a mind too ardent in the pursuit of the noblest objects of humanity, by the boldness of his projects of reform. If fate had permitted his successor, whose mild and peaceable disposition appeased every disturbance, and won the hearts of men at the very beginning of his reign, to finish the work undertaken by his brother; if he who exalted Tuscany to be the seat of true political wisdom, had been allowed to transport his excellent administration to a more extensive theatre; if no French revolution had arrested the progress of improvement, and blasted the blossoms of so many hopes, what might not the Austrian monarchy, under the government of Leopold and his successor, have attained to?

The achievements of Frederick II. have been too much the objects of general observation, too often the subjects of the most admired authors, not to render it unnecessary for me to dwell much upon them in this place. The world, afflicted and almost exhausted with continued wars, beheld the military talents of this extraordinary genius with dismay. It was his good fortune, by the service he rendered during twenty-three years of peace, to efface that impression. In that ever-memorable period the kingdom of PRUSSIA became a noble example of order, regularity, and energy; of fruitful industry, admirable cultivation, and true civil liberty⁽⁴⁹⁾: nor was the edifying example of this kingdom unproductive of good effects to others. More than one of the German princes imitated the system of government adopted by Frederick. Germany, in general, made remarkable advances in every branch of public welfare, between the end of the seven years war, and the beginning of the French revolution.

(49) Vide Note E.

With the exception of a few states, kept back by the difficulties of a general reform, or by the indolence of their rulers, the improvements in administration, held up by Prussia in the north, and by Austria in the south, to the imitation of their neighbours, were everywhere visible in their effects. It is only necessary to advert to the prosperous state of Saxony, Brunswick, Hanover⁽⁵⁰⁾, Holstein, Hesse, Baden, and many of the smaller principalities, and even some of the ecclesiastical states, during the last years of that period.

The slightest glance at the affairs of the BRITISH EMPIRE, is sufficient to banish every idea of decay and disorganization. The condition of that kingdom after the American war, was the first complete demonstration of the true principles of the wealth of nations, which had remained so long unknown. The loss of her colonies was the first æra of the lasting and independent greatness of Britain. It was after the year 1783 that she became conscious of her real strength, and clearly understood the true grounds upon which it rested. Until then she had more or less partaken of the errors and misconduct of the rest of Europe, derived from an imperfect knowledge of the system of commerce. She now took the lead of all, in a new career, and upon better principles. The French revolution, which interrupted the progress of all Europe, undoubtedly confined and retarded the completion of the masterly system of administration adopted in England. It is a phenomenon sufficiently extraordinary, which can only be explained by the history of its government during the preceding ten years, that Great Britain should have been able to maintain itself entire and unshaken in the dreadful war excited by that revolution⁽⁵¹⁾. What it might have attained to in a continuance of peace, must be a matter of mere hypothesis; but this hypothesis will receive a place among the clearest political truths from those who have been accustomed to study the true sources of the prosperity and strength of nations.

The government of DENMARK in the same period was characterized by measures which, though less splendid, were certainly not less

praiseworthy in their nature. It united, by a policy equally wise and liberal, the two extremes of all ministerial wisdom. It increased the revenue of the state, while it enriched its subjects: it confirmed its own power, while it gratified a just and reasonable love of liberty. The abolition of the last traces of villanage, the improved cultivation of the country, the wise laws enacted for fixing the relations between the peasantry and the proprietors of land, the liberty of the press, the harmony which reigned between the different orders of the state, the reciprocal confidence between the people and the throne: all these internal improvements form one of the most pleasing pictures which the page of history will have to hand down to posterity.

Though scantily endowed by nature, exhausted by the extravagant undertakings of her most celebrated princes, and fallen into decay during the destructive anarchy which immediately followed her unnatural greatness; even SWEDEN, under the reign of Gustavus III. made evident progress towards a state of greater prosperity and liability. The restless mind of that prince embraced every branch of the public welfare; introduced light, order, and activity into the chaos of a disordered government; and in the midst of many dangers and adversities, laid the foundations of a new one, upon which his successors, under more favourable circumstances; may completely organize a better system. The accounts which Gustavus, from time to time, laid before the diet, are noble proofs of his vigilance; industry, and acuteness; and though his passions sometimes counteracted the good which was the object of his zeal though the spirit of party ran very high during his life, and the apolitical situation of his country was often very critical; yet the benefit he conferred upon Sweden will long continue to be felt, and will be fully acknowledged by the judgment of an impartial posterity.

It may, perhaps, at the first glance, look somewhat like temerity, to mention the unfortunate kingdom of POLAND, in an account of the progress and improvement of the different states of Europe. But even in this retarded and neglected country, the dawn of a brighter day had begun, shortly before its dissolution, to lighten the horizon. No essential improvement was in this instance practicable without a thorough reform of the constitution; for the errors in the constitution were the real causes of the decay and weakness of the state. This first object had,

(50) The administration of this country has always been exemplary, and has implicitly followed the Prussian model, even in its military establishment. – TRANS.

(51) I mean to examine, and I hope completely to refute the opinion, that England has prospered by this war, in a subsequent chapter.

however, already occupied the attention of all thinking persons; and the partition of 1772, with all its evil consequences, had one beneficial effect for Poland; it pointed out, in the clearest and most impressive manner, the necessity of a great political regeneration. The patriotic zeal of the friends of a radical reform, and the general conviction of its necessity, first brought it forward as an object of public consideration, at the diet in 1788. The result of this diet is well known: the constitution of 1791 was the presage of a happier fortune, the beginning of a new state of existence, conformable to the spirit of the times, and the progress of civilization in the rest of Europe. This is not the place to review the series of events, by which this constitution was destroyed in the moment of its birth, and Poland for ever struck out of the list of nations. But there is one observation which applies immediately to my argument, and will be subscribed to without difficulty by every impartial reader acquainted with the history of modern times: had it not been for the French revolution, the constitution of 1791 would not have been destroyed, nor the political independence of Poland annihilated.

Of all the nations of Europe, SPAIN and PORTUGAL were perhaps the farthest behind in the general state of improvement. And yet the irresistible strength of that propensity to reform which actuated the most indolent governments was not altogether without effect even in these. Portugal had been awakened from her profound slumber by the administration of Pombal; another minister like him, one prince only of an active disposition, would have freed her altogether from the setters that encumbered her. Spain too began to understand her true intermits; and, however great the difficulties she had to surmount, the resolution of encountering them was not wanting⁽⁵²⁾. Much time, and many favourable circumstances, were requisite to ameliorate the condition of a nation, whose decay was the result of causes so ancient and so deeply rooted; but it is enough that the desire of reformation was awakened, and a resolution taken to effect it. We are not, at present, asserting the uniformity of the result, but the generality and uniformity of the impulse and exertions.

(52) Bourgoing's instructive work on Spain sufficiently shows that the Spanish government was not inactive or supine in the above period, though it had almost insurmountable difficulties to encounter.

Even ITALY, so far behind all other civilized nations, in proportion to her natural strength and advantages, which seemed to have defined her to a place among the first; even Italy had made some advances towards an improved state. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany, transformed into a paradise by Leopold, afforded a surprising example to the world of what may be accomplished in the short space of twenty years, by a prince endowed with wisdom, activity, and perseverance. This example could not possibly remain entirely useless to the neighbouring states: even the feeble government of Rome conceived the thought of rendering itself independent of contributions from abroad, by adopting principles of prudence and economy; and the measures of Cardinal Ruffo during the time he managed the finances of the Pope, were all founded upon that idea. Naples, a country fallen into the deepest decay, by the total neglect of every principle of government, oppressed with barbarous abuses and having such a constitution as rendered it almost impossible for the government to undertake any good work; Naples began to listen to prudent counsels, employed the wisest heads to project plans of a systematic reform, and was preparing to put them in execution⁽⁵³⁾. She would, doubtless, have had to encounter the greatest difficulties in accomplishing this; but it would have been undertaken; and no one can with certainty assert, that the attempt would have been unsuccessful, had not the storm of the revolution here, as everywhere else, destroyed good and bad together, and renewed the chaos, out of which a happier order of things was beginning to unfold itself to our hopes.

In order to complete this review of the states of Europe, we must, in the last place, direct our attention to the central point of the revolution; the country out of which its splendid promises, and its dreadful devaluations, have immediately proceeded. That the former government of FRANCE was such as stood in need of the greatest reforms; that the errors in its legislation, its administration, and its domestic constitution, were many and great, cannot for a moment be disputed. Nobody will attempt to deny that the government of Lewis the XVth laid the foundation of a dangerous disorganisation. But was

(53) Vide Note F.

the reign of LEWIS XVI. from its commencement to its tragical end, a proof of the assertion, that there no longer existed any proper principles of government in Europe? Was it not rather marked throughout by the desire of beneficial reforms, the prevailing character of the times? Was not its only misfortune a misconception of its strength, which sank under the weight of its own undertakings? Was the monarch who placed TURGOT and MALESHERBES among the number of his ministers, who twice intrusted the fate of his kingdom to the hands of NECKER, was he a patron of abuses, a blind follower of former systems? Was the *convocation of the NOTABLES*, and the plan for which they were convened, the work of mean, contemptible, obscure, and common-place politics? Was the facility, or rather the levity with which this government contented to the assembling of the States, a proof of tenacious obstinacy, or of an imprudent spirit of concession? Was the edict of the 5th July 1788, which not only established the freedom of the press, but called upon every hand that could guide a pen to employ itself in publishing plans of general utility – was that edict the measure of a court that trembled at every prospect of innovation? Was the decree of the council of state of the 27th December 1788, and the speech of the minister of finance of the 5th May 1789, and even the unfortunate declaration of the 23rd May – were these the productions of a government far behind the wishes and opinions of its enlightened subjects? Is the revolution, in short, to be attributed to the want of system and principles; or, on the contrary, to the superfluity and abuse of them?

These are questions which require no answers. In France, as in the rest of Europe, “that general chamber of impatience, restlessness, and mutability”, which the Author with justice describes as the distinguishing feature of the age, was only the necessary consequence, the expression, as it were, of a general sense of the progress already made, and the desire of further improvement. The events of the last ten years were occasioned by the too ardent and too hasty pursuit of good intentions, not by the general prevalence of corruption; and instead of admitting, that the true principles of administration were never so ill understood, we may, on the contrary assert with confidence, that they were never so generally and extensively known and practised in any period of history; that the condition of mankind had never required so

little as it then did, the violent revolution which France experienced, and of which all Europe has felt the effects; and that this revolution, instead of being the last link of a long chain of disorganisation and decay, was, on the contrary, the first link of a new chain of misfortune and disorder; the signal for a general pause, perhaps relapse in the state of Europe, by a daring attempt to leave the natural course of social improvement, and to bring it at once to perfection.

Such was the state of Europe with respect to the internal condition of its several nations. Let us now proceed to examine, whether, in their political relations towards each other, there is any better foundation for the belief of that general disorganisation and total want of *public law*, which are said to have existed at the time of the French revolution.

That this examination may not degenerate into empty speculation, we must, in the first place, define with precision, the meaning to be properly attached to the term *public law*, or law of nations (*droit public*).

A law of nations, in the most extensive sense of the word, would be such a constitution as should establish all their several relations by immutable laws: assign to each the place it ought to hold in the general system, so as not to interfere with the interests of the rest; guaranty the duration of this system by a perfect equilibrium of power, and provide effectual means for preventing every undertaking of a nature to destroy that equilibrium. Such a constitution can only exist in idea, never in reality. There never has been any law of nations in this sense of the word; and it would be in vain to expect it, until the project of perpetual peace be likewise realised.

To convince ourselves that the federal constitution of nations can never be otherwise than imperfect, we need only consider the imperfection of all systems invented and established by man; the immensity of the objects to be embraced by a code of laws, comprehending and regulating the rights of all nations; the impenetrability of the future; the mutability of the relations of society; and the alterations that must necessarily take place in the course of time, in the absolute and relative strength of different states, owing to the diversity of their fortunes, the inequality of their progress, or the personal abilities of their princes. The merits of such a constitution must always be merely relative, greater or less; and the most perfect federal system we can ever hope for, will at best

only be tolerable.

Whoever takes upon him to assert, that, at a certain period, the political system was utterly corrupted, and the federal constitution either eminently defective or totally annihilated, must be able to show, that at that period there existed no guarantee of public security; that the balance of power was entirely destroyed; that the weaker states could no longer find refuge or protection against the usurpations of the stronger; that one or a few of the powerful endangered the peace and security of the rest, and rendered their existence precarious; that the disputes of nations were no longer determinable by negotiations or treaties; and that war and force were the only resource, the only policy, the only umpire in all their differences.

Was this the state of the federative system of Europe at the commencement of the French revolution? I should contradict my own opinion were I to hesitate a moment to confess, that at that time the political system laboured under great defects, and was pervaded by many errors; that it was far, very far, removed from that perfect federal constitution, which we contemplate in idea; that the balance between the principal powers was by no means secured; and that the situation of the smaller states was in many respects dangerous and precarious. A great part of these errors and defects was the immediate consequence of the rapid civilization of Europe, by which the former proportions between the leading states were altered, and the disproportion between four or five preponderant nations on the one hand, and a great number of small, dispersed, and insignificant states on the other, was considerably augmented. This disproportion excited and encouraged many and various plans of ambition and usurpation; and at length added to the numberless combinations of modern politics, the celebrated system of partition, which inflicted deep and dangerous a wound on the federal constitution⁽⁵⁴⁾.

But I can never be persuaded to believe that “at the time of the French revolution, the political system of Europe had reached the last stage of decay and disorganization; that its every prop and foundation

was destroyed”; that “it preferred nothing but imbecility, anarchy, and confusion”. The history of the twenty-five years which elapsed between the peace of Hubertsburg and Fontainebleau, and the beginning of the disturbances in France, contradicts this assertion in every respect; the most indisputable facts stand in opposition to it; the slightest glance at the situation of Europe, during that period, confirms the very reverie. The federal constitution was at least as perfect as it ever had been since the thirty years war; nay, it was even more efficient and entire. The changes which Europe had experienced in the last 150 years had been as happily and wisely grafted on the former political relations, as, from the joint operation of accident and prudence (such is the nature of every federative system), could ever have been desired or expected; the balance of power was adjusted as effectually and as favourably as a liberal and reasonable policy could desire; and if there were some events which infringed the sacred principles of the federal constitution, they were at least avenged by the unanimous indignation, and the marked disapprobation of all cotemporaries. Europe possessed, in every reasonable sense of the word, a federative constitution, a political balance, and a law of nations.

To explain these truths, it will not be necessary to descend to a minute and particular analysis of the political relations existing at that period. It is sufficient if we dwell upon the leading features of the picture. The fate of Europe depends upon the fortunes and political relations of the powers which preponderate in the general system. If the balance be preserved among these; if their political existence and internal organization be safely established; if, by their mutual action and reaction, they protect and secure the independence of the smaller states (so much, at least, at the weak can be secure in a community with the strong); if there is no dangerous preponderance to be perceived, which threatens to oppress the rest, or to involve them in endless war; we may rest satisfied with the federal constitution which fulfils these most essential points, notwithstanding many errors and defects. And such was the federal constitution of Europe before the French revolution.

The five powers which since the middle of the eighteenth century have constituted the principal weight in the general political system

(54) Vide Note G.

are, France, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and England. In considering the federal relations of these states, we shall have an opportunity of adverting to those of a second and third order, as well as to some of a still lower rank, so far at least as they affect the general survey of Europe. (...)

PART II.

*Of the Situation of Europe after
the French Revolution*

False premises lead to false conclusions. The author of the *Etat de la France* having described Europe, before the revolution, as a scene of universal anarchy and ruin, it was natural to expect he would erect superstructure of the same kind on that foundation, which is not merely exaggerated, but altogether arbitrary, and in defiance of history and experience: this was a matter of course. But however prepared we might be for strange, unusual, and paradoxical conclusions, our Author has far exceeded the most extravagant expectations.

If it should happen that nothing more remained for the reader of some future time, than his dark picture of the former political system of Europe; if, from the principal features, the tone and spirit of that fragment, it were required to guess the remainder of his work; I can hardly conceive that any future commentator would be found possessed of sufficient penetration and assurance to restore the latter part in its true shape. The most rational conjecture would, perhaps, suppose the following reasoning: “The revolution found Europe weakened and distracted on all sides; deprived of every guarantee of a due equilibrium, every pillar of its federal constitution, every maxim of state administration, and every, principle of the law of nations. It kindled a dreadful war; and the convulsions that ensued, subverted the few pillars of the social constitution that yet supposed the tottering edifice. Destruction advanced with giant strides; the whole building crumbled into atoms, and Europe became a theatre of ruin and desolation. But however melancholy the fate of the unhappy generation that survived this catastrophe, however pitiable their situation, however critical and hopeless the prospect of their regeneration, they had no right to complain of their lot; they had no real cause to lament it. No right, for their misfortune was their fault; they might have foreseen the approaching evil; they deserved it by their criminal indifference to the obvious indications of an approaching storm, by their guilty inactivity in the midst of the daily more visible decay of their whole social system, of their civil, political, and federal relations. They had no reason to lament it; for what they lost was in reality not worth regretting. Their existence had long been divested of everything that could contribute to its dignity, safety, and consistency; the anarchy was complete, however veiled by custom, indolence, and the daily palliatives of a contemptible commonplace policy. The explosion

was not to be avoided; the revolution, and the war it produced, were only the last and decisive efforts of the evil; and whatever a suffering world may have endured under the joint scourges of these two dreadful plagues, yet it may, and it ought sincerely to rejoice that the crisis is at length surmounted, and the period arrived, when, rising from the ruins of the past, it may erect a new edifice with more solid materials, more deliberate wisdom, and more accurate principles; and hand down to a grateful posterity the blessings of a more perfect constitution”.

This reasoning, all built upon the assumption of the total inefficacy of our former political and civil organization, will of course have no weight where the premises are not admitted: and I think I have fully proved, in a preceding chapter, that such petitions will not bear strict examination. The writer, however, would have been justified in proceeding upon these grounds to the consequences above stated. Had he been satisfied with that, he would at least have avoided the reproach of doing violence to his own promises, of abusing his principles by unwarranted conclusions, and of having, by a singular refinement of sophistry, deduced an arbitrary and false result from a false and arbitrary hypothesis.

The Author was not satisfied with painting the revolution as a necessary consequence of the previous disorder of Europe, and the war of the revolution, with all its new disorders, as its natural companion. Such a gradation was not bold and striking enough for him: he passed over the revolution, and deduced the general war between France and the powers of Europe, *immediately* from the faultiness of the former federal constitution, the annihilation of all political principle, the dissolution of the law of nations and the blindness and folly of all governments.

I should exhaust the patience of the reader were I to recapitulate the string of accusations, by which, in the first chapters of his work, he supports this singular deduction, and in which he vents his spleen under various colours and pretences, and sometimes in the most violent terms. It will suffice at present to bring forward a single passage, which, though one of the most moderate, will throw much light upon the general train of his ideas. On a nearer examination of this system, we shall have more than one opportunity of following him in the rest of his observations.

“The war of the revolution”, such are the words of this passage, “was the last scene of a hundred and fifty years of improvidence,

blindness, and impolicy. After having first dreaded the ascendancy of France without cause, or from exaggerated motives, and afterwards long disdained her beneficial influence, the powers of Europe became accustomed to dispense with her tutelary, preponderance, and made a sport of her political degradation during thirty years; and when at length some unexpected circumstances enabled a nation, whose ambitious politics were never effectually checked but by France, to debate in the most public manner, whether the ought not to be extirpated – all Europe took arms, and formed a confederacy as wicked as it was senseless; from which moment every vestige of the law of nations was abolished”. – Thus arose, according to the Author’s ideas, a war, whose dreadful consequences have shaken the federal system to its foundations; have rendered the present state of Europe an enigma; made its future existence problematical; and destroyed more within the short space of ten years, than many centuries had raised, or perhaps than ages will be able to restore. This war was a wanton attempt, by the most unnatural of all alliances, to build a new political system, and establish a new division of power upon the ruins of the French monarchy; and thus to restore the long-lost balance of Europe, by for ever annihilating the first and most important of its elements!

If the events of this war were utterly effaced from the memories of all who witnessed them; if history were suddenly to stop, and the space between 1789 and 1801 to remain a frightful blank for posterity; still this representation, or rather misrepresentation, of its origin, must forever be incredible while a vestige yet remains of the former system of Europe. Such could not possibly be the causes of that war! Would the latest posterity exclaim; and shall we who have seen and survived it, be imposed upon by fables, which have not even the merit of being ingeniously fabricated?

There certainly was a time when the most dangerous attempts were apprehended, not “without sufficient cause”, from the ambitious politics of France; against whom, a general league would then have been a very probable, and at the same time justifiable and even necessary measure. It would even then have been a violation of sense and justice to project the total degradation of France, instead of defining her proper limits; or to look for the security of Europe in the dismemberment, conquest,

or annihilation of that nation. In a period, however, of such general discontent, the extravagant fears of one prince, or restless ambition of another, or secret enmity under colour of the public safety, might have conceived or favoured so absurd a plan; which under those circumstances would not be quite unaccountable, though neither laudable nor wise. But what inducement, immediate or remote, could incite the powers of Europe to overwhelm France at the end of the eighteenth century? When, at peace with all the world, she was governed by a mild, just, and conscientious monarch; and when she was so far from alarming the whole system by ambitious views of preponderance, that she gave not the slightest umbrage to her nearest neighbours⁽⁵⁵⁾? None of the continental states could be profited by the ruin of France; not one of them could hope to rise by her degradation. Among the very abundant political combinations of the age, there is not the smallest vestige of a conspiracy against her. The author of any such scheme would have been ridiculed as a visionary projector at every court in Europe. What then could have united all nations in an enterprise for which no one had the smallest motive or inclination, or any reasonable hope of success?

It is perfectly natural, that a person desirous of gaining credit for so absurd an opinion, should recur for that purpose to the all-explaining influence of England; the only power that could be conceived inimical to the security and independence of France. But what childish credulity must the man suppose in his readers, who can attempt to persuade them that the powers of the continent were all leagued against that nation, merely to gratify England! That those powers, seized with one common mania, departed from all policy, sense, and justice; that they sacrificed every interest and advantage on the same pile with the elaborate structure of an admirable federal constitution – to make England sole mistress of the seas! To give the smallest colour of probability to so extravagant a combination, so monstrous an absurdity, some facts, or something, at least, in the shape of facts, ought to have been appealed to. But where are they to be found? Who has ever attempted to adduce the slightest proof of all this? And though amidst the greatest confusion,

(55) Vide Note Z.

and in the darkest periods of the revolution, when the minds of men, inflamed by the wildest passions and smarting under the severest sufferings, eagerly pursued every chimera and caught at every wonder to explain their inexplicable fortunes; though there were then some impudent declaimers, who in some degree successfully represented the wickedness of the British ministry as the cause of all the afflictions of Europe; yet how could a writer of the YEAR 8 associate with such incorrigible impostors? How could a politician, professedly calm and impartial, give way to such gross excesses of revolutionary violence? How could he be so ignorant or unmindful of history, as to attribute to England the origin of a war, that had lasted nearly eight months, before it ceased to be doubtful whether that nation would maintain the strictest neutrality amidst the dissensions of the continent?

No! If that accursed war, which has overwhelmed the federal system of Europe, was indeed the effect of a general, premeditated, systematic confederacy against France, the object of that confederacy was at least very different from what the Author has asserted. If there ever was a coalition, and if the plans of that coalition did really produce the war, it was neither jealousy of France, nor a desire to weaken and degrade, nor any ridiculous project of dismembering that kingdom, that constituted its origin and intent. It was formed not against France, but the revolution; it was not the ascendant of the French nation, (what ground of alarm could that afford in the year 1791?) but its hopeless distractions, that drew down the unexpected storm upon Europe.

It would be foreign to my purpose to enter into a particular discussion of the causes of this war⁽⁵⁶⁾. It is an inexhaustible subject, on which politician will be long divided; and if similarity of views and uniformity of opinion are ever to be attained in this intricate question, it can only be in other times, and among other men; when truth shall have prevailed over all hypotheses. At present I shall merely submit my private opinion; and though none of my readers should be inclined to follow it, I am firmly persuaded I shall be able to prove most satisfactorily, that the system of our Author is devoid of all foundation.

(56) Vide Note A.A.

It has always been my opinion (and I know many enlightened statesmen think the same), that the war was not produced by a coalition against France; that, in the strict sense of the word, such a coalition never has existed, and would have remained an empty speculation, an idle dream of a few ministers, if France had not compelled the powers of Europe, in a certain degree, to realize it. Even after this, when the common danger was at the highest, the coalition was only a name without meaning. The war was resorted to and commenced by France herself, that is, by the dreadful succession of outrageous and barbarous factions which enslaved, distracted, and tyrannized over her during ten years. What rendered it inevitable, was the wide difference between those reigning factions and the rest of Europe, in their systems of administration, and in all their principles of internal and external policy; which created a discordance not to be remedied by any peaceful measures. The revolutionary chiefs, aware of all this, and feeling the precariousness of their own situations, recurred to the war as the only means of maintaining themselves, or as the last refuge of their despair; and they would have contrived to involve all Europe in this misfortune, even though every government had been anxious to avoid it, even had they coalesced to preserve peace. Unimpelled by any coalition, at a time when the very name did not yet exist, and not a vestige of it was perceptible, they challenged successively every nation, near or remote, continental or maritime, and at length made one general declaration of war against every ancient establishment. Thus Europe had no alternative but the dangers of the contest on the one hand, and the perhaps still greater danger, with which, on the other, those demagogues threatened the very elements of the social constitution.

Such appears to me to be the origin of the war against the French revolution: for either there never has been a war against France, or it has only been a consequence of the other. In this opinion I may be wrong: but the mistake is certainly not owing to prejudice or want of reflexion. My judgment has been formed by a studious observation of the characters and actions of the two great parties in the awful contest which, during ten years, has desolated Europe. On the one hand, I have incessantly watched the fate and progress of the revolution, the speeches and writings of its chiefs, and the manifold testimonies they themselves have afforded in

the accusations and replies with which each declining or falling party threw the blame of the war on its successful adversaries. On the other band, I have carefully examined and compared every document and correspondence laid before the public, and all those imaginary treaties said to be the basis of the coalition; I have collected every authentic information concerning the opinions, views, and conduct of its pretended founders and patrons. Lastly, my opinion is supported by the solemn coinciding assurances of many highly respected statesman; an authority to which, in a problem of this nature, I may surely be permitted to refer.

Having thus declared my opinion, I will push impartiality so far as to set it entirely aside, and will endeavour, if possible, to forget it. I intend to meet the Author of the *Etat de la France* on his own grounds, and will suppose the war to have been produced by a coalition of the powers of Europe.

The first, and I think the most important, question will then be, whether such a league, when impartially considered, would be so condemnable, so unjustifiable, so impolitic, so monstrous as the Author asserts; whether it would justly incur the abuse he heaps upon it?

I will here once again declare my own opinion, without insisting upon it as a demonstrable truth.

I do not conceive it to be universally true, "that a nation has no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of any other", and I trust I shall not be singular in regarding it as liable to great exceptions. There are cases in which found policy suggests, and the law of nations permits, an active intervention in the internal proceedings of a foreign country. Such a case arises when there happens in any, especially if it be a principal state of Europe, a disorder so great, general, and permanent (it must have all these qualities) as manifestly to endanger the neighbouring powers. Those powers are still more justified in not remaining inactive spectators of such disorders, when there are several parties contending for the government of the distracted country upon various pretences, and the right of legislation is disputed by a variety of claimants. I regard the French revolution as an event of this kind, not merely permitting, but absolutely requiring the active interference of other nations. The all-destructive principles upon which it was founded, the criminal excesses and contempt of every right that attended its progress, would

have justified an early opposition. The constitution of 1791, instead of diminishing, strengthened and confirmed the right of interference; for no one, even in France, will now deny that it was calculated to organize the anarchy, and of course to prolong the miseries of the unhappy country, and the danger of its neighbours. What completed, and gave, as it were, the ultimate sanction to this right, was the scene that presented itself immediately after the introduction of that constitution. The popular members of the National Assembly, and the favourite orators of the clubs (the men who at that time governed the country), then poured forth the torrent of their abuse and calumny against all the governments of Europe; they commenced an inveterate persecution of every ancient establishment, of every sacred principle that ensured the obedience of the citizen and the safety of the throne; they called upon all people, to throw off their allegiance; and their speeches and writings were a series of reiterated insults that announced every day more openly the hostilities they were resolved to realize with other weapons.

Under these circumstances, a coalition against the *destroyers of France*, not against France herself, would have been prudent, just, and beneficial; in everything the reverse of a wicked conspiracy. It would not however have deferred this meritorious character, unless conceived and projected upon principles pure and disinterested, with views liberal and enlightened. Every idea of partition, dismemberment, or subjection, being inadmissible, the complete independence of France should have been the first article, the most sacred and inviolable stipulation of the league. Nor should any foreign power have assumed the right of prescribing a new constitution; for that would have been out of the province and beyond the just policy of its intervention. A foreign power in such a case has nothing more to do than to remove every unnatural obstacle to a proper constitution, to facilitate the restoration of law and order, and to give freedom to the lawful depository of sovereign authority. Here must end all foreign interference; the rest is entirely a domestic concern, to be left to the energy, skill, and wisdom of those intruded with the business of regenerating the distracted state.

This I conceive to be the only tenable opinion on a subject which the Author of *l'Etat de la France* has seen in a different light: for he has put a very hateful, and I think a very false construction upon the plan of

such a coalition. Among other things, he says, "Can any man reconcile an undertaking of this nature to the true principles of a federal system? Can it be aliened that those who contrived that immense combination of offensive relations, were actuated by views of general interest? Can they be laid to have intended to distinguish the rights of the continental and maritime powers, to define the just limits, add secure the independence of each? Could this engagement, so hastily and unadvisedly made, be of long duration?" etc. Immediately after this, he says, "A league of this nature is necessarily in opposition to the principles which should be the groundwork of every alliance"; "the nations so leagued were never allies"; and, "because they found no word in the political dictionary, whereby to denote their monstrous convention, they were forced to invent a new one; and to give the term *coalition* to that which will be more properly denominated in future histories, a conspiracy against the rights of a single people, and a solemn, premeditated renunciation of every principle of the law of nations".

What can we expect to find but nonsense, contradiction, and unnatural combinations, if we attempt to apply the principles that should regulate every ordinary alliance, to a league quite extraordinary in its nature? A coalition neither is, nor ever can be, an alliance. Whether in earlier times the word coalition has been used in the sense now given to it, is a question of little import; the thing itself has existed at all times, or might at least have existed at any time. It is evident, that amidst the great variety of social revolutions, there must sometimes occur cases, in which a temporary, urgent, and truly common interest, may suspend every usual federative relation, and unite all nations in the prosecution of a common object, without regard to the similitude or diversity of their permanent views. Such an union must always be transient as the interest which creates it; but, while it does exist, it operates in a manner peculiar to itself. An alliance, that is, a permanent league formed for the maintenance of certain permanent interests – an alliance of all Europe against a single power, is utterly inconsistent with any principles of genuine politics; a coalition, the effect of extraordinary circumstances, may sometimes be enjoined by necessity; and will then be approved by prudence, and sanctioned by every principle of justice. This very important distinction takes all weight from what the Author has said

about the “gigantic and visionary association of the European powers”: his severe and angry animadversions have no longer an object or a meaning. What have we to do with an alliance, a permanent similarity of interests, the possibility of long duration? What with the continental and maritime nations, the distinction of their rights, and security of their respective limits? These, with everything else the Author has supposed, sought, and found wanting in this “monstrous confederacy”, are quite foreign to the subject. The whole business is simply a temporary junction of the strength of all nations, in order to obviate a common danger: till that danger be averted, till the all-threatening revolution be divested of its hostile and formidable character, brought within bounds, and rendered incapable of mischief; till then, but no longer, the private interests of Austria, Prussia, Spain, and England, must all be confounded in a more important consideration – the maintenance of the social constitution. This being completely secured, everything would return to its former state; the ordinary federal principles would again prevail, and Europe resume her natural character, and submit to her ancient laws. It is not more confident with true federal policy to call such a compact “a solemn abjuration of all principle” than it is agreeable to the just notions of the law of nations to term it an “atrocious conspiracy”, or “a wanton attempt upon the liberties of France”.

I am well aware that the right of one nation to interfere in the domestic affairs of another (the first principle upon which the foregoing argument is founded), so far from being universally acknowledged, is, on the contrary, remedied unconditionally, and in every possible case, by many political writers. But however various the opinions of men on this important point, there is surely nobody so intolerant as to admit of none but his own. Let us then, in order to grant everything for the moment, suppose it doubtful whether such a coalition were justifiable, even in the very extraordinary and critical situation of Europe after the year 1789; let us suppose all governments to have been seduced by views positively false, are they, on account of this error, to be branded with the reproach of madness or guilt? If it really was an error (which I am very far from thinking), it was at least a pardonable one; pardonable on account of the magnitude of the danger; and pardonable on account of the obvious and immense advantage to be derived from the success of a well-

concerted plan. The true object, whether just or unjust, of this coalition, and the motives ascribed to it by the unprincipled sophistry of French politicians, are as different from each other, as the accidental error of a skilful calculator, from the ignorance and stupidity of a perfect idiot. Supposing the powers of Europe to have coalesced imprudently against the *French revolution*, they have not thereby incurred the reproaches they would merit, had they senselessly made war upon *France* herself.

But the last and apparently most formidable question is, whether the common safety, well or ill understood, was really the ground of this general combination? Whether do we not attribute to its authors a degree of wisdom of which their plans were in truth utterly destitute? And whether the idle hope of profiting by the distress of France, of weakening her for ever, of dismembering, and perhaps subduing her, did not constitute the true though secret motive of the undertaking?

To this question I have only one answer, which is involved in the following dilemma: – either there never was a coalition, in the ordinary sense of the word, the war was the sole work of revolutionary demagogues, and the confederacy in question was strictly defensive; or the common safety of Europe was the only object of that coalition. The latter part of the alternative is proved in a few words; *it could have no other motive*. Whatever temerity, perfidy, or folly, may be imputed to, or imagined of this or that government, it is impossible to suppose it ever could be the wish, the interest, or the aim of all Europe to dismember or ruin France. Suppose Austria to have projected a coalition in order to despoil her of some provinces; suppose England to have done the same with a view to extinguish the French navy; it will still remain inconceivable how Prussia, Spain, Sardinia, Sweden, Russia, the States of Germany and Italy, and even the Ottoman Porte, were drawn into this senseless league. The trite and trivial recourse to intrigue and bribery, and Heaven knows what secret and magic arts, now meets with contempt and ridicule throughout Europe, as an exploded fable. How careless of truth, how deficient in argument must that person be who can mention a handful of guineas as the cause of a coalition of Europe against France! As the origin of a league in which the most heterogeneous elements combined; in which the natural friends and natural enemies of France were ranged on the same side; and in which, according to the principles of ordinary

politics, it is impossible to imagine, much more to ascertain and define, a common object! How far above all ordinary considerations must be the aim of a confederacy, which, instead of affording any prospect of advantage to its members in general, exacted many painful sacrifices; and which exposed them to a multitude of dangers to encounter a single evil; an evil big indeed with the greatest of all dangers!

This then is the only alternative: a coalition on the most justifiable grounds, or no coalition. Every other view of the subject must be imaginary or absurd. To me the choice appears by no means dubious. I believe it to be the misfortune of Europe, that there never has existed a coalition in the true sense of the word. There was nothing at the beginning of the war in the least resembling it. The loose and undefined league to which we now give the appellation, was produced by the urgency of a common danger, and the immediate necessity of defence; it was not the result of a regular, preconcerted system of attack. But if ever this opinion shall be refuted, if some archive, yet a secret, some more authentic document than the treaties of Pavia, Pilnitz, Mantua, etc. should afford the future historian of these melancholy times, indisputable proofs of a premeditated, systematic, and offensive coalition, though it were only of a few leading states; I here confidently assert before-hand, that it will not confirm one syllable of what the Author of *l'Etat de la France* has imputed to such a league, and that the general welfare of Europe will be found its only object. If there ever has been a coalition, and in whatever degree it may have existed, this must have been its only basis: it could have no other⁽⁵⁷⁾.

We cannot therefore ascribe the war to the defects of the federal constitution, either before or after the year 1789; for it was in every respect foreign to the good or bad maxims and combinations, to the happy or unsuccessful efforts of ordinary politics. It was an unnatural and unforeseen event that confounded and defied all human calculation; it was the revolution produced this terrible war. The revolution, and that alone, overturned the political system by an unfortunate attempt to support it; dissolved every federal obligation, subverted and demolished

every pillar of the balance of power, and converted the federal constitution of Europe into a scene of anarchy and confusion, whence no human skill or wisdom will speedily deliver it without the miraculous interference of Providence.

That Europe, in its present unnatural and helpless condition – the dreadful result of ten successive years of convulsions and misfortune – that Europe now possesses no federal constitution, now scarce retains any public law, is a melancholy truth, in which all parties seem to agree. The Author of the *Etat de la France* is far from doubting it. The peculiarity of his arbitrary, sophistical, and paradoxical reasoning consists in his attempt to deduce from an earlier period the source of the general disorder; to withdraw the first and only cause of it, by an artful misrepresentation, from the eyes of his cotemporaries; and thus, if successful, to exempt and purify his country from the everlasting reproach of having brought so dreadful a misfortune upon civil society.

But where the connexion between cause and effect is so obvious as to strike the meanest understanding, and catch the most inexperienced eye, all the efforts of sophistry must necessarily be vain. The only difference of opinion, the only doubts that have hitherto prevailed, have been concerning the authors of the war; and we may safely predict, that even these will soon be dispelled by the light of truth; so that France, as well as every other nation, will point the curses of the present, and the abhorrence of future ages, where they are really due. But sophistry will now attempt in vain to dispel the conviction, that Europe owes the dangers and distress of her present situation entirely to the revolution and its consequent war.

I shall not minutely examine the causes that have rendered the present war so destructive in its character, and so unfortunate to most of the nations concerned in it; of which the dangerous preponderance of France has been the last, most important, and permanent effect. I shall confine myself to a few observations, of which the truth is too evident to expose me to contradiction. That series of misfortunes was not a simple phenomenon; it was the result of circumstances extremely complex and intricate. On the one hand genius and depravity, and on the other inevitable inferiority, with deplorable, perhaps condemnable weakness, assisted each other to produce it. It is difficult to say which was the

(57) Vide Note B B.

principal of these cooperating causes; but each must be taken into the account; each was at once cause and effect, each at once an original principle and complementary condition of the other. Future ages will do ample justice to the extraordinary energy and steady perseverance, the unshaken intrepidity and military talents, the daring enterprises and inexhaustible resources of war displayed by France amidst the storms of the revolution, to the wondering nations of Europe in arms. But history will remind us, too, that this extraordinary vigour grew from the same root with a no less extraordinary depravity; and that the means of such unheard of efforts, such gigantic enterprises, could only be afforded by a revolution that trampled on all rights, tore down every barrier of civil polity, and gave a loose to every irregular passion. Moreover, this enormous military greatness is less a subject of wonder, when we reflect that every social and civil consideration, the interests of justice, and even of humanity, the welfare, and in a certain degree the existence of a great nation, the rich harvest of the past, and the seeds of the future, were sacrificed to that splendid but unprofitable greatness.

On the other hand, it is evident that the powers leagued against the revolution could not imitate the proceedings adopt the measures, and use the means of the common enemy, without risking all they were contending for, and introducing to their own countries the very evils they were combating: the difference always existing between the resources of a coalition and those of a revolutionary government, produced the necessary inferiority of the enemies of France. But it is equally evident that this unavoidable disproportion, this necessary inferiority, are far from being sufficient to explain all the events of our times. Some evil genius seems to have perplexed the councils of every cabinet, and paralysed their political and military energies; for it has been their fate to meet the most trying difficulties with pitiful projects, half-measures, weak and incapable instruments, and a deplorable deficiency of everything the magnitude of the occasion required. They too late, if ever, learnt the character of their enemy, and how to combat revolutionary weapons and resources. There was no plan, coherence, or uniformity in their proceedings; no two of them were of one opinion. Their unfortunate (dissensions, the fatal influence of their private interests, their want of unanimity and concert, the tardiness and indecision of their measures,

redoubled the strength and courage of their enemy. Capable, at most, of a weak and partial defence, unequal to a vigorous and uniform attack, they formed no effective coalition, but were merely a reluctant assemblage of ill-according parts. They were, in short, unfortunately for the interests of Europe, anything imaginable, except what the subtle declamations of the enemy, and the easy credulity of the age, have represented and believed.

The issue of a war so conducted between such parties, could not be doubtful, and, in fact, was exactly such as had been predicted by all men of judgment and penetration. The first of its unfortunate results was the entire failure of the original and only object of the coalesced powers. While they were all wasting their strength, and many of them hastening to ruin, the revolution was triumphant; the most scandalous enormities remained unpunished; the perpetrators of the most atrocious crimes that ever disgraced the earth, ascended the throne of Lewis XIV. assumed a plenitude of authority to which the power of that mighty despot bears no comparison, and drowned the monarchy of France in the blood of its last defenders. But this was not all; they overran the neighbouring states; they devoured the substance of the richest countries in Europe; they carried the symbol of their tyranny, under the name of the Tree of Liberty, through an hundred provinces; they extended their territory on all sidea by conquest, by forced alliances, or by compulsory treaties; and when all this was accomplished, resistance no longer possible, the dominion of the revolutionary rulers established, and the balance of Europe irrecoverably lost; the single hope that yet remained – that of seeing the monstrous edifice fall to pieces of itself – suddenly vanished; the scene changed, and this colossal fabric; these new resources, these territorial acquisitions, these forced connexions, this military power and terrible preponderance, were all consolidated in the hands of a regular, skilful, and comparatively popular government. The old revolutionary system was demolished as a useless pile. No principle, of rule was now acknowledged but the will and ambition of the reigning party, and the genius of its chief and this government, thus strengthened and consolidated, gave laws to a great part of Europe.

Such is the state of things at the present moment⁽⁵⁸⁾. The political system which resisted the violence of so many storms until the French revolution, and whose strong foundations had defied the vicissitudes of fortune, and the lapse of time, has been concerted into a heap of ruins by the revolution, and its necessary companion the war. Europe, say the friends as well as enemies of the preponderant power; Europe has entirely lost its balance. Let us now proceed to inquire if there be any hope of seeing it re-established.

(58) The autumn of 1801.

PART III.

*Of the present Relations between France
and the other European States*

Before I enter upon the thorny path that now awaits me, I must premise a few observations, to explain as much as possible the point from which I set out, and from which alone the course of my reasoning can be fairly traced and judged. I hope thereby not only to secure myself against wilful misrepresentation, but even to disarm that lawful criticism which does not exceed the limits of its province.

Politics, or, more properly, the diplomatic branch of them, consist of two elements of different natures:

1st, An accurate knowledge of the peculiar relations of every state:
2dly, The talent of estimating the capacities and characters of the principal actors on the great stage of public affairs, so as to form a correct judgment of the nature and object of their views, and of the influence and probable consequences of their conduct every political transaction. The rules by which a statesman should on all occasions be guided, ought to be founded upon a due combination of these two principles.

It is obvious, that politics, as far as it depends upon personal characters and dispositions is only an art, since these relations can never be the object of science, The opinions, inclinations and passions, the talents and abilities of individuals, cannot be reduced to general rules: they are various and irregular as nature. Long study, much observation, frequent intercourse with the world, and great natural penetration, improved by habit and experience into a talent of divination, are the indispensable requisites to a diplomatic statesman. The deepest researches, the most extensive knowledge, all the advantages of an excellent understanding improved by habits of reflection, will not supply these qualities, or compensate the want of them.

Practical politics must necessarily be imperfect as a science; for a considerable part of it depends upon these personal considerations, and the art of observing and directing them. Its most elaborate and profound calculations are constantly baffled by the influence of human opinions and actions; its apparently most infallible conclusions are frequently disappointed by a single change in the fate of one important personage; by a striking thought, a moment of weakness or passion, by a whim, a capricious fit of favour or disgust. Its most fatal enemy is death, which frequently defeats its speculations, because it seldom forms a part of them. The decease of a single person has often destroyed the work and

combinations of a century; the appearance of one new actor on the great theatre of the world has brought about events which the boldest and most ingenious politicians could not have discovered by an age of meditation.

But however necessary, in all political calculations, to keep those circumstances constantly in mind, and not to carry the science beyond its unalterable limits; it would on the other hand be extremely improper to attach too little importance to the elementary and essential part of politics. I call that the essential part which relates to the absolute and relative strength of nations; and requires a knowledge of all their fundamental and permanent relations, their geographical situations, the political and military security of their frontiers, their wants, their powers, their means of invasion or resistance, the natural and constant objects of their industry, and their several predominant interests. These are, perhaps, the most important articles in the vocabulary of politics; because they are the most permanent, and in some measure the only permanent objects. Whatever changes may take place in the opinions and passions, the dispositions and capacities of men, the inclinations and aversions of princes; there will always be certain fixed and immutable points in the changeable sphere of politics; always some fundamental relations, some principles of action, which no accidental change can alter or destroy. A great and powerful country, advantageously situated, will, even under a government comparatively weak, always be capable of greater efforts to resist or attack an enemy, than a small, defenceless, and divided state, though governed by a prince of extraordinary abilities. A nation whose power is supported by commerce and industry, will on all occasions act on other principles than a state whose greatness rests principally or entirely upon military strength. Amidst the combinations of private views and passions, there must always exist some natural alliances and rivalships among nations. The true, that is, the permanent and fundamental, interest of each, will, soon or late, prevail, however perverted, disguised, or concealed, by the temper or the errors of the moment. Political calculations, founded upon these principles, will never be entirely disappointed, never ultimately useless, notwithstanding accidental changes and exceptions.

There are therefore two extremes to be avoided with equal care in all political reckonings: on the one hand, the opinion that the permanent

relations of states are alone to be considered; and on the other, that they are entitled to no consideration at all. With the first of these the *art*, with the second the *science* of politics must fall. To acquire true notions, whereby to regulate our conduct in politics, we must first study the fundamental relations of every state in their whole extent; and then always be mindful of the changes that may possibly be occasioned in these by the personal circumstances, the principles, the character, and private opinions of their rulers.

I shall here confine myself to these permanent relations, setting aside all consideration of persons. I consider any nation dangerous to the tranquillity of others when it wants nothing to injure them but the will; whether it be governed by virtuous or depraved characters, guided by true or false principles. On the other hand, I regard the situation of a country as helpless and precarious, without adverting to the possibility of its being exalted above all its dangers by the exertions of an extraordinary prince, and so raised to a higher degree of power and independence: here again I judge without reference to anything personal, and conclude a nation to be weak and defenceless, when some unusual occurrence (such as the birth of a pre-eminent genius) is necessary to its preservation and security.

Many of my readers will perhaps think me blameable for adhering strictly to this rule, in a picture where FRANCE is the principal figure. But to this blame I must submit; because the method I have adopted appears to me the safest as well as the most equitable. It is true, indeed, that the personal relations of men in power can never affect a political question in a higher degree, than where the subject is a nation immediately issuing from a great revolution. Much more depends in such a case than in any other, upon the character of the government, and the probability of a change in its component parts. But if I renounce many important arguments derivable from these peculiar circumstances, I am the more certain that even the friends of the French government will not invalidate my reasoning.

The following observations on the political and federal situation of France, are therefore entirely confined to her real and permanent relations. I abstain from inquiring how far the personal character and principles of her present government deserve the confidence, or justify the distrust of other nations. Its partisans assure us it has renounced all

revolutionary projects, and directs its views to safety, peace, and justice only: others assert, that its moderation is but a new cloak for old maxims, which conceals the same ambition and perfidy, the same oppression and systematic tyranny that characterized the ruling faction in every period of the revolution. These opinions I leave to the practical statesman, whose conduct must be materially influenced by them, and to the future historian, whose province it will be to relate and judge the proceedings of this government hereafter. Neither shall I inquire whether the duration of the present constitution of France be within the sphere of human probability. I will suppose it durable; could its warmest advocate require more? What I am now going to say of France is entirely independent of any such inquiry, and must be equally true, whether a Bonaparte, a Robespierre, or a Bourbon be at the head of the French government.

We have already examined the state of France before the revolution, her security, her means of defence, and the nature of her frontiers; in all of which she had nothing left to desire. She was more happy in the first requisite to a good federal position than any nation in Europe. Her conquests, in the last ten years, are a powerful addition to her security. She stood in no need of them whatever, and has thus acquired a superfluity of political and federal strength. She was secure against every attack with her ancient frontiers; with her newly-extended limits she may bid defiance to the plans and efforts of all Europe.

But however secure and powerful this kingdom was in its ancient state, there were always several powers in Europe capable of curbing its ambitious views of inordinate aggrandizement, and restraining its attempts upon the peace and safety of others, as often as it betrayed such dangerous designs. It was constantly counterpoised by Austria, Prussia, or England; and if any of these was not singly strong enough to counteract its efforts, it was then effected by a well-directed combination of their means. France was, moreover, surrounded by several independent states, which, though comparatively of little weight, yet served to break the force of the first attack; gave time to the leading powers to assemble and prepare for defence; and, united with them, contributed to preserve the balance at all times. *This system is entirely destroyed.*

The chief bulwark of the north of Germany, and consequently of the north of Europe, was the independence of HOLLAND. This rich and

respected republic had, in former times, often resisted the attempts of France, with her own well-directed strength in the hands of skilful and intrepid leaders. She gradually declined from her former greatness after the peace of Utrecht; but until the French revolution she neither wanted strength nor resources to make head against an enemy; and her political alliances were such as to ensure the maintenance of her rank and influence. The torrent of the revolution has irrecoverably overwhelmed her, and she is now erased from the list of independent states. Holland has been a province of France since the year 1795. And supposing any favourable change to relieve her from her present abject dependence, it is not possible to conceive how she could recover any material part of her former importance. Her strength is exhausted, her frontier towns are lost; and Belgium in the hands of France, leaves not the smallest hope of better times. Holland is therefore a part of the dominions of France, and will be considered as such in every future war. Her independence was formerly a safeguard to the north of Europe: that safeguard is now no more.

The AUSTRIAN NETHERLANDS were the next rampart between France and the north of Germany. These provinces were, perhaps, more burdensome than productive to Austria; they were constantly exposed to the arms of France, and their distance from the main body of the Austrian dominions rendered it very difficult and expensive to defend them. It must likewise be confessed, that a more liberal view of the subject would lead to a wish that these provinces, the object and theatre of so many wars, had long been otherwise disposed of. But however that may be, it is certain, that, so long as France did not possess them, the Austrian Netherlands were a great protection to the north of Germany. That France should commence her operations against Germany, on the Meuse, or at her former frontiers, is a difference of no small importance; that she should be able to penetrate immediately into the interior of Germany, instead of consuming one or more campaigns in the conquest of Flanders, is an immense advantage.

The third bulwark of the Empire against France in the north, was that large portion of German territory which lay between the Rhine and the French dominions. This country, possessing two of the strongest fortresses in Europe, and a number of excellent military positions, was

well suited, like the Netherlands, to break the force of a first attack. The passage of the Rhine (in many places an enterprise of little difficulty) is now the only obstacle to prevent the French armies from overrunning all the northern circles, of the Empire as far as the Weser or the Elbe.

The three safeguards thus lost to Germany, were the more important, as they protected the provinces least defended by art or nature. The history of the last war has indeed afforded more than one sad example of the insufficiency of art or nature to oppose the progress of a victorious army; and has shown that the south, as well as the north of Germany, is not impregnable to an enterprising enemy; but it must be allowed that the country between the Mayne and the Alps presents many more difficulties to an invasion, than the district between the Mayne and the North Sea. The last is everywhere open, containing scarcely a tenable place, hardly one fortified or difficult pass, as far as the frontiers of the hereditary dominions of the House of Brandenburg. One or two pitched battles will always decide the fate of this country, with which the fortunes of the north of Europe are necessarily connected. The extraordinary coincidence of circumstances that shielded the north of Germany from immediate danger at the most alarming period of the war, rendered her less sensible of the loss of her ancient ramparts, and less anxious about the consequences; otherwise, the cession of the Rhine districts to the masters of Flanders and Holland, and the treaty by which the Rhine was made the boundary of France and Germany, would have been objects of greater solicitude, more earnest complaints, and more effectual opposition.

Neither is the south of Germany so secure as it was before the revolution. There too the Empire has been deprived of its most important bulwark; for such was Switzerland. The neutrality of this fortress of nature, this impregnable position, this central point of all military operations, a neutrality consecrated by ages, is no more: let us not indulge in groundless hopes; it is destroyed forever. At present there is not the smallest prospect of a favourable change; for Switzerland is a province, a place of arms, an entrenched camp of France. Should any political revolution, should the spontaneous moderation of the French government restore its liberty, it could never resume its former independence. The tacit agreement of the leading

powers to spare it in their several undertakings; the respect for its wise and inflexible neutrality, rather the effect of ancient custom, than of policy or moderation: all this is annihilated forever. In every future war Switzerland will be held by the boldest and readiest competitor. France must at all events maintain a great and permanent influence in its domestic concerns, and will no doubt, at all times, and under all circumstances, consider and use it as her property. Here then is an end of all safety for Swabia, Bavaria, and the foremost provinces of the Austrian monarchy! At the first signal for war, the troops of France will pour down from the summits of the Alps upon the south of the Empire; and as Switzerland forms a great point of communication between Germany and Italy, the operations of the French, planned and executed upon the new system of warfare, must acquire an extent, continuity, and vigour, to which the neighbouring nations can oppose no adequate resistance.

The states of the King of Sardinia were formerly a barrier between Italy and France. That monarch was not improperly called the *guardian of the Alps*. For though incapable of effectually opposing either of the powers that so often contested the possession of Italy, and though by no means so powerful as the interests of that country and of Europe required; yet his geographical situation, and his many excellent fortresses, gave him no small degree of importance, and considerable means of defence. While Europe retained its ancient constitution, neither France nor Austria could indulge a hope of conquering and subjecting Italy. The ruler of Piedmont and Savoy was the natural ally of the opponent of such projects.

This system is now irrecoverably lost. Savoy is forever united to France; and fortified places of Piedmont are all in the hands of the French government. The future destiny of this country, and of the King of Sardinia, lies buried in the obscurity of the future; but we may confidently predict, that the most favourable turn of the present crisis can never restore the former state of things. Should the King of Sardinia be re-established in the sovereignty of Piedmont, he would hardly recover his frontier towns, the essence of his strength and the bulwark of Italy. Even if these should be restored, yet with France on one side, and the vassals of France on every other, he would himself be nothing more than a vassal, an impotent vassal of the republican chief.

The obedience of the Cisalpine republic is forever secured to the power whence it derives its existence: the submission of Genoa, Parma, Tuscany, are alike implicit and invariable. Before the treaty of Luneville, the manifestos of France declared, "The interests of Europe require that Austria do not pass the Adige." The meaning of this maxim is no longer an enigma. The Adige is the boundary of Austria; but it is the boundary of France also. The whole of Italy is neither more nor less than a French province. French generals, and French commissaries, give the law from the Alps to the Straits of Messina; and if the consular authority should resolve tomorrow to convert all Italy into one republic, under the protection of France, or to incorporate its provinces with the Great Nation, the important operation would cost the Chief Consul nothing more than an order to his military lieutenant, to promulgate his sovereign decree.

An undisturbed alliance had subsisted between France and Spain since the year 1762; and as France was greatly more powerful than her ally, there was a disproportion in the connexion that led to the dependence of Spain. The Spanish government, however, preferred a certain degree of independence, until the commencement of the revolution, and France did not enjoy an unlimited control of the councils and resources of her ally. This is now entirely altered: Spain has not preserved a remnant of freedom or independence; when France commands, she must be obeyed, though the utter ruin of the Spanish monarchy were the necessary consequence. The words of Lewis XIV "There are no longer any Pyrenees for France", have been rendered more literally true since the year 1795, than when he spoke them. The expenses of a conquest have been spared; but the conquest of Spain is nevertheless complete. That nation has vanished from the list of independent states, in every political and federal respect; and the power it may hereafter possess, must be looked upon merely as an addition to the resources of France, and be estimated as such in every political calculation.

It is not therefore enough to say that France has extended her limits on all sides by conquest; has added to the impregnability of her frontiers by new ramparts, and increased her influence over the neighbouring states in a formidable degree: the truth is, that France, in her present state, is contained by no limits; everything round about her either is

really, if not nominally, her territory and property, or may be made a part of her possessions, at the first convenient opportunity, by the nod of her sovereign. Spain, Italy, and Germany, without fortresses, without means of defence, without security political or military, are open to the attacks of France: and it now only depends upon the moderation and justice of the French government (mere personal guarantees, which every moment may alter or destroy), whether France shall rule alone in the whole west of Europe, whether any law shall be obeyed but hers.

The foundation upon which this enormous power was first raised, and still continues to rest, is by no means frail or precarious. The military greatness of France, the joint result of the revolution and the most unfortunate of all wars, is not, as many people hope, a transitory meteor. It is thoroughly interwoven with the essential principles of the French republic; it is a fundamental part of its constitution, its politics and government; and is so inseparably connected with its character and existence, that a cessation of this military preponderance, and the total dissolution of the republic, may be said to be synonymous. Amidst the storms of the last ten years, the French nation has become entirely military; it has cultivated the art of war at the expense of every other: accustomed to victory, the ambition of military fame is now the characteristic feature, the use of arms the ordinary occupation, and war the natural element of the French. Even the internal solidity of their present constitution depends entirely upon the constant predominance of a military force: nothing but a military government (which, however, need not be tyrannical) can coerce and restrain a people who have lost every element of polity, and every principle of peaceful subordination, in the convulsions of a ten years revolution; among whom force is become the only measure of authority, and anarchy the only substitute of law and order. When in such a state the springs of military power are relaxed, the decline and ruin of the civil constitution are at hand. The slightest view of the subject must convince any man, whether friend or enemy, that the capacities, inclinations, habits, characters, and interests of her present rulers will justify no other conclusion.

If to this military power, this extensive territory, this unlimited control of so many nations; if to all the former and present advantages of France, we add the terror which she has spread around her, and

which is now the predominant sentiment of Europe: is there in the whole extent of the continent, a nation capable of maintaining, alone, a contest with such a power? I shall spare myself the melancholy task of entering minutely into the discussion of this truth, and of developing all its painful consequences. The disproportion is clear and evident to every spectator: the history of the war of the revolution, and particularly of the campaigns of 1799 and 1800, is one continued and incontrovertible comment upon it. I say nothing of extraordinary conjunctures: I will not say that some new power may not be formed, some great genius may not arise hereafter, to avenge afflicted Europe of the mortifications she has received from victorious France; but the present state of affairs, the natural course of things, and the usual estimation of strength, encourage no such prospect. No nation on the continent, unless compelled by the necessity of self-defence, would singly hazard a war with France. If, therefore, it be yet possible to check her inordinate ascendant, and recover the balance of Europe, there must be a counterpoise formed by a combination of several powers. But should a nearer examination display insurmountable difficulties in the way of such a confederacy; should the possibility of its existence or the efficacy of its operation be highly dubious; the answer, though a very comfortless one, will then readily be found to the question; "What guarantee does there now exist of our federal constitution?"

In the first place, it can hardly be disputed that AUSTRIA or PRUSSIA must be principally engaged in every effectual coalition against France. The other powers of Europe can never combat her ascendant, but in concert with one or both of these, by their means, and as their allies. Supposing Russia able to cope singly with France, yet they have no immediate point of contact, and the immense intervening space renders all active operations between them impossible, unless some more neighbouring nation should side with Russia. Besides, however dangerous France may become to the safety and independence of her neighbours, it never can be the interest of Russia to stand up alone in opposition to plans, of which she must necessarily be the last to feel the effects. The power of Russia, if ever again it be engaged in a war with France, will act no other part than that of an auxiliary. England, whenever it interferes in the concerns of the continent, must do the same. If France

were bent upon subduing the whole continent, England alone could not prevent it: England can only act against her as an auxiliary in a general war, in concert with Austria or Prussia, or both of them.

The whole question therefore, concerning the stability of the present federal system, is reduced to this: How far are Austria and Prussia enabled to protect themselves and the nations connected with them, against the power of France? Before the revolution, such a question would have been easily answered. The power of Austria had been a counterpoise to that of France since the beginning of the sixteenth century; sometimes alone, sometimes in alliance with others, Austria had often counteracted the attempts of her ancient rival in Germany and Italy. The ultimate result of all their wars, was indeed in favour of France; for if we contemplate the period which elapsed between that epoch and the year 1740, we find that she had considerably enlarged her possessions in the Netherlands and on the banks of the Rhine, and had seated princes of the House of Bourbon on two Italian thrones. But the foundations of the Austrian monarchy had never been shaken by France before the year 1740. All the plans of Lewis XIV were baffled by the great alliances with England and Holland, which Austria successfully opposed to them; and at the treaty of Utrecht the Imperial provinces remained entire; the Empire retained all its ancient bulwarks from the Alps to the North Sea.

An important change took place in the situation of Austria after the year 1740. The elevation of the House of Brandenburg gave a new form to the Empire. Till then it had been divided into a number of great and small states, who took part with or against Austria in her several wars, according to the interests or politics of their sovereigns. But when Prussia became a great and independent state, the centre as it were of a system formed by its new powers of attraction in the north of Germany; the interests of the Empire began in many important respects to be distinguished – the north from the south. The Empire was from that time divided into two parts, strongly connected with each other by a multiplicity of interests, but entirely distinct in the most essential points of their federal politics.

This new system was far from agreeable to the private interests of Austria; but considered in an enlarged point of view, it could not but be generally advantageous. There was only one case possible in which such a system could be dangerous to Europe, and especially to

Germany; and of that case there was not the smallest probability till the French revolution. The schism in the Empire could have no pernicious consequence, unless the ascendant of France were such as to require its united forces to oppose her. So long as France remained in her former state, so long as either Austria or Prussia, with their occasional allies, formed a sufficient counterpoise to her power, the balance and security of Europe were unshaken; and Germany and Europe enjoyed the beneficial effects of the altered constitution of the Empire, without experiencing, or even apprehending, that mischief, which could only, under the above circumstances, result from it.

Two great examples have demonstrated the efficacy of that system; in the war for the succession of Charles VI. Austria, abandoned by almost every other power, stood alone against France and her numerous allies; and maintained the contest with dignity and vigour. Prussia stood engaged with one half of Europe, in the seven years war, and supported her cause with honour and effect. Even the thirty years alliance between France and Austria, produced by the treaty of 1756, was never sufficiently powerful to threaten the independence of the north of Germany with serious danger. Had France so far departed from all the principles of rational policy, as to threaten Prussia and her allies, by means of this connection, had Austria been blind enough to assist, even tacitly, in such an undertaking, the north of Germany, in itself neither weak nor destitute of resources, would have found support in the assistance of England and Russia. The profound peace enjoyed by Germany, unbroken but by the campaign of 1778, and even that campaign itself sufficiently prove, that the constitution of the Empire contained complete provision for the safety and integrity of the whole and every part, against all foreign or internal dangers.

But this state of division necessarily presented the greatest advantages to France as the enemy of Germany, when unforeseen, unnatural revolutions had given her such a preponderance as to require the united forces of the Empire to oppose her. Now that she has overthrown every bulwark of Germany, crushed the independence of the intermediate countries, established her sway in Holland, in the Netherlands, on the left bank of the Rhine, in Switzerland, and in Upper Italy; now that she has even razed the few fortresses that remained on

the left bank of the Rhine; a campaign in Germany will be an enterprise of no hazard or difficulty for the French armies. Within eight days from the commencement of hostilities, the theatre of war will be in the heart of the Empire. The immediate object of the invasion will not, as formerly, be attacked on this or that particular side, but in every part at once. If the rest of the Empire is neutral, it will speedily be surrounded. The first advantage of the enemy then opens him a way into the territories of the principal states. A destructive and decisive contest is commenced in the very heart of their dominions; the loss of every battle is followed by such incalculable danger, leads to such dreadful consequences, as take away all courage to resist; the lesser evil is eagerly submitted to, in order to escape from a more terrible misfortune; and ruin, apparently inevitable, is averted by an ignominious peace. Such will be the event of every war in Germany, so long as the present system shall endure.

If it be yet possible to preserve the independence and security of Germany (whose frontiers are now defenceless and unprotected) against France, with all her late conquests, her enormous extent of territory, her consolidated military strength, and her absolute control of Holland, Italy, and Switzerland; it can only be effected by a junction of all the powers of the Empire. Such an union cannot be produced without a good understanding between the two principal states. Is that to be expected? This question involves, to all appearance, the future fate of Germany, and that of Europe also, since Europe can only resist the preponderance of France, by means of Germany.

Since Prussia has ranked among the principal powers of Europe; since more than half a century, Austria and Prussia have appeared two hostile stars that threaten the whole political system with subversion and ruin, whenever their orbits interfered. We have seen them involved in bloody wars, engaged incessantly in plans for weakening each other; ever vigilant, ever in alarm, each jealous of the efforts or advancement of its rival. They were allied during a short time against an evil of a most extraordinary nature; against a most formidable and universal danger: but even this alliance sowed the seeds of fresh discord, and produced new and apparently justifiable grounds of perpetual division. The impossibility of their acting in concert, even when called upon by the greatest and most pressing danger, the strongest and most sacred

motives; this lamentable impossibility, the source of such deplorable misfortunes, has furnished the completest proof of an irreconcilable antipathy, and annihilated, not only every hope of the present, but, for those who see deeply into things, every hope of the future.

If this inveterate hatred were only the effect of passion, opinion, and prejudice, an enlightened statesman would not consider it insurmountable; and, so far as it only rests upon such grounds, we may always entertain a hope of seeing, if not perfect harmony, at least a suspension of discordant measures between them; a temporary agreement for a common object, and confidence and unanimity in the pursuit of it. That the common notions concerning natural antipathies between governments and nations, are by no means unfounded, has been incontrovertibly proved by many deplorable examples; but that these antipathies should have no bounds, is rejected by sound policy, because condemned by sound reason. Whenever a real interest commands, every national antipathy, though existing from the earliest times, if it only rests upon prejudice, must yield to more urgent motives; and so it doubtless will, when the guidance of nations is intrusted to the wise and great; to men who are above all narrow views, and superior to all little passions. The deliberate and decided measures of a truly enlightened government, intent upon important objects, break through the fetters of popular opinion, are supported by the wise, and carry the weak irresistibly along; often extinguishing, in one fortunate moment, whole ages of national prejudice.

But in the case before us, the evil is more deeply rooted. The antipathy between Austria and Prussia is not founded upon a blind sentiment of aversion, jealousy, or mistrust; is not merely the effect of long habit, or the bitter remembrance of mutual injuries. It is connected with more deep and essential causes. It has hitherto been a fundamental principle of European politics, and, under certain limitations, must always continue so. These two powers are evidently destined to balance each other; that is their political calling, the necessary rule of their whole political conduct. Setting entirely aside all private hatred, all jealousy and animosity (which should always be excluded from the higher views of politics and government), there must ever remain in their relations, in the nature and objects of their activity, and in the very principle of

their existence, a fixed and unalterable cause, not of natural or political enmity, but of natural and political opposition. They are compelled to counteract each other; how could they then in the common course of things be permanently allied? This necessary state of opposition was evidently conducive to the welfare of Europe, as long as its ancient constitution and relations endured, without being detrimental to those powers themselves, provided it was not suffered to exceed the bounds of true policy. Till France arrived at her present greatness, the systematic enmity of Austria and Prussia rather added to the security than to the dangers of Europe; their conduct was in unison with the principles of legitimate politics; and if we maturely weigh the effects of a close connexion between them, we must confess, that, had it been possible, it would have been by no means desirable.

But since the total change which has taken place; since the French revolution has subverted every foundation of the federal system; since France has attained a preponderance against which every ancient guarantee of the equilibrium is but a rotten pillar to a falling building; from that time, this once beneficial opposition is converted into a cause of general weakness, and (it cannot be concealed) of general ruin. Though an alliance between Austria and Prussia continue to be as unnatural and impracticable as heretofore, yet it affords the only means of protection and defence to Germany; there is no other chance of its preservation in the general wreck of Europe. This alone is a strong proof of the malignancy and danger of the present political crisis, and of the magnitude of our misfortunes: for as the means of preserving the last remains of the political system, are difficult, extraordinary, and unnatural; even so severe and extraordinary must be the shock which has disordered it.

It is among the most unfortunate peculiarities of this case, that every confederacy of the leading powers of Germany, though called for and cemented by the strongest necessity, must necessarily be conceived and executed in the spirit of a coalition, and not of an alliance. The fundamental contrariety in the principles and objects of their politics, will continue the same under any circumstances; and must indeed return whenever the general balance is re-established, and the federal system secured upon its former basis. This union, therefore, can never

be other than transient; which is the whole secret, the perpetual and necessary cause of its weakness. Such would be the uncertainty of a combination of these heterogeneous parts, that the forced and unsteady alliance might be dissolved, and all its operations suspended in the most critical and decisive moment. It is a matter of doubt whether the separate resistance of each state, with all its necessary disadvantages, would not be preferable to such a coalition.

If, moreover, the inordinate ascendant of France were to create an alliance between Austria and Prussia, as the only means of resisting it, a general coalition would, in all political probability, be the consequence. For England and Russia would always take part with Austria or Prussia; and in the present state of Europe, every power of the second and third order would be more or less concerned with them. Thus a league between Austria and Prussia may always be considered as a coalition of Europe. The want of such a one (all the politicians of Europe will not suppress this truth), the want of such a coalition against France will often be felt and acknowledged: but the conviction of its necessity will be accompanied by the reasonable apprehension of its insufficiency. It would require a rare conjunction of great and extraordinary characters to organize, direct, and contain such a coalition, and to conduct it successfully to the object of its original destination. Experience has taught us this: the dreadful lesson is yet fresh in the memory of humbled Europe; and who now among the rulers of nations will venture to encounter a second?

Thus far is certain at all events: the political system cannot but be extremely defective, when it contains such a disproportion of power as nothing but a general league can rectify. And when even that difficult, dangerous, and almost desperate remedy does not promise certain success, does not afford even rational hopes of it, the existence of anything like equilibrium must be quite out of the question.

I will here briefly recapitulate the foregoing observations, and present the following results of this view of the present relations between France and Europe; which, though indeed only my individual opinion, is founded throughout upon facts.

1st. France has extended her limits on all sides by military or revolutionary operations. She has destroyed the independence of the neighbouring states, either by regular conquest, as in the case of

Flanders, Savoy, the Rhine lands, &c. or under colour of alliance, as with Holland, Spain, Switzerland, and the Italian republics; or finally, by the right of power only, as in the subjection of all Italy as far as the Adige. The ancient constitutions of all these countries have been demolished, and France has established an empire upon their ruins, which has no parallel in Europe.

2dly. This total obliteration of her former limits, the destruction of every safeguard of her neighbours; this military force, alike extraordinary in extent and efficacy, and far exceeding even her territorial aggrandizement in proportion; these have given a preponderance to France, against which no continental power, not even the greatest, can contend with any chance of success.

3dly. Were France to abuse this prodigious preponderance; and, not content with her present acquisitions, were she to prescribe too hard conditions to the rest of Europe, a general league would be the only means of resisting the danger.

4thly. Such is the geographical, military, and political situation of France, that no league against her could be in the least effectual, in which Austria or Prussia, or both, are not engaged.

5thly. In every future war of Austria or Prussia separately against France, the probability of victory (to say no more) is on the side of the latter: and even the alliance of either with a third state, would not form a counterpoise to France, if the other remained neuter; they could, at the most, only lessen the disproportion.

6thly. Austria and Prussia must therefore act in concert, to afford a hope of effectual protection to Germany in any future war.

7thly. But an intimate alliance between those two powers, is the most improbable, the most difficult of all political combinations. Thus vanishes the basis of every federative guarantee against France, as soon as we have discovered it.

8thly. In the whole sphere of federal relations there is no alliance (in the common acceptation of the word) that can form a counterpoise to France. That object can only be accomplished by the means, always dangerous and uncertain, of a coalition, whenever the necessity of an active resistance shall arise: and as every coalition against France must be general (because the whole of Germany, and consequently all the

allies of the leading powers of the Empire, must necessarily be engaged in it); so the only refuge that remains to Europe against France, is the most dangerous, the most uncertain, the most intricate and difficult of all political measures.

I am aware of some objections likely to be made to this reasoning in general (the intrinsic consistency of which, I think, will hardly be impeached), and will answer them beforehand.

On the one hand, it will be said (such are the topics of consolation most frequently held forth), “To what purpose are all these melancholy calculations? What is the use of thus reckoning and balancing remote dangers against hypothetical remedies? The speculations of politics are as hills of sand, whose shape and figure vary every instant with the winds of heaven. What assurance have we that a few years, nay, a few months, may not put an end to this preponderance of France, so frightfully described to us? The genius of a few enterprising minds, the genius of one man, raised that nation from the depth of ruin to its present greatness and stability. That which depends upon an uncertain life, must be itself uncertain. Even now, perhaps, while you are bewailing her ascendancy, France is sinking once more into an abyss of anarchy and confusion, or losing, in the hands of a weak and incapable government, that bold and energetic character, which has more contributed to destroy the balance of Europe than any essential advantages of her present geographical, military, and federative position. Even if this should not be the case, who will warrant that the springs of this colossal machine may not relax in consequence of their very nature; and even though managed by the most skilful artists, wear out and become useless in the course of time? Take from France her military spirit, discipline, and enthusiasm, (and where is it written that they must be eternal, because created in a moment by extraordinary circumstances?) and what becomes of her power? Her extent of territory, her conquests, her tributary republics, her immense population, will all be converted into a weight to hasten her downfall whenever the vital principle in the centre shall fail. And is then the rest of Europe forever deprived of courage and genius, of great and energetic plans, and of ability to execute them? A single extraordinary genius, one great and decided character, might reverse the whole system, and take from France the weight that now oppresses Europe, to throw it into an

opposite scale. Perhaps in the midst of your complaints of its intolerable preponderance, the moment may unexpectedly arrive, when the French nation will be deprived of its just and beneficial influence; and you will have to lament, that, by an exaggerated description of the present danger, you have contributed to a loss so great and detrimental to the general interests.”

To this I answer: Politics, speculative as well as practicable, have to do with no elements but such as actually exist; and when they look forward to the future, their calculations must always rest upon present realities, and not upon accidental or personal circumstances, upon empty hypotheses or mere possibilities. The probability of the long or short duration of the present state of France, her military and political ascendant, is a subject of speculation and reflection for the politician. But whatever may be the result (merely hypothetical and conditional) of his researches, it cannot affect the indisputable truth, that at present there is no prospect but of *power* to France and *danger* to the rest of Europe. Should France suddenly fall, or gradually decline, we would draw new conclusions from new premises; should she, however improbable it may appear, descend even beneath her just level, and lose her proper and necessary share of power – the principle of her preservation – should the safety of Europe be threatened from some other side with dangers now hardly to be understood or imagined; those who survive such changes would learn how to accommodate their systems, principles, doctrines, and, where it is necessary to act, their measures accordingly. But so long as the present relations endure, all systems, principles, doctrines, and measures must be built upon these; and as long as Europe on the one hand, and France on the other, continue as they now stand, in this first year of the nineteenth century, it must be permitted to assert, that there exists no federal constitution, no balance of power, no solid and durable peace.

On the other hand, I shall meet with objections of a different, and perhaps more specious nature. “A revolution has been accomplished in the political system. This might have been prevented, and the former system preserved with all its defects, if the strength of Europe, more firmly united, had been more efficaciously directed. But the past cannot be undone; the present and the future only should occupy the science

of politics. Why are they both represented so comfortless? There never existed a balance of power in the strict sense of the word; there always have been preponderating states: the weak have always been obnoxious to danger; there always have been pretexts for oppression, occasions for injustice, and subjects of war in Europe. Supposing the ascendancy acquired by France to be as you describe it, does it follow that all security, liberty, independence, and stability, must be annihilated forever in the rest of Europe? Will not France cease to be dangerous to other nations from the very circumstance of her having nothing more to wish for, nothing more to undertake? What is there now to call forth her exertions? Every new conquest would be a burden to the republic; every new conquest would diminish her strength. Will she go forth upon unprofitable adventures beyond the Alps, the Rhine, and the Pyrenees? Or, will she exterminate kingdoms which she cannot govern? The mere possibility of an abuse of power, of a wanton exaggeration of pretensions, will not justify suppositions of so hateful a nature, such unfounded and chimerical apprehensions. If the former revolutionary governments were the terror of Europe by their unprincipled ambition, their insatiable avarice, their unbounded immorality; yet the present government is formed, in every respect, to dissipate the storm, to tranquillize all minds, and to awaken sentiments of confidence and security in all other nations. It aims at no further aggrandizement; seeks only to maintain its possessions as it found them, and is desirous of living in peace with in neighbours and the whole world; faithful to the principles of the law of nations, powerful protector of its allies, and an example of justice, equity, and moderation, to its enemies. If it continues to adhere to such principles, why should not Europe be happy and secure in her present situation? Let us forget the past; let every state conform with prudent resignation to its present circumstances; let each improve its present advantages, and renounce all destructive ambition, all unnatural and extravagant systems, all false and turbulent politics. The great powers of Europe, whose broad and solid foundations resisted the torrent of the revolution, are still powerful enough to defy every wanton attack, to cultivate and improve their states by peaceful economy, to make their subjects happy, and to maintain their political dignity. The rest is all error and illusion; whether a certain number of little sovereigns, or one great

republican power, give laws beyond the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Adige, must be matter of indifference to the rest of Europe, since the ancient possessors are expelled, and the former constitutions abolished. Austria, Prussia, Russia, England, and the powers of a second and third order, and everything that yet remains of the former system, will not the less prosper and endure on that account: and if these changes have indeed irreparably subverted the ancient federal system, what shall prevent you from erecting a new edifice with new materials?"

The following observations will answer these arguments; the strongest which any advocate for the present state of Europe, any defender of the ascendancy of France, can oppose to the just apprehensions of the world, and reasonable warnings of political speculation.

1st. Whether the present government of France deserve the unlimited confidence required by its partisans, is not within the sphere of my present inquiry. I once more solemnly disclaim all regard to personal consideration. I even go further, and willingly concede whatever is not immediately necessary to my object, that I may thereby tread firmer upon the grounds where I mean to build conviction. I therefore entirely renounce all arguments deducible from the character of the present government; which shall be supposed in all its principles, opinions, plans, and measures, the reverse of that to which it succeeded. We will consider it as only desirous of concord and peace, of security and justice; as hitherto guiltless of any proceeding calculated to justify our former apprehensions, or to excite new ones, to inspire mistrust, or to suppress reviving hopes: to grant this is surely the extreme of moderation.

2ndly. But the character of the present French government is no security for the future. It is a leading maxim in every rational system of practicable politics, that every power is dangerous to the rest, which possesses the means of disturbing the general peace, and wants nothing but the will to use them. If we depart from this maxim, we no longer find any fixed point whatever in the whole sphere of politics; there remains nothing then but vague suppositions and wavering hypotheses, uncertain opinions of personal characters, and loose probabilities, which one moment presents, and the following destroys.

3rdly. As the personal character of the present government of France, or indeed of any government whatever, cannot ensure the dispositions

of its successors; as even the present wishes, acts, and declarations of a sovereign, are no security for his intentions and proceedings at a future period; even so do the obvious interests of a power afford no perfect assurance of its views and conduct. This observation must, however, only be taken in a limited sense. In the ordinary course of things the true interests of a nation are no inadequate criterion of the conduct which in all reasonable probability we are to expect from it, while there is a due balance of power, or a constitution in which it is nearly balanced; when there is no danger of an immediate revolution, and no state sufficiently preponderant to effect a sudden subversion of the whole system. For it may always be supposed, that in any given period, as of fifty or an hundred years, the wise and imprudent counsels by which it is directed, will at least counterbalance each other; that the principles of its real welfare, though for a time forgotten, will always be recurred to; and that, on the whole, its true interest will be the leading object of the government. The politician will therefore generally be right in his conclusions, who makes the interest of each state a principal ground of every speculation concerning its future conduct. But this maxim ceases to be useful in times when the state of Europe may be altered in a moment by a single resolution. When any power attains so great a degree of influence and preponderance in the political system, that the slightest deviations of its politics may endanger all existing relations, and threaten a general subversion, it would be madness to dismiss every apprehension, and continue in perfect security, because war and conquest may be opposite to the permanent interests of that nation. For who will venture to assure us, that the men intrusted with this extraordinary power, will never give way to the impulse of ambition, avarice, or resentment, and gratify the passions of the moment, regardless of those permanent interests? This would be sufficient, in the present state of Europe, to produce the most extensive desolation.

4thly. When we consider the present state of France, and what she has experienced during the last ten years, we shall find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine what maxims and conduct her interests will constantly prescribe to her. Self-preservation is naturally the first object of every government. Where that is best secured by pacific measures, and an adherence to the principles of moderation and justice, there justice and moderation will prevail. But when circumstances require

a contrary conduct, and a government feels itself obliged to assume a lofty and decided tone, and engage in great and splendid undertakings, to support its sinking popularity, to counteract an aspiring faction, or to awe the turbulence of a seditious people; then moderation is sacrificed to the interests of the moment; and who will be found bold enough to deny that the French government may possibly be thus circumstanced? Does not everything about that government indicate the probability of critical situations, frequent changes, and a long state of uncertainty?

5thly. But should the present and every future government of France invariably renounce all views of usurpation, and make moderation the leading principle of its politics; should its interests be constantly averse to wars of conquest, plunder, and oppression; and should these doubtful positions be verified in the most satisfactory manner; yet the relations between France and the rest of Europe would not therefore be less unequal, constrained, and dangerous. For, besides the disputes arising from ambition, avarice, or wanton provocations among nations; there are differences of another nature, which originate in the doubtfulness of their rights, the insufficiency of their treaties, and the often unavoidable concurrence of their several interests. These disputes, and the wars, which, in extreme cases, are the only means of deciding them, will never cease to occur, while there are separate states, without a perfect system of public law among them. But these unavoidable wars must, in the present situation of Europe, be productive of the most dreadful misfortunes. The slightest misunderstanding about an undefined boundary, a doubtful right of sovereignty or navigation (not to mention the greater ones, that might in time arise by the decease of princes about the right of succession), the slightest difference between France and any neighbouring state, would, on account of the immense preponderance of the French power, raise such a storm as to threaten all Europe with destruction. The dictates of sound policy prescribe the necessity of a natural or artificial balance of power; not only to prevent the wanton and dangerous abuse of it on the part of a preponderating state; but even to maintain a due proportion of strength in those ordinary wars, which human wisdom is often unable to avert, and to preserve the political system from shocks that might prove fatal to its existence. Whenever this balance is destroyed, the security of the whole is immediately

annihilated, whether the maxims that govern each particular state be just or unjust, warlike or pacific.

6thly. In the present state of things, there is a constant source of political disturbance, a perpetual cause of war, in the necessary disposition of the humbled and oppressed nations, in their inextinguishable resentment towards their haughty and oppressive conqueror. It would betray the grossest ignorance of human nature to expect that nations, subdued and trampled on by France; that princes stripped of their provinces and revenues, their rank and splendour, and subjected to the most humiliating conditions; that so many minds afflicted by the severest losses, and irritated by the most contemptuous insults, should in a moment throw a veil of oblivion upon the past, forget their sufferings, dispel their sorrows, and submit, with patient resignation, to the yoke of France. – Every rational observer of the ordinary course of human sentiments and passions must expect the very reverse. Until the power of France shall again be reduced to its just proportion in the system of Europe, the prevailing sentiment in all other countries, or at least in the principal European states, will be a secret desire of thwarting her preponderance; a secret and insurmountable hatred of that monopoly of influence and dominion which France has so victoriously asserted. They will suffer in silence so long as they continue to feel the impossibility of any effectual remedy. But new exertions and attempts, new wars and coalitions, will be formed upon the first hope of a successful issue, whether founded upon reviving courage and the animating consciousness of their own increased strength, or upon symptoms of disorder, dissension, and weakness in the interior of France. An unnatural and oppressive constitution, incompatible with the safety and dignity of Europe in general, can have no prospect of duration. The indestructible elasticity of springs too forcibly compressed, will always tend to restore their natural state. All the treaties in the world cannot confirm and preserve a state of things repugnant to every principle of freedom, to all equality of power, to the fundamental laws of the social and federal constitution, to the wishes, propensities, and views of the great majority of nations and individuals.

7thly. Should any man deny the force or truth of all these arguments, and assert, in contradiction to experience, to the evidence of the past and

present, and to the true principles of politics, that neither the mutability of the views and characters of the rulers of France, nor the uncertainty of their future dispositions, nor the chance of their private interests being incompatible with the general interest and peace of Europe, nor the danger with which even an ordinary war would threaten all Europe when there is no balance of power, nor the natural and insurmountable propensity to dissolve unnatural obligations – should he assert, that none of these causes of dissension, enmity, and war, are sufficiently active and important to justify the apprehensions here entertained; and that, notwithstanding all these obvious sources of perpetual internal discord, the constitution established by the French revolution, and the events of its unhappy war, may endure in peace and harmony, as well as the former or any other political combination; he must at least allow, that such a constitution does not deserve the appellation of a federative system, either in the former, or any other proper acceptation of the words. He must be prepared to assert, that the balance of power, as hitherto conceived, is only an empty term; that Europe can exist and prosper under circumstances different from those formerly held necessary and essential to it; and that federative policy is in future to proceed upon new and unheard-of principles, in utter contradiction to all which prevailed before, and hitherto unconfirmed by any experience. According to all former grounds of judgment, all ancient rules of conduct in politics, the present situation of Europe is a state of political anarchy, of constant and inextinguishable war. Those who maintain the contrary, must either renounce all consistency, or disclaim every principle hitherto received.

These remarks on the present relations between France and Europe, are totally uninfluenced by hatred or prejudice against the French republic. They flow from a free and impartial consideration of the subject, from the real state and natural course of things, and from an unconstrained application of the simplest rules of the science of politics. Every enlightened friend of the French nation must as readily subscribe to them, as the bitterest enemy of France, or the most determined adversary of her present constitution. It is a characteristic property of all great disorders in the political system, that they do as much injury to the states apparently benefited by the destruction of the balance, as to the immediate losers by the disproportion introduced. It is the true

and permanent interest of every nation without exception, to preserve a due proportion between its own strength, and that of its neighbours; and to maintain a just distribution of power among all the members of the federative system. The advantages of a dangerous ascendancy are always deceitful; for the public welfare of a nation cannot be secure, without the satisfaction of its neighbours, and the confidence of the world. An enlightened policy requires a due attention to these important requisites of peace, on the part of the greatest as well as the smaller states. Were France to distinguish her true interests; were the voice of reason to prevail above the dictates of ambition and avarice; her statesmen would easily be convinced, that what now is called, by a shameless abuse of words, the federative system of Europe, is nothing but a compound of inordinate power on the one hand, and impotence on the other; in which no real independence, no stability or security, and no permanent peace can exist; and which is consequently incompatible with the general welfare.

I have freely declared my opinion of the present state of Europe. I have not suppressed the difficulties which I conceive inseparably connected with every attempt to establish a better system, amidst our present disasters – the fortune of the present, and perhaps the dowry of future generations. I have portrayed the evil at full length, such as I beheld it. It is for the practical politician to find the most effectual remedies for the disorders of society; the writer has done his duty when he has shown their existence and origin. In one case, however, he may go further: if another writer, whether authorized or not, has made proposals to the public, he may inquire into and examine them. In one of the principal chapters of his work, the Author of *l'Etat de la France* has given us the basis of a new federal system; for he does not doubt the destruction of the old one. This may therefore with propriety be made a subject of public discussion; and I shall now proceed to examine it. (...)

Fragments Upon the Balance of Power in Europe

INTRODUCTION

The following sheets are fragments of a work which, after a preliminary development of the notion generally entertained of a political balance, and of certain ideas connected with it, was to have contained a representation of the existing political situation of the different European states in their mutual relations, and in the respective relation of each individual state to the whole. The object was to show how, the former federal system of Europe, after having existed and flourished down to our times under many various forms, in all of which the same spirit was preserved, was sapped and shaken by abuse and violence on one hand, and by carelessness and indifference on the other; and how, since the unfortunate peace of 1801, its fall became so probable that nothing remained for us but either to wait its total ruin in torpid inactivity, or to avert it by manly resolution and daring enterprise. To demonstrate the truth of this position, it would have been necessary to extend the elucidation, which will be found in the following pages of the relations between FRANCE and AUSTRIA since the conclusion of the peace of Lunéville, both in a historical and political light, to the relations between FRANCE and PRUSSIA, between FRANCE and the GERMAN EMPIRE, between FRANCE and RUSSIA, between FRANCE and ENGLAND, and so forth; and to have illustrated as distinctly as possible their respective interests, by which means we should have arrived at induction of the principles on which we ought to act, the object to which our exertions ought to be directed, and the new constitution which ought to be framed for the purpose of remedying the present evil, and of obtaining security for the future.

This attempt necessarily supposed that the political distempers of Europe had arrived at a decisive crisis, at the time when AUSTRIA and

RUSSIA prepared for battle with the overgrown power; and that it was only by energetic means and bold operations, that it could be discovered whether the principle of life, or the principle of death was to prove victorious. Had the former triumphed but in part, or had at least the event of the contest for a considerable period of time remained in doubt, the abovementioned enquiries would have been of some use, first in the way of impressing on the minds of contemporaries the immense importance of the object for which we were contending; and secondly, as a mode of circulating clear and distinct notions of what was to be acquired before our efforts could be rewarded by that true political regeneration at which we aspired. But as an unhappy destiny blasted the fairest hopes upon earth in their first blossom, as the contest was decided and terminated, lost and given up when people scarce believed that it had commenced; as events such as no age ever witnessed, in less than three months inflamed the disease in the vital parts of the system to such a pitch of virulence, that all we had hitherto suffered vanished like a shadow before what was present; the execution of the original plan could have produced no good effect. For though the few amongst us whose courage is superior to fate, and which rises in proportion even as their fortunes droop, do not on the brink of impotency, where we are now brought, despair of the possibility of salvation, it will least of all escape them that under this new form of ruin which presents itself to us in consequence of the retreat of the RUSSIAN army, the PRESSBURG treaty, and the PRUSSIAN negotiations, there are much greater difficulties to vanquish, and far different problems to solve than there were in that earlier period of the disease, when the peace of Lunéville, and its immediate results, seemed to call forth the utmost energies, and to defy the most powerful remedies. In such circumstances no one can be astonished that he who undertook such a work, after being interrupted in the execution of it by the catastrophes of the time, resolved not to pursue it agreeably to his original plan, but to give that part of it which he had already executed in the form of fragments, as a specimen of what, he would have performed under more fortunate circumstances, or at all events, as an historical monument to perpetuate the recollection of a state of things which the rapid growth of the evil seems already to have left half a century behind.

In this point of view alone the following sheets must be considered, in

order to their being fairly and justly estimated, and in order even to their being received with indulgence. Their numerous deficiencies and gaps will not escape the penetrating eye. Though much of what they contain will, by those who approve the sentiments, be found to be truths of much importance, independent of their reference to the time of their being written; yet upon the whole they bear the character and colour of that particular period.

Perhaps this very circumstance sometimes produces a beneficial effect. He who lost not entirely all feeling for the disgrace of his country, for the calamities of his contemporaries, for the convulsive struggles of a sinking world, will dwell with indifference upon the complaints we then uttered, and the hopes we then entertained, when he reflects that those were scarcely heard, and these scarcely expressed; when we were overtaken by a fate of which the unfathomable woe extinguished all recollection of former sorrows, like that of an unpleasant dream, and made hope disappear like an imaginary phantom.

The most detailed part of this collection, that which contains an exposition of the relations between FRANCE and AUSTRIA previous to the war, will, it is hoped, be considered in a point of view which will render it not altogether unworthy of attention. With the exception of two or three pamphlets of some merit, but which seem to have been composed in haste; and the authors of which appear to have been provided with scanty materials, that were published a short time before the commencement of hostilities; nothing yet has been written, either historically or politically, upon the origin of the war which is now ended. The wildest French Manifestos, the most abominable misrepresentations of facts, accusations of the foulest nature against all who supported or wished well to the common cause, have as usual remained unanswered; and if facts did not speak loud enough – loud enough let it be understood for a wiser posterity, though always too low to be heard by contemporaries – the future historian confined to the fabulous materials at present existing, could not represent the events of this unexampled epoch in an intelligible, much less in a credible, form. The little therefore which can here be said towards the elucidation of these events, (for much must be passed over in silence), derives some value from the circumstance that it is the only attempt of the kind which has yet been made; and that, for

reasons known to everyone, it will long possess this recommendation.

It was neglected to instil into the Public sound and tenable notions of the nature of the war. The few even who ventured through the channel of the press to maintain, the cause of the Combined Powers against the unrighteous accusations of the enemy, have chosen false grounds. They have described FRANCE as the *attacking party*, and the undertaking of the Allies as a WAR OF DEFENCE. The Public nevertheless seeing the AUSTRIAN and RUSSIAN armies not merely fully prepared for war, but actually upon the theatre of hostilities; while the FRENCH government hardly believed, or pretended to be able to believe, that serious projects were formed against it; what was more natural than that the unreflecting and giddy multitude found a contradiction between the words and actions of the Combined Powers; and at last considered their most incontestable grounds, as so many artifices employed by craft for the purposes of deception? A cause is seldom so good that it cannot be hurt by ill-chosen arguments, particularly in the eyes of the weak. Whoever has courage to carry a manly resolution in an honest way into effect, must renounce half confessions, mean evasions, and ambiguous representation. The war which was determined on against FRANCE was a WAR OF ATTACK, in the best sense of the word; was to be conducted as such, conducted as such, and as such it ought to be represented. It was a just, necessary, and in its origin, (which must not be confounded with the plan on which it was carried on), wise; and what is more, a highly obligatory attempt to resist Colossal power, and to set bounds and limits to the subjection of Europe, to the decay of its ancient constitutions, and to the plagues and cares of a whole generation groaning under a weight of oppression. The authors of the general disorder had, without much penetration, discovered that there was nothing more desirable for them, than under the deceitful mask of a hollow, perfidious, nominal-peace, to carry their unceasing endeavours to the point of completion, by the maintenance of this peace – which would be better denominated by a state of war; and that of the most destructive kind, because it raged only on one side and found no resistance – at a time when it only required one decisive blow to spring the frail barriers which remained between them and universal dominion. This system, which was certainly the

surest and the most convenient, they preferred to an open declared war, the issue of which is always doubtful, and for this reason they did not wish for a rupture. For a similar reason the other party must wish for war; and as their adversaries endeavoured to preserve the existing relations, or in other words, the omnipotence of their will, and the defencelessness of their victims: so nothing remained for them, whose object it was to introduce a more favourable system, in order to prevent total destruction, but attack. That considered generally, in reference to the whole of their situation, the attack was only a measure of resistance to unjust and intolerable oppression; and was in this view an act of self-defence is manifest of itself. But on this very account, they should have ventured without fear for a word to have expressed the true character of their undertaking with frankness and precision. A just and necessary war is at all times a DEFENSIVE WAR, whoever be the first to take up arms.

A just and necessary war! That the one which has laid us prostrate on the ground was such, is a consolation of which no man shall rob us; the harder and more violent has been our fall, the more we require the solace of this reflection. From rashness, presumption, and insanity, to have rushed into a new abyss of misery; to have forged still more galling fetters than those we wished to break, is a thought intolerable even to those, who, without any immediate influence, were partakers in what has passed only by assent; and who, though merely inactive spectators, were content to share in their will, wishes and dispositions, the terrible responsibility. Whoever oppressed by the weight of these chains, has so much as believed the release promised us by the war for a moment possible; whoever has felt his heart expand with the slightest sentiment of joy at the approach of happier times, has believed with fear and hoped with doubt, must feel how important it is to be acquitted in this grand and complicated process, not merely of every unhallowed, but likewise of every inconsiderate motive. He must therefore hold him to be his benefactor, who now undertakes to prove, that at least his wishes were upright, and his efforts blameless; and that never since war was waged on earth, has there been a more satisfactory cause of hostility, a more worthy object, a more holy incentive. This point is besides the only one in the history of our days, on which we can dwell without painful feelings, and

with some complacency. It is only reflection upon the origin of the war which can afford subject of content and exultation, all the rest is dark and disheartening. This is not the place to examine how an undertaking so commendable in itself, from the moment that it was put in a train of execution, was baffled by false calculations; and was in so short a time, by improper measures, thwarted, frustrated, and undone. That this precipitate and cruel overthrow, supposes not simply decisive faults, but a heap and chain of blunders, a fatally crowded tissue of variegated error, is clear, independently of all inductions; and presses itself on the mind of every one, who, without any other acquaintance with the march of events, only knows the commencement and conclusion of the drama of which we have been spectators.

Is then everything lost? Is hope become a crime? Shall the menacing predictions of those, who in earlier disasters and earlier punishments, read what is now present, as well as what is still future; who were at first accounted atrabilarious dreamers, afterwards fanatical prophets; and who have at all times been treated with coldness and disrespect, often with marked displeasure: shall these in the end be literally fulfilled? Shall that which in the corrupted dialect of the present time, and in the disgusting gibberish of the press, is called “THE NEW FEDERAL SYSTEM”, take the place of the remains of that glorious edifice which our fathers reared, the old magnificent constitution of Europe, THE TRUE FEDERAL SYSTEM? Shall all, which with so much art divided, and with so much skill united the nations, be confounded by a decree of general servitude, and sink into a common grave, where its spirit will never revive? Shall GERMANY – all the rest is lost, excepting what either lies out of reach, or what can only then be reached when we are lost beyond redemption – Shall GERMANY become in its whole extent what the half of it is already; what HOLLAND, SWITZERLAND, SPAIN, and ITALY are at this moment?

The answer to these questions belongs to those in whose hands is placed our ambiguous destinies, our divided and languishing strength, our last capital of defence. To us powerless suffering spectators, to us it is only permitted to maintain – or to see, and feel, and reckon, is not denied to the meanest – that however difficult the problem of salvation is rendered by the disasters of these days, the possibility of finding an outlet is even

yet undeniable; and that the aggregate of the means, which in the last extremity may be collected, in support of the most generally interesting of all causes of general interest, that of an independent existence, is still considerable enough to banish unconditional discouragement. How these means, if they are to be called forth, and called forth so as to save, are to be first of all united, then properly arranged and directed – how the pressure of the moment is to be overcome, – how, during the never-ceasing progress of the evil, and in the continual presence of danger, so long a respite, and so much tranquillity is to be obtained, that the walls of the tottering fabric do not fall in before the buttresses are raised for their support – how to keep the middle path between the caution and passiveness which the most threatening conjunctures prescribe as a law, and then to attain a happier condition, which the duty of self-preservation imposes upon us as obligatory – how what is now scattered is to be collected, what is now overthrown is to be reinstated, what is now dead is to be reanimated, and first a futurity, and then a happy and honourable futurity secured? – all this must be the concern of the governments.

What is obligatory upon us who wait the unfolding of our destiny, our breasts straitened with anxiety; upon us who have no power to resolve, but who can strengthen those whose resolutions carry with them a sentence of life or death, by unwavering confidence and steady support, or weaken them by unworthy fears and unfounded dismay, is to cultivate a temper of mind which can neither capriciously; or intentionally add to the difficulty of solving that hard problem. When rulers and their immediate assistants see nothing around them but dumb despair, or culpable indifference to the highest interests of states, or satisfaction at their dissolution, they must possess more than mortal energy, and more than human wisdom to preserve the people from ruin. How shall they be succoured who do not long for help, to whom it is quite alike to flourish or decay, who prefer peaceful slavery to active exertion in the defence of liberty, and who less dread the destruction of their rights than the cares attendant on their preservation? From this disposition we have experienced the most baneful effects. For a long series of years the seducers of a heedless age left no art untried to ridicule, or render suspicious, the few who had courage enough to draw aside the curtain

which covered the horrors of futurity, and recommended those very maxims which were calculated to cut off all possibility of improving our situation, “We should”, such was their lesson, “remain quiet, tranquil, pacific, and above all things inactive; the stream which has overflowed its banks will soon of itself return into its regular channel; universal dominion is a chimera; of what importance is it to Europe whether France have a few provinces more or less? There are several states which have received accessions of territory, population, and revenues, and commercial facilities, and so on, to the end of the whole statistical rhapsody; we may enjoy tranquillity just as well under the treaties of Lunéville and Ratisbon as under that of Westphalia; the French empire has moreover reached its natural limits; the new regent is too wise to think, of extending it farther; there is no immediate danger, and time will do the rest.” – To this sleepy perfidious doctrine the people and the courts lent an attentive ear. Its influence has been felt more strongly, than that of any other cause in producing the present calamities; for from this source– it cannot be explained here, but the well informed understand it sufficiently– proceeded a great proportion of those unconnected projects, of those garbled measures, of those political and military blunders to which are to be ascribed the misfortunes of the last campaign. When the evil had grown to a gigantic size, first by the natural march of a continually increasing dominion, (for what had FRANCE left stable when AUSTRIA and RUSSIA took up arms?) and afterwards by the necessary inefficacy and impotence of a feeble attempt at salvation, which could only be compared to a building raised on a swamp, and constructed with the most spongy, incohesive, and unamalgamating materials; the persons who had inculcated these treacherous motives to repose, had recourse to a new sophistry, in order to conciliate those whom they had duped, concealment being no longer practicable. It cannot now be denied that the so much ridiculed predictions have been justified, have been accomplished with the clearness of day, that system which for centuries protected the liberty of Europe, with all its ornaments and excellencies, its constitutions and laws, its archives, its territorial limitations, and its adjudications of rights, has fallen to pieces; and that an arbitrary will “has removed the bounds of the people, robbed their treasures, and put down the inhabitants”, that there are scarcely

three independent princes to be found between the Tagus and the Volga, and that the distance between universal empire being actually acquired, and its being regularly proclaimed and solemnly recognized, may be measured not by years, but by months and days. This is now so awfully manifest as to flash conviction on the dullest perception; the veil which folly or craft threw over futurity has been rent, by the terrors of the present; but the magazines of deception are still unexhausted. What can no longer be scouted as fanciful, or rejected as fabulous, is now described as a supportable evil, nay even as an advantage. And also in this desperate construction of things, the frivolity of the age is ready to acquiesce. Whoever will take the trouble to observe with attention the predominant sentiment of the day, the character of political conversations, the tone of society, the tendency and bearings of public opinion, will soon be convinced that, with the exception of a very small number indeed, who, with genuine patriotic and true cosmopolitical feelings, (which in the higher sense are the same), lament the ignominious fall of the European commonwealth, the great mass of the public in every country may be divided into two classes; the one of which, and by far the largest, views the events of this wasteful period with more or less *INDIFFERENCE*, while the other beholds them with *SATISFACTION*. The same classification comprehends, with two or three exceptions, all the writers particularly in *GERMANY* upon political subjects.

The word-mongers of the indifferent party, rich in dispiriting encouragements, and desolating consolations, in order to sooth the discontent of their contemporaries, at one time represent the evil as unavoidable, and at another they describe the advantages which are still left us. “Now”, say they, “that Europe by an irresistible destiny is reduced to a situation in which hardly a shred of its ancient political constitution is left, it is no longer worthwhile to treat or fight about it. Experience has clearly demonstrated, that every attempt to stem the torrent of destruction has been attended with a contrary effect; when power has attained a certain pitch it is madness to resist; in such a case wisdom prescribes to us to capitulate on the best possible terms, and instead of defending the entrenchments, an early surrender, deference to the will of the conqueror, assiduity in courting his favour, so that all that can be saved may be saved. Besides our lot, taken even in its most threatening

aspect, is far from being intolerable. The balance of power among states has always been a chimera; in all times the weak have received laws from the strong; whether the law is pronounced by one individual, or twenty, is the same to him whose fortune it is to obey. To live under the sceptre of a stranger, and to see all the appurtenances of an independent constitution, swallowed up in the vortex of a prodigious monarchy, where everything is engorged, and mingled, and sunk, and forgotten, has, to be sure, something repulsive in it; but in whatever hands the chief authority may be placed, there will always be local regents and whether these be men of ancient race, or upstarts, whether they be called presidents, or prefects, or stadholders, or electors, or kings; of what consequence is this to the subjects? No one can be robbed of those things which he values the most, his house, his land, a part (who will be insatiable!) of his hereditary or acquired fortune; and let the worst happen, no despot can disturb what constitutes the real enjoyments of this passing life, the pleasures of the table, and of love, music, the theatre, good instructive reading, a friendly game at cards, a comfortable restoring sleep. The rest consists merely of accessories of imaginary, rather than real goods, which are not to be rejected, it is true, when they can be obtained by moderate exertion, or even by temporary sacrifices; but which we should cease to pursue as soon as they endanger the possession of more substantial advantages, the enjoyment of which is always sufficient to console us for the want of the others.”

Every person must perceive after a moment’s reflection, that it would be a fruitless undertaking to combat such a system with argument. For between what lies within its sphere, and what lies without it, a common basis is wanting, without which no discussion can lead to any right conclusions. Must it be formally demonstrated that every member of a state, however low and insignificant he may be, besides the common wants of life has other desires of a higher nature, among which national honour, a respected name, an independent constitution, a fixed and well assured interest in the political system, hold a principal place? These truths must be felt, and those who are insensible to them can never be convinced of them by argument. When a people or a generation is so far degraded by egotism, by unworthy maxims, and by a low and contracted manner of thinking, as to have lost all sense of public interest to,

consider the country as a name without a meaning, to weigh the value of an independent existence in the same balance with the commonest benefits, and to view the loss of liberty, and honour, as an event of indifference; then it is no longer time to appeal to the nobler feelings; slavery is complete before the oppressor has appeared; the state is dissolved before being the object of violence; and when the first trying catastrophe arrives, those who were no longer able to endure the light of the sun will be delivered over to the minister of darkness.

The only tenable position from which the defenders of unconditional subjection can be attacked, and harassed with any hope of happy results, is one which has a sort of connection with their favourite calculation. That there never was a widely extended empire, which, after in the first place destroying the public property of nations, such as their forms of government, their laws, their privileges, their local constitutions, did not afterwards invade their manners, their character, their habits of thinking, nay, even their language; and finished at last with destroying their private property, their professional pursuits, their domestic relationships, their personal liberty, and security, is manifest both from ancient and modern history. That the empire in which Europe is about to be overwhelmed, as far as it has proceeded hitherto has not only subverted thrones and dignities, demolished laws and forms of government; but that it has brought in its gloomy train, misery in every form, the robbery and plunder of the rich, the starvation of the poor, the most vexatious insecurity of all property, the ruin of all public institutions, the obstruction of industry, commerce, and particularly of foreign trade, the annihilation of capital and credit, and a load of most oppressive taxes, which extinguishes every hope of recovering them; and, besides all this, to complete the catalogue of evils, the pressure of arbitrary power, continual anxiety and fear for the loss of personal liberty; the impossibility, either in speech or writing, of imparting any consolation to the sufferers, and a hopeless prospect for futurity – all is disclosed by the notoriously undeniable situation of so many ruined nations; and many powerful reasons might be adduced, which cannot here be explained, however much they merit being fully developed, and deeply laid to heart, to prove that this new empire must retain its desolating and pestilential character to the last moment of its existence. But such warnings, however terrible and loud, cannot rouse us

from our lethargic slumbers; even these considerations, so nearly allied to the commonest interests, so powerfully addressing themselves to the security and welfare of individuals – and mortifying it is to be obliged to confess it! – require too much public spirit, too much participation in the sufferings of others, too much exaltation and expansion of view to operate with effect upon our contemporaries. They are still not personal enough. Each individual contents himself with casting up the amount of his own particular loss, supposing things come to the worst, and how many advantages, and how much enjoyment he will then have left; and with this calculation, as foolish and deceitful as it is unworthy and inhuman, he shuts himself up in his chamber, and gives his country, contemporaries, and posterity, to the winds of destruction. Thus does eternal justice punish a degenerate and deeply corrupted generation! Thus does the supreme good of social existence, mistaken, contemned, and rejected, avenge itself on the commonest possession. After a blind and obstinate selfishness has sacrificed everything to one only idol, from which amidst rubbish and ruin it expects salvation; an inexorable arm seizes at last on the contemptible image, breaks it before its trembling votaries, and dashes them to the ground, to wallow in the dust for which they were made.

But if reason and experience compel us to pronounce that indifference to the public good, which characterizes a very great proportion of the people of our time, an incurable evil; what are we to think of another error, which, though less frequent, is still more revolting than that, (for it would be going too far to call it more destructive,) I mean the satisfaction with which some amongst us hail the dissolution of all the old constitutions, the more than half finished, and soon to be completed, subjection of Europe! Here it is not grounds of consolation which they offer us to sweeten a bitter and inevitable destiny; it is formal congratulations, it is a call to joy and exultation. One informs us with philosophical profundity, that what in appearance is so frightful, if considered in a just point of view, is the best and most convenient way to attain an everlasting peace; war, the only evil – for human wisdom will ere long get the better of earthquakes, pestilence, and famine – will soon vanish from the earth, when everything is subjected to one master. Another is of opinion, not quite without ground, if the conclusion

followed from the premises – that the old political body is become so weak, the joints which unite the different members so feeble, and the spirit which animated the whole so exhausted, impotent and scant, that its dissolution should not occasion much regret; but on the contrary, as opening a better prospect for futurity, that it is more to be wished for than deprecated. The vigorous creative hand of one individual of an absolute sovereign will restore to everything life and youth. A third dwells on the greatness of the man, whom Providence has chosen to govern the world according to his will; when the struggle is once finished, and every obstructing obstacle removed, then will his mighty genius put us again in possession of what we have lost, and convert united Europe into a scene of comfort and abundance, of splendour and bliss. – The public hear this language, not indeed with unqualified confidence, but without any symptom of disgust; and in the minds of most people, there is something which predisposes them favourably to receive it. They pant after repose. They think it impossible but the present painful, embroiled, and tumultuous state of things, must tend to a speedy and determinate issue; leading either to the re-establishment of order, or to the completion of that disorder, where everything must begin anew. But as the road which conducts to the former of these results is much more long and rugged than that which leads to the latter, they accustom themselves, by little and little, to consider the very abyss of evil as a sort of haven in which their hopes repose; and thus become familiar with the most criminal wishes, of which they were originally quite unaware.

Such a temper of mind as that here described we cannot be expected to combat. In so far as it has obtained an ascendant among the great mass of the people, it originated either in childish credulity, or in dark despair. In so far as it has been occasioned, encouraged, and cherished, by a baneful class of writers; it is sufficient to point to its sources. Some were actuated by secret motives; and as such a conduct surpasses in criminality all ordinary depravation, by the most impure of all motives; others, and probably the greater number, (for the former class we must suppose to be but small, and no one should be ranked in it without the most convincing proof of his really belonging to it, have been carried away by a perversion of intellect, by a love of fanciful speculation, by an abuse of ideal principles, and a total ignorance of real life. Whoever

recalls to his mind what this class of political writers have inculcated and affected, for the last fifteen years, particularly in GERMANY; how they have found out illustrations and apologies for every one of the thousand forms, which the Proteus-like monster of the revolution assumed in such an incredibly rapid succession; and with what shameless effrontery they defended, more changeable even than their stars, systems the most inconsistent, admired the most contradictory forms, and oftener than once idolized today what yesterday had been the objects of their execration – whoever will bear this in mind, cannot be much surprised that “ABSOLUTE DESPOTISM”, and “THE NEW FEDERAL SYSTEM”, are at present the objects of their veneration; and that the avenging demon, which, as a punishment for their presumption, has whipped them round the wide and wearisome circle of political frenzies, has metamorphosed them from enthusiasts of liberty, ghastly feverish liberty, into panegyrists of the most perfect slavery to which the nations were ever subjected.

The ascendant which apathy and indifference to the highest interests of Europe, or an immediate predilection for what tended to prejudice these interests, obtained in the minds of our contemporaries; was not only, as is frequently believed, an accessory to greater evils, a figure in the background of the gloomy picture of the decay of Europe, it was the innate active principle, the original source of the decay. The governments have exposed themselves to much well merited censure; they have done much to precipitate their fate, but the greatest and most decisive share in the work of devastation is ours. Their mistakes would have been fewer, shorter, and more susceptible of remedy, if the utter blindness of the nations, the perversion of public spirit, the dormant state of all genuine sentiments, the dominion of the lowest motives; and to say all in a single word, the moral corruption of the world, had not infected, poisoned, and preyed upon everything around it. Every age may suffer from some political faults, or some unsuccessful enterprises. But when, for a series of years in every quarter of the world, we see the same spectacle of littleness and impotence, of false and nerveless policy, of worthless plans and paltry means of execution, and a straight undeviating march to inevitable destruction, we may rest assured that the evil does not lie in accidental anomalies, in the incapacity of individual organs; or in passing

obstructions; but that the heart is affected and diseased, that the blood of the political body is corrupted and dried up. Princes, it is said, stamp their character upon the nations which they govern, and in a certain sense it may be so; but in a higher and more comprehensive sense, nations stamp their characters upon the princes to whom they are subject. They are constituent parts of the whole, and when viewed from the central point of the world's relations, they are, at every given moment, necessarily and precisely what surrounding objects make them. After all the faults and blunders of rulers have been described and illustrated fully in detail, the history of the dreadful disturbances which Europe has experienced in the course of the last ten years will remain for posterity an unintelligible mystery, a riddle not susceptible of explanation; the very echo of a fable. The state of the nations must be represented, their participation in the common ruin, their progress in good and evil, their wishes, their aims, their errors, their moral and political decay, must be held forth to view and elucidated. All partial complaints against regents, all exclusive accusations brought against them, are the productions of blindness and injustice; the mildest and the hardest, the best and the worst that can be said of them is, they have given a faithful representation of their age.

From what quarter shall we now expect relief? The governments and the public opinion are the common responsible authors of our present cruel situation. The former neither hear nor understand us, and what is still more discouraging, they can no longer listen to us; because the overmeasure of their embarrassments has robbed them of their freedom: to attempt to operate upon them is to no purpose, because the possibility of a fortunate issue, at least supposes as granted, what here has vanished without hope of return, a longing after a more happy state, a sentiment which detests chains, and a courage which dares to break them. One bright prospect still remains, and this, which is a mighty consolation, no malice of fate can darken. The brave, the upright, and the good, how small so ever their number may be, must remain steadfast and inseparable, must mutually instruct, admonish, bear with, support, and inspirit one another. A league between them is the only power, the only invincible coalition, which can still at this day defy the force of arms, restore liberty to the nations, and repose to the world. Even this sacred league may succumb in individual combats; but all that it has to lose is the

field of battle, a glorious retreat is open to it. When all around it falls off, it entrenches itself upon an inaccessible eminence, shuts itself up, with the fairest treasures of humanity, beyond the reach of the conqueror, and guards the deposit for a happier generation.

You who, in the wreck of time, live surrounded with death and desolation, who have saved the first or most precious of all goods, a free enlightened mind, an honest and sensible heart, an affection for the sacred relics of humanity, and courage to sacrifice everything for them; you proved and valiant heroes of the age, whom adversity has not been able to vanquish, who in mind and in truth have been always victorious, whose character is mistaken by the multitude, and who, fortunately perhaps, are despised and detested by those blustering disturbers of the world's peace whom the people adore. – But above all, you to whom these words are particularly addressed, distinguished ornaments of your country, magnanimous Germans, worthy of your name, invincible to misfortune, fatigued, but not – dispirited! He who has selected you to reconcile posterity with the present generation, has doomed you to the hardest troubles and most fiery trials. Wherever you turn your eyes you are surrounded with the images of desolation, and with invitations to discouragement. Our country is depressed, trampled upon, torn to pieces, and profaned; a part of its princes openly and avowedly bear the yoke of a foreign power; more than one, enticed with vain titles or imaginary aggrandizement, became fellow-workers in the common ruin, which overtook them in the very hour even of apostasy; in the moment of fancied enjoyment, before they had gathered the fruits of their treachery, or brought them into security. Of those who still have an existence, who still retain the name of powers with some shadow of independence, the greater part are ripe for destruction; by their selfish or cowardly policy, by their voluntary and shameful capitulations, by steps which have deprived them of the esteem of the world and the confidence of their people, they invited the fate to which they are doomed. The few who retain pure, noble, just, and German sentiments – for such there are and you know them – are either, in consequence of still bleeding wounds, or of the proportional smallness of their territory, or of a thousand considerations and restrictions, so fettered, and weak, and helpless, that almost all they can give us is their good will. The energies of our great

nation are scattered, divided, turned aside into feeble rills, or into corrupt and stagnant pools, or into exhausting drains, and lost for every national object. All the protecting bulwarks of our land are overthrown; our confines, if confines we can be said to have when the enemy is still among us, are bared of every means of defence; our most flourishing towns and provinces are daily like so much merchandise without an owner, cut up, parcelled out, sold, exchanged and again exchanged, and given away to natives and foreigners. Property honestly acquired vanishes or migrates, industry is sick and crippled, our ports and markets are shut up.

But not merely the body of the empire is maimed, maltreated, and dishonoured, its soul also is mortally wounded. In vain you seek in the great mass of the people, in vain at courts, in vain among those distinguished for their rank in the country; that exalted feeling of melancholy, that deep, but manly sorrow, that piercing, but hopeful grief, which engenders saving resolutions. Your lamentations are spent in the air, your descriptions of the general ruin are considered at best as matter of idle amusement, or literary curiosity; there where you are still permitted to disturb the slumbers of the public, men think they do a great deal when they tolerate you as tiresome friends, or well-meaning enthusiasts; the greater part listen to you with uneasy feelings, nay, even with fear; and the moment is visibly approaching, when a long gloomy silence will be the law of your social existence, and the hard, but imperious condition, of your personal liberty.

All this and more than this, – for who can ascertain where the evil will end, – you will support not merely with steadfastness and equanimity qualities which are not denied to beings lower than you; but with the pride-inspiring consciousness of incontestable superiority, if you have greatness and strength enough never to prove untrue to yourselves. As long as you remain upright, there is nothing fallen which may not be reinstated. Even the grave opens, and death is only apparent when the vital principle still exists in the heart. Whether you will live to receive the reward of your constancy, to celebrate the public triumph of your cause, and the regeneration of all things, depends upon inscrutable decrees. For you, however, if you remain steadfast in what is good; and for your posterity and heirs, to live and conquer is but one thing. In you what appeared to be sunk, rises with renewed splendour; in you what seemed

to be lost, is again recovered; our native country, the commonwealth of Europe, the liberty and dignity of nations, the reign of law and order, the productions of all the ages which are passed, continue to flourish in your spirit; there where no destiny can reach, no tyrant approach, the world is restored to youth and vigour. Your immediate influence may be thwarted, the circle of your operations circumscribed by narrow bounds, your hands laid in fetters, and your mouth forcibly shut; but these are only the outworks of your power. Your firm intrepid purpose, the acknowledged steadfastness of your principles, your constant, though calm protestations, against whatever guilty violence may attempt to effect or justify; the lively conviction ever present to your enemies as well as to your friends, that the war between you and injustice, will never be compromised by false negotiations, interrupted by imaginary truces, or terminated by an insincere treaty; the dignified, manly, constantly upright, constantly prepared posture in which you appear to your contemporaries, these are your everlasting weapons. Your bare insolated existence is a perpetual terror to the oppressors, and for the oppressed an eternal consolation.

Never forget that wherever you are is the true central point of all the undertakings, by means of which Europe sooner or later must be delivered from servitude; the arbitrary code of laws to which it is at present subjected torn to pieces, the imposing edifice of a temporary might thrown down, and a new immortal league formed between liberty, order and peace, for the happiness of future times: neither England nor Russia can accomplish it; desirable as both are as allies, invaluable as they are as a counterpoise, and in the relation of cooperating powers; but the proper work of liberation must be accomplished on German soil. Here the re-establishment must take place, as it was here that the building was overthrown, and its destruction completed. Germany has been the cause of Europe's fall – Germany must lift it from its state of ruin. Not all the energies or arts of France, not that wild conclusive force which sprung like a tempestuous cloud from the poisoned abyss of the revolution; not the personal prowess or dexterity of any creature of this revolution could have heaved the world from its socket the defencelessness of Germany alone has done it. Our unhappy eternal discords, the division of our force, the mutual jealousy of our princes, the want of unison in our

people, the extinction of every generous feeling for the common interest of the nation, the slumber of every patriotic sentiment, these have been the spoilers, these the destroyers of our liberty, these have been our mortal enemies, and the enemies of Europe. If we unite, if we forget our family feuds, if, in the hour of danger, in the hour of general pressure, we can resolve to be Germans, we shall thus defy every assault – never will a foot's breadth of German territory become a prey to an insolent stranger, never will the weakest, and most distant member of the great European system be struck off from its compact and vigorous body; nay more, we shall have the credit of restoring France, which has been so deeply convulsed, and which still remains in a distempered condition, to a state of true and hopeful convalescence; for who can compare its present situation, its bloated and unnatural corpulence, to a state of health! And of conducting it to a tranquil, harmonious existence, and a happy reconciliation with itself; a measure which, if performed with wisdom, and with well-chosen instruments, would have established and protected, for many centuries to come, the civil constitution of Europe in the whole and in each of its parts. So much was in our power, brothers, and so much we have most culpably neglected. But if anything can extricate us from this abyss of misery in which we are now doing penance for our sins, it is the same resolution by which, at an earlier period, we might have avoided falling into it. In a state of division we have been subjected, in a state of union we must rise from subjection; this mode of salvation is now, it must be confessed, become more difficult to realize than it was; but so much is incontestably true if the *political energies* of Germany, are ever to act in concert, the national will must be previously united. Here high spirited and magnanimous Germans, scattered but undivided in spirit, allied by identity of sentiment and of aim, constitutional representatives of the nation, here an honourable field opens before you. To remain true to yourselves was your first duty, but desert not now your native country. Let everyone in the circle in which he moves, in the station which he holds, through whatever medium it may be, set up the lights of his wisdom, of his strength, and unwavering perseverance; let his voice be heard as far it can reach, calling upon the slothful to renewed exertions, the hopeless to fresh courage, or the torpid to renovated life. Cultivate peace and concord, and mutual confidence, and harmony

of views and wishes and interests and zeal for the common cause, and readiness to sacrifice every private advantage to a great national object; and inculcate the same sentiments on all to whom your influence extends. Exclude none from the benefit of your cares, not even those you have given up as irretrievably lost; not even those who, on the brink of destruction, and subject to fear and terror, you may think inaccessible to your influence; not even those whose deluded rulers have added to our calamities, introduced the enemy within our walls, and surrendered the country to his discretion. In the hearts of the most degraded Germans there lives still something which will understand your meaning, and return you the tribute of esteem and approbation: why should you not win over such who, without any love of shame, but from the traitorous counsels of others, fell the victims of weakness, indecision, or of wavering resolutions? Never inquire after immediate effects, nor after the extent of the good you have done, nor after the number of the minds you have gained! It requires not a great number to bring about matters of the highest moment; consider that a single word spoken in a happy moment can awaken nations from a state of death, and rekindle the sacred fire of patriotism, though quite extinguished, in whole generations! It is impossible that a people like ours, however it may have been punished and mortified, deserted and betrayed; however it may have been misled by hellish artifices, or stunned by defeats and calamity; however it may have forgot itself for a time, must not at last rise from its degradation; and from the cruel state of humiliation to which it has been reduced; impossible that so much force of mind, so much personal superiority, so much isolated, but energetic power, such an affluence of natural talents improved by various and profound instructions, as are to be found amongst us, should not sooner or later collect into a focus which will enlighten and animate the whole; impossible that out of this venerable stem of multifarious excellence and virtue, out of this cradle of European dominion, out of so many families illustrated by ancient reputation, by great and honourable names, and obliged, as it were, to transmit to their heirs the inheritance which they have received from their ancestors; out of so many races of princes shining with antique splendour, even in this twilight of all greatness, a perfect hero should not spring forth as a saviour and avenger to wipe the tears from all faces, to re-establish us

in the possession of our eternal rights, and again build up Germany and Europe. To prepare for this protecting genius, appear when he will, fit and useful instruments with which to act, to train up subjects with a spirit of resistance to governments founded in usurpation, determined foes to tyrants, and an obedient and willing people to returning legitimate dominion; to preserve regularity in religious observances, to educate intelligent and worthy ministers of virtuous liberty, and of that wisdom which comes from God, and to breed up for posterity a class of hardy spirits and valorous combatants, that similar calamities may be prevented from again breaking in upon the world – that is your mighty calling.

If Providence has irrevocably decreed that the evil, the iron times in which your lot is cast shall extend beyond the limits of your days, and that the darkness shall be completed before the enlivening influence of the sun again is felt, retire within yourselves, and enjoy through faith and hope what the troubled realities of the present deny you. But let your enjoyment be fitting minds influenced by the most serious impressions. The grounds of consolation with which persons such as you should arm themselves against the terrors of the present, have nothing in common with those by which selfish and short-sighted weaklings endeavour for a time to escape from the feeling of misery, the sentiment of shame, till at last the miserable bolster on which they thought to forget the loss of everything that is great and good, and to slumber out existence, sinks into the all devouring gulph. Yours are of a higher nature, more active, quickening and balsamic, but they must be purchased at an incomparably higher price, and enjoyed on much harder conditions. It is not permitted for you to shut yourselves up in sloth, cowardly to withdraw from the field, to retire with cynical disgust, or monkish apathy, from the world; and to indulge in inactive and inglorious repose. You must contend as long as you have breath with the enemy, how great so ever his might, how menacing so ever his violence; you must not surrender a foot breadth of the sacred territory which you are appointed to defend without resistance, and without a struggle, you must yield to no danger, to no difficulty, nor must you give up the cause entrusted to you under any pretence or probability, not even when, to all human appearance, it seems irremediably lost. That is the law of your being; it

is only thus you can insure peace with yourselves, tranquillity during the raging of the storm, and an exaltation above every fortune. It is fortunate that what duty enjoins your advantage requires, and that your interest is in perfect harmony with your obligations. Recollect that in past scenes every moment of repose proved dangerous to those who engaged in the race, and that restless redoubled endeavours to attain their object was always the maxim of those who were familiarized with victory. In your career to stop is to lose the prize. As soon as you stand still your strength abandons you, the sleep of discouragement overcomes you, and the night comes and mantles you with its terrors. With the more constancy and determination you advance, the more certainly you will escape this feeling of fatigue, the more hope will fan you with its freshest breezes, the sooner you will be saluted by the purple dawn of morning.

Written in the beginning of April 1806.

Chapter I

The true acceptance of a Balance of Power.

What is usually termed a balance of power, is that constitution subsisting among neighbouring states more or less connected with one another; by virtue of which no one among them can injure the independence of the essential rights of another, without meeting with effectual resistance on some side, and consequently exposing itself to danger.

The allusion in the term to corporeal objects has given occasion to various misconceptions. It has been represented that those who recognized the principles of a combination among states founded on an equal balance of power, had in view the most perfect possible equality or equalization of powers, and required that the different states composing a great political league should, in respect of extent, population, riches, resources, and so forth, be exactly measured, squared and rounded by a common standard. Out of this false hypothesis, according as it has been applied by credulity or scepticism to the relations between states, have sprung two opposite errors, the one almost as hurtful as the other. Those who adopted that imaginary principle in its full extent, were thereby led to believe that in every case in which a state gains an accession of strength, either by external acquisitions, or by the development of its internal resources, the rest must oppose, and contend with it till they have either obtained an equivalent or reduced it to its former situation. A different set justly persuaded of the impossibility of such a system have, on the other hand, declared the whole idea of a political balance to be a chimera invented by dreamers, and artfully made use of by designing men as a pretext for disputes, injustice and violence. The former of these

errors would banish peace from the earth; the latter would open the most desirable prospects to every state which, under the influence of ambition, aspired to universal dominion.

Both errors proceed from the same mixture of ideas, which, in the province of the interior economy of states, have produced all the visionary and airy theories of *civil liberty*, and the failure of all the practical attempts to carry them into execution. In every well-ordered state the collective body of citizens, and in every well-ordered commonwealth of nations the collective body of states should be equal in rights, (that is) their rights should be *equally respected*; but it by no means follows that they should have the same rights, that is, *rights of equal quality and value*. True *equality*, and the only equality attainable by legitimate means, consists, in both cases, in this, that the smallest as well as the greatest is secured in the possession of his right, and that it can neither be forced from him nor encroached upon by *lawless* power.

As it is a fundamental principle in every well-organized state, and the triumph of its constitution, that a multitude of persons in the greatest degree unequal in rights and powers, in talents and capacities, in acquired and inherited possessions, so happily exist together under common laws, and a common government, that no one can arbitrarily thrust himself into his neighbour's sphere; and that the poorest can as little be molested in the enjoyment of his cottage and his field, as the richest can be in the possession of his palace and domains; so the proper character of a union of states, such as has existed in modern Europe, and the triumph of its constitution, is, that a certain number of states, possessing various degrees of power and wealth, shall each remain untroubled within its own confines, under the protection of a common league, and that, that state whose whole territory is encircled by the walls of a single town, shall be held as sacred by its neighbours as any other, whose possessions and power extends over lands and seas.

But as the best constitution of a single state which can be devised by man never completely answers its purpose, and always leaves room for individual acts of violence, oppression, injustice; in the same manner the most perfect federal constitution is never sufficiently strong to prevent every attack of a more powerful state on the rights of a less powerful. Nay more, if the conditions are in other respects equal, a league between

states will, in a certain proportion, be more defective in protecting the independence and security of its members, than a single state is in defending the legal equality and security of its citizens. The security of the citizens of a single state rests upon the unity of its legislation and administration. The laws all proceed from one central point, their maintenance is the work of one and the same authority, and those who are disposed to infringe them can be checked at the outset by legal coercion; or those who have actually transgressed them, can be made responsible to a tribunal of justice. The law which binds states together consists in their mutual compacts; and as these, from the endless diversity of the relations out of which they spring, are susceptible of an infinite number of differences in their principle, spirit, and character, the nature of their origin excludes, in the strict sense of the word, a higher common sanction. Among independent nations there is neither an executive nor a judicial power; to create the one or the other has been long a fruitless, pious wish, and the object of many a vain, well-meaning effort. But what the nature of these relations prevented from ever being perfectly accomplished was, at least, obtained in approximation; and in the general political system of modern Europe, the problem was as happily solved as could be expected from the endeavours of men, and the application of human wisdom.

There was formed among the states of this quarter of the globe an extensive social commonwealth, of which the characteristic object was the preservation and reciprocal guarantee of the rights of all its members. From the time that this respectable object came to be distinctly and clearly recognized, the necessary eternal conditions, on which it was attainable, unfolded themselves by degrees. Men were soon aware that there were certain fundamental principles, arising out of the proportional power of each of the component parts to the whole, without the constant influence of which order could not be secured; and the following maxims were gradually set down as a practical basis, which was not to be deviated from;

That if the states system of Europe is to exist and be maintained by common exertions, no one of its members must ever become so powerful as to be able to coerce all the rest put together; –

That if that system is not merely to exist, but to be maintained without constant perils and violent concussions; each member which infringes it

must be in a condition to be coerced, not only by the collective strength of the other members, but by any majority of them, if not by one individual; –

But that to escape the alternate danger of an uninterrupted series of wars, or of an arbitrary oppression of the weaker members in every short interval of peace; the fear of awakening common opposition, or of drawing down common vengeance, must of itself be sufficient to keep everyone within the bounds of moderation; – and

That if ever a European state attempted by unlawful enterprises to attain to a degree of power, (or had in fact attained it), which enabled it to defy the danger of a union of several of its neighbours, or even an alliance of the whole, such a state should be treated as a common enemy; and that if, on the other hand, it had acquired that degree of force by an accidental concurrence of circumstances, and without any acts of violence, whenever it appeared upon the public theatre, no means which political wisdom could devise for the purpose of diminishing its power, should be neglected or untried.

These maxims contain the only intelligible theory of a balance of power in the political world.

The original equality of the parties in such a union as is here described is not an accidental circumstance, much less a casual evil; but is in a certain degree to be considered as the previous condition and foundation of the whole system. It is not how much power one or other possess, but whether he possess it in such a manner that he cannot with impunity encroach upon that of the rest; which is the true question to be answered, in order to enable us to judge at every given moment of the proportion between individual parts and of the general sufficiency of the structure: hence even a subsequent increase of that original necessary inequality, provided it has not sprung from sources, or been introduced by practices, which contravene one of the fundamental maxims above-mentioned, may be in itself blameless.

It is only when a state with open wantonness, or under fictitious pretences and titles artificially invented, proceeds to such enterprises as immediately, or in their unavoidable consequences, prepare the way for the subjugation of its weaker neighbours, and for perpetual danger to the stronger, that conformably to sound conceptions of the general interest of the commonwealth, a rupture of the balance is to be apprehended; it is only then that several should unite together to prevent the decided preponderance of one individual power.

By this system, which has been acted upon since the beginning of the sixteenth century, with more or less good fortune but with great constancy, and often with uncommon prudence; at first more in a practical way, and, as it were from political instinct, afterwards with clear, reflecting, and methodical constancy, two great results were obtained, in the midst of a tumultuous assemblage of the most decisive events. The one was, that no person succeeded in prescribing laws to Europe, and that, (till our times), all apprehension, even of the return of a universal dominion, was gradually banished from every mind. The other, that the political constitution, as it was framed in the sixteenth century, remained so entire in all its members till the end of the eighteenth, (when all ancient ordinances were abolished), that none of the independent powers, which originally belonged to the confederacy, had lost their political existence.

How these two important results were obtained, amid cares and dangers of various sorts amid many storms and tempests, to the credit of the European statesmanship, and to the no small advantage of humanity, is to be learnt in the history of that period. It was only at the commencement of this period, before experience and deeper observation had spoiled the phantom of its terrors, that the possibility of an universal monarchy obtained belief. But wiser men afterwards perceived, that though a complete universal dominion, such as the Romans established, might on sufficient grounds be declared impossible in modern Europe, this was by no means the only danger; they perceived that by extraordinary circumstances, and by neglecting to oppose the proper obstacles, one great kingdom or another might attain to such a degree of preponderance as might gradually draw upon the whole system, if not immediate sudden destruction, at least the loss of its independence; as might change substantive parts of its territory, (under whatever title it might be), into provinces of the principal state; as might convert regents into vassals, and whatever other evils might arise out of such a constitution, they clearly and with utter abhorrence recognized in its eventual establishment, the unavoidable ruin of the smaller, the oppression and degradation of the greater, and the constant peril of the middling states.

But by the arrangements adopted by the statesmen of better times, and less by individual measures than by the general vigilance, alertness, energy,

and true political spirit which guided them at every step, they succeeded in most successfully solving their second problem, in preserving inviolate the whole structure committed to their care, even in its lowest compartments, and in protecting with eminent dexterity those weaker parts which were in danger from time to time of being undermined. It is certainly a remarkable occurrence, that in the course of three most eventful centuries, amid so many bloody wars, so various and decisive negotiations, so frequent changes of power, so great and extended revolutions, amid a general anarchy of all social, civil, religious, and political relations, not one independent state was annihilated by violent means. Neither Switzerland, nor Holland, nor any spiritual nor temporal German prince, not the most insignificant imperial town, nor Venice, nor Genoa, nor the small Italian republics, though surrounded on all sides by states of gigantic greatness, nor Malta left to itself, nor the weak, though flourishing Geneva pressed by France on one side, and Savoy on the other; nor even the power of Savoy, at one time threatened by Austria, at another by France; nor Portugal, enclosed on all sides by the Spanish territory; nor Sweden, nor Denmark, both endangered by the prodigious extension and aggrandizement of the Russian and Prussian powers; – not one of all these states disappeared. Several of them certainly maintained themselves by their own courage and strength, or by superior wisdom, or by the recollection of those achievements by means of which in earlier times they had attained to independence and dignity. But the greater part of them, if not all, would, to the vast prejudice of the whole, have gone to ruin, had they not been supported and protected by the general interest of Europe, and those great enlightened principles, by which that interest was conducted.

The whole of this excellent system has now at length, like all the works of man, seen the hour of its fall approach; and it has sunk under those maladies which gradually prove fatal to all the productions of the moral world, *abuse of form* on one hand, and *apathy of spirit* on the other. How this has happened will be shown in the following chapters, and, at the same time, we shall conscientiously enquire, whether because much is lost, and much irretrievably lost, we should on that account, with cowardly indifference, give up that which stilt remains; or, whether we ought not rather to do our utmost to save what can yet be saved, and from the ruins of the old building to rear a new and more substantial edifice?

Chapter II

Of the Shock given to the Balance of Power by the Introduction of the Partition System

In the physical world, a system, the operations of which are regulated by weights and counterweights, can only be shaken by one or more of these losing their original power, and thus producing the preponderance of the others, and the ruin of the machine. A similar system, when applied to human relations, is exposed, besides that now mentioned, to another danger. As its powers in this case are endowed with freedom, a part of these may combine to the prejudice of the rest, and effect what would have been impossible for anyone singly to have produced, the ruin of the devoted member, and thus the destruction of the whole machine.

A system of political counterpoise, has both in its structure and operations, a remarkable analogy with what, in the internal economy of states, is called a mixed constitution, or constitutional balance. When this, as in England for example, has attained to the highest pitch of perfection of which it is susceptible; when everything is arranged and constituted in the wisest manner, when none of the different powers of which it is composed can surpass the bounds of their respective spheres, or in any way transgress their limits without encountering a repelling force, there is yet another danger which baffles all human skill to avoid. As the divided powers must necessarily act in concert for good and salutary purposes, they can also, in extraordinary cases, voluntarily combine for bad ones; and thus, what would have been impossible for anyone singly to operate had the principle of mutual counteraction continued, may be effected by a fatal understanding between them, to the prejudice of the state, and the ruin of its constitution.

In precisely the same manner it is possible that the members of a great confederacy, which, in the natural course of things, should act as a counterpoise the one to the other; and in times of common danger, by common measures of prevention, oppose the preponderance of one individual, may be misled by extraordinary conjectures, may unite for the oppression, humiliation, or annihilation of a weaker member, and thus employ for the purposes of attack and destruction the same powers which were destined for protection and preservation. To such a perversion of a system grounded in wisdom, and calculated for beneficial purposes, by the constant action and re-action of reciprocal limitation; to such an *abuse* of form the partition system is indebted for its origin.

The possibility of an abuse of this kind arose so clearly out of the particular construction of the European national league, that, as it strikes us at present, a mind reflecting on futurity must have dreaded the contingency of the evil long before its approach. But in all human things there are certain outrageous extremes, it would seem, which even the mind most capable of combination does not take into its calculation till the evil actually arrive, brought on as it were by a fatal influence of the stars; such is the case with that unfortunate perversion by which the most salutary political principle was converted into a tool of unrighteousness. It was not known, it was not counted upon, it was scarce ever dreaded, when in the year 1772 the partition of Poland took place.

This event belongs entirely to history. It is in every sense of the word concluded; its results have passed into the province of right and order, into the constitution of Europe, as it is recognized, prescribed, and established by treaties, into that system which has been consecrated by the public sanction of nations. – Besides this, its authors and those who took a part in it have disappeared from the theatre, posterity now pronounces judgment on their transactions. If we regard them with a rigorous eye, it is not only for the purpose of ascertaining with correctness the causes of the shock sustained by the social constitution of Europe, and of the means of remedying the evil, we are actuated by another and more pressing motive. The partition of Poland is now pleaded as a just pretence for completely overturning what still remains of the old constitution, and of forcibly and violently knocking to the ground its pillars and supporters. It is explicitly maintained, not merely by private

writers, who must first clear the path, but by the French government and its immediate acknowledged organs, that France is justified even now in demanding indemnity for what the neighbouring powers gained by the partition of Poland, and that by just analogy, as they carried their plans into execution without the consent of France, so France must pursue its advantage, without regarding their remonstrances, wherever it can carry its arms. In order to strip this pretence of everything which has a tendency to blind the weak, to mislead the wise, to encourage and to favour the enemies of the public weal, it is proper and necessary attentively to consider it. In great transactions like these, a contempt of all little aids and an undisguised representation of truth, is always the surest way to one's object. With the more frankness and sincerity that we pronounce upon past injustice, so much more undoubted is our right not to spare those who have called it back into existence for the purpose of building upon it a new and more extended system of iniquity and still wider devastation.

What rendered the project of a partition of Poland so incomparably more destructive to the higher interests of Europe than any former acts of violence of apparently a more aggravated character, was the decisive circumstance of its originating in that very sphere from which was expected to flow nothing but benefits and blessings, security in time of peace; and salvation in periods of danger. An union between several regents had been always considered as a beneficial barrier against lawless power, and the passions of an individual oppressor; it now appeared, to the terror of the world! That such an union could be formed for the purpose of bringing about precisely that evil against which it seemed destined as a bulwark of defence. The impression made by this detestable discovery must be still deeper and more painful, when we reflect that the framers of the wicked project, in the whole course of their undertaking, adopted the principle of the political balance as a star to conduct them through it; that they acted conformably to this principle as far as circumstances would admit in the adjustment of their respective interests, and that while they inflicted upon its spirit the most frightful wounds, they borrowed its attire, its forms, and even its language. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. To witness such an abuse of the noblest mean which the European commonwealth possessed for assuring its safety and

welfare, was, in itself, a revolting spectacle; but the malignant character of the deed was first completely brought to light in its consequences. The cause of public justice was on all hands abandoned and betrayed. A horde of jabbering sophists who, at that time in France, were striving to shake the foundations of all principle, and to undermine every existing constitution now that the mighty of the earth had broken into the sanctuary of national right, not under the impulse of incendiary passions, but deliberately and systematically turned the most respectable political ideas into ridicule without fear or reserve. Even among the enlightened and upright of the time only a few escaped the dreadful contagion. Notwithstanding that what is purest in its nature may be profaned, and what is most wholesome may be poisoned – notwithstanding that the fatal blow which the federal constitution of Europe had received called upon them the more fondly to unite, to establish the foundations of the building on a firmer basis, and more vigorously to exert themselves in its defence, they either gave themselves up to a comfortless incredulity in the inefficacy of political maxims, or to a systematic indifference. The multitude misled by the former, or not sufficiently warned against the latter, sunk every day deeper in the bottomless void, and became more and more accustomed to expect their law from violence, and their salvation from chance. How much this fatal habit of thinking must have contributed to facilitate crime, and spread desolation, when at last the evil days arrived when all right was trampled under foot, the ruin of all order conspired and, the whole social machine disjointed and broken, can have escaped only the inconsiderate observer.

But we have at last suffered enough; ruins heaped on ruins, disaster on disaster, and a mass of violence and crime, such as no age ever witnessed, has covered up that old act of injustice. To bring it again forward to view, for the sake of grounding upon it new usurpations, is a pretension so repulsive in its nature, that all Europe must unite in raising its voice against it. This becomes so much sounder policy, and so much the more a sacred obligation, because that unhallowed and wicked pretence, after a long interval of silence, is again brought forward at a moment of crisis and great confusion, so that no one can determine where in the course of time it may lead, and whether at last it may not be explicitly declared, that *Europe* must go to ruin because *Poland* has gone

to ruin. It is time to set this whole process aside; France alone still rakes up its ashes: let us unite satisfactorily to prove that France has no right in any political discussion, in the defence of any present measure, or in preferring any claim, whether in other respects well or ill grounded, to bring what formerly happened in Poland into reckoning and account. By these means at least if we are not able to impose eternal silence upon all present and future sophists, we shall at least set to rest the sound part of public opinion upon this captious question.

1st. The fate of Poland is long ago decided, not only in *fact* but in *right*. By a number of treaties of peace and conventions concluded between the partitioning powers, and all the other European states, their old and new possessions are recognized and guaranteed; the former Polish provinces are now so completely united and incorporated with their old territory as to make it impossible to separate the one from the other; the re-establishment of Poland is therefore impracticable, either in *fact* or *right*. Had France by the partition of this country been immediately and essentially injured, had it suffered and lost more than the other neighbouring states, had *it* alone lost and suffered by the transaction, had it the justest claims upon indemnity of this loss, and had it not extended its territory a single foot's breadth, – were all these suppositions as true as they are collectively false, it would be no less firmly established that after France had kept silence so long, had kept silence on so many great occasions; nay more, after it formally acknowledged and confirmed the present constitution in all its treaties of peace, its right is for ever extinguished, forfeited and cancelled. The French government has lately made the romantic proposal, to appearance indeed by way of joke, but who can mistake the omen! That all the powers should respectively give up what they have acquired for the last fifty years: but if everything is to be settled in this way, and if all that has been transacted and agreed upon for half a century is to be undone and retracted, why not go further back? Why not go at least a hundred or a hundred and fifty years back? Thus would France give up Alsace, the three bishoprics of Lorraine; or if it kept them, give an equivalent to the Emperor of Germany in Italy. With much about the same right, indeed, the King of Sweden might take possession of the states of Denmark, because his ancestors lost Livonia to Russia; or the King of Spain indemnify himself in Portugal for the loss of Holland.

2d. But if all that has been concluded, decided, and ratified by the law of nations, still remained in a state of uncertainty, and a negotiation were now, for the first time, to be set on foot on the question of the interest of France in the partition of Poland, there is no enlightened tribunal of public law which would not decree, that the transaction which took place in Poland did not afford the slightest pretence for the smallest aggrandizement of France. Not now to dwell upon that senseless doctrine on which France has oftener than once grounded her late pretensions, because a *first* violated the rights of a *second*, a *third* is justifiable in avenging them on a *fourth*; we consider the case merely in its influence on the collective body of states. Could Europe have been indemnified in any way by the gain of France for the loss which it sustained in the partition of Poland! Would not every attempt of this nature instead of healing the wounds rather have irritated them, and made them mortal? If the King of England, in a critical conjuncture, should combine with both his houses of parliament to adopt some unjust and oppressive measure, tending to the ruin of his land; what would we think of the man who should have the audacity to maintain *now* the House of Commons is at liberty to pass the first arbitrary law that may be proposed *without* the consent of either the King or the Lords? The appeals of France to the transactions of Poland have precisely the same degree of logical force; because the system adopted for the common security experienced a violent shock in consequence of an unfortunate combination of certain powers, shall every power be henceforth at liberty to attack it when it shall think proper? Had such a pretension been brought forward immediately after the partition of Poland, the partitioning powers even ought not to have hesitated a moment to take the field to combat it; for though one has been guilty himself of injustice still it is always proper and laudable in him to prevent others from committing similar injustice. It was the province and duty of France to stifle the project in the birth, and to prevent its execution in every possible way; but after it was completely accomplished, had the French cabinet at that time under pretence of re-establishing the balance of power, attempted the conquest of a neighbouring country, Holland for example, Austria, Prussia, and Russia would not only have neglected to exercise their rights, but would have exposed themselves to a new reproach, if they had not employed their force in frustrating the undertaking.

3d. In as far as *political* grounds can be separated from grounds of *justice*, it is indisputably certain, that the aggrandizement of France in consequence of the partition of Poland could not *politically* have been either justified or excused. The powers which were, to use the expression, *personally* interested in this event, were the Ottoman Porte, Sweden, and Denmark: in a more distant degree, and as it were in a second instance, on account of its future possible consequences, the German empire, the States of Italy and Switzerland. What France suffered from it, it suffered in the first place as a party in the common interest of Europe, and secondly in virtue of its near connection with those who were the immediate sufferers. The security of France, its proper personal interests, its prosperity, importance and splendour, remained uninjured and untouched. For France had been for more than a century so fortunately rounded, enclosed, and, as it were, perfected, that there was nothing wanting to render it flourishing, nothing that could bring it into danger. Richly endowed with all the gifts of nature and of Heaven, equally well calculated for a military and maritime power, covered from the danger of hostile attack, by strong natural boundaries, prodigious fortresses, and the experience of three centuries, envied only by a single power, if by any; feared and beloved by all the rest. France could behold with indifference, as far as its own interests were concerned, the extension of all the European states. It had under Louis XIV more than once made head against the half of Europe (which then did not attack its rights but opposed its ambition); it possessed a century afterwards – who at this time of day can contest it! – more real sources of power, more means of resistance and attack than it ever possessed under Louis XIV. What it might have obtained with these means, by a regular and judicious system of energy, may be clearly seen from what it has been able to effect in a long fit of feverish delirium. Even its external political relatives were not hurt by the partition of Poland. For the union of the three partitioning powers was manifestly only a passing phenomenon; and what for France, more than anything else, was then the surest ground of its security, and what afterwards has produced its preponderance, and favoured its usurpations – the rivalry between Austria and Prussia – remained unaltered.

4th. Hitherto we have only had the first partition in view, but what we have said of this will, with a few alterations, apply also to the second; the result of this also is ratified by public instruments; it also, however unjust it may have been, furnished France with no legitimate ground for extending its dominion at the expense of its neighbours. The only point which, at first sight, appears at all doubtful, is, whether on account of the extent of the territory gained, France was entitled to indemnity in a *political* view. We firmly maintain, and hope that every enlightened statesman will agree with us, that if France were now limited by its old boundaries, its individual interest would not be at all injured by the final dissolution of Poland; that notwithstanding the consequent aggrandizement of the three powers, it was not threatened more than any other state by a contingent league between them; and that it was much less vulnerable than any other in its vital parts, protected as it is from without by the intervention of the neighbouring kingdoms, fortified as it is internally by its wealth, its great and various industry, the military spirit of its inhabitants, and extraordinary resources of every sort which qualify it for the greatest undertakings; and possessing everything, in short, which the warmest and most discerning patriot could wish for to complete the prosperity of his country. But how distant is the hypothesis upon which we maintain this position from the truth! What an increase of territory, of population and revenue, has France acquired in the course of the last ten years? In reference even to an equal distribution of power, though we always protest against this as the true theory of the constitution of a balance of power, it had acquired before the year 1801, in political strength, more than any one of the three partitioning powers gained by its share of Poland. So that when we hear it said on every occasion, "France has derived less advantage than any European state from the changes which have taken place in the course of the last fifty years", we are in doubt whether this is meant to impose on the simplicity of the reader, or whether it is thrown out by way of banter.

If the division of Poland was the first event which by an *abuse of form* deranged the political balance of Europe, it was likewise one of the first which begot an *apathy of spirit*, and stupid insensibility to the general interest. The silence of France and England, the silence of all Europe, when a measure of so much importance was planned and executed, is

almost as astonishing as the event itself. The weakness of the French cabinet toward the conclusion of the reign of Louis XV, throws some light upon the circumstance, but does not sufficiently explain it. No effectual resistance could have been expected from England alone, and still less from the other powers after France declined to interfere. But it will not escape the observation of the future historian, that the omission on that occasion of any public measure, of any energetic remonstrance, of any serious protest, nay, even of any expression of disapprobation, was an indubitable symptom of general debility and relaxation.

And yet how unimportant and trifling appear these passing clouds, when compared with that thick darkness in which we are now involved! The preponderance of the mighty league by which the partition of Poland was effected; the surprising novelty of the transaction; the mystery in which it was long wrapped up; the prudence with which it was concerted; the boldness with which it was executed; all taken together explain how those who naturally might have been expected to oppose it, stunned and petrified, as it were, by sudden terror, forgot their allotted parts. The events of the last ten years were stamped with a different character.

Chapter III

Of the Decay of Political Feeling in the Course of the Revolution War

The history of the French revolution war, viewed in almost every possible light, is a dark and gloomy picture; but for him whose sensibility to great calamity has not been blinded by ordinary vexations, and who has not lost in passing afflictions all feeling at the sight of deep disaster and widely extended ruin, there is nothing so terrible in this picture as the total and hopeless oblivion of all the principles and maxims, on which rested, not only the stability and greatness, but the bare possibility of a federal constitution; the fatal dissolution of all ancient ties, of all reciprocal attachment and fidelity, of friendship and good neighbourhood, and natural and political relationship, of all public and national spirit and European family sentiment, in the governments and nations of this quarter of the globe. If one dared without peril throw the whole mass of evils into a single group, even those would stand appalled in beholding it, who must recognize their own features in the prominent figures of the picture. It was not enough that distant danger, that forebodings of the approaching storm, that the most pressing solicitations of friends, that the increasing troubles of neighbours, that the cries of anguish uttered by deserted allies, were disregarded by princes and their ministers; not even the most hideous and frightful catastrophes, the actual fall of states, the dissolution of governments, the dethronement and banishment of dynasties, the devastation and overthrow of ancient constitutions, the invasion of the most important adjoining provinces by the common enemy, the most bloody combats a few miles distant only from their residences, the destruction of their

last bulwarks of defence; nothing could rouse them from their lethargy. To escape the common danger in any possible way; – when resistance could no longer be avoided to confine themselves to the most paltry and ineffectual means – and as soon as an outlet could be found to desert the field on any condition – this seems to have been the sum of all state policy in that eternally to be lamented period, when it was reckoned fortunate, even when indifference and selfishness did not give place to still more detestable principles of action; and when the hope of catching in the general confusion some flying booty before the fire reached their own house, did not convert egotists into secret adversaries. Accounts of the most melancholy results of desperate treaties of peace were received with the same stupid insensibility as reports of defeats in the field, and provided that the storm could only be conjured from bursting on their heads, provided the vexatious complaints of the sufferers, and the still more vexatious admonitions of duty, could be but for a moment silenced; they saw with less regret than would have been felt in other times at the surrender of a citadel, or in consenting to an inconsiderable change of limits, whole lines of fortresses given up, and nations and kingdoms pass into subjection

The state of public opinion corresponded with this unheard of state of disorder. Whoever at that time attempted to talk of a common cause, of the necessity of common measures, and of salutary alliances, was, if favourably dealt with, denominated a well-meaning enthusiast, but was commonly treated as the hired instrument of another government. To expose his personal safety, to break in upon his treasures, or to march out his troops and fly to another's help, was conceived in a prince to be a species of madness. The highest panegyrics were passed on those who most carefully avoided making a trifling or momentary sacrifice to the general good. Posterity will scarcely believe, that the oracle of this memorable period, and what authors, orators and statesmen quoted, when they wished to point out a pattern of political wisdom, was the Danish government. The perversity of thinking arose to such a pitch, that those were most firmly admired and beloved, who were most determined never to take the smallest interest in the contest against the common foe. The conquest of Holland, the loss of all the German provinces on the left bank of the Rhine, the base subjugation of Switzerland, the fate of Italy, the

danger of the Austrian monarchy, scarcely ruffled the surface of the public mind. – Very many – who can have forgotten it! – were mad enough to rejoice over the victories of France; others took care of themselves, and left the rest to the care of heaven. This monstrous conduct was arraigned in a few unpopular papers, which were little read from curiosity, and which were only tolerated out of decency, but no person paid any regard to them.

It is true that this unparalleled delusion was in a considerable degree owing to the pestilential influence which the apostles of the French revolution, and their wretched maxims of liberty, had obtained over the public of every country; but that the evil did not arise solely from this source, became evident after the enthusiasm of liberty had destroyed everything within its reach, and after the principle of liberty was itself extinguished in consequence of an unexpected change which had taken place in the interior of France, (unexpected at least by the giddy multitude, though not by those who are acquainted with the progress of human error;) for even then, the same indifference to the public good, and the same insensibility to the common interest continued to exist. To select only one from the many examples which might be given, how little was the public of Germany affected by the disgraceful negotiations at Ratisbon, and their lamentable issue? With what cold disgusting levity did people witness the dissolution of so many old political ties, the ruin of all the spiritual princes, the abolition of the immediate tenures of so many Imperial towns, and the general overthrow of the constitution of the empire? How few were there that felt the mortifying circumstance, that in this cruel revolution we had not even the consolation of its being effected by ourselves; but that we received the law from strangers; that strangers formed the plans; and that strangers carried them into execution in all their most minute details? Germans contented themselves with private negotiations, embassies and journeys to Paris, emulation in little tricks, and low arts to curry favour; with complaints of their own neglected situation, and of the unmerited good fortune of others; with projects of sales and exchanges, and anecdotes from the secret history of the intercourse between foreign ministers! The only gracious feature in the whole revolting spectacle, (and this almost no one observed), was the perfect resignation and calmness with which the spiritual princes supported their misfortunes; if we except this, we

do not find in the whole course of the transaction one magnanimous or disinterested trait, not one patriotic act, not one word which merits being recorded, not even a complaint over the general calamity. In such a state of stupor, in such a disgraceful absence of public spirit, we cannot be surprised at any of the humiliations which Germany experienced in so great abundance; the only wonder is, that we still exist, that we are still in a situation to deliberate upon the means of salvation.

Had he, whom an unexampled fortune – favoured more by the unexampled failings of his contemporaries than by anything else – seemed willing to conduct to universal dominion, in addition to all the advantages which he enjoyed, possessed the quality of moderation; had he only kept pace with the gradual, but visible decay of all inclination to resist him, Europe would in a few years have lain at his feet; he has himself checked his own progress; and Providence has so ordered it, that good should spring from the excess of evil. By the feverish restlessness of his spirit, by repeated and accumulated acts of violence, by a precipitate disclosure of projects dictated by unbounded ambition, he outran the general alacrity to serve his views, and created a spirit of resistance to himself, when people were only seeking for decent pretences for continual subjection. About a year and a half ago the dawn commenced of a salutary revolution, in the wishes, dispositions and temper of the public; and even before AUSTRIA and RUSSIA resolved on war, on a *just and holy war, originating in the purest motives, and undertaken for the most noble cause*, this change was making a visible and daily progress. The most indolent are at length roused; the most spiritless are become impatient of suffering; the most selfish have begun again to take to heart the general interest; delusion is at an end; people feel that things must go differently if all is not to be given up as lost.

The transition from the present state of things to another founded upon a balance of power, and leading to a permanent amelioration of the political system, and to durable order and tranquillity, intelligent men have long perceived cannot be brought about, without strenuous exertions and sacrifices of every sort. The first duty obligatory on us in the present circumstances, is to pour forth the most ardent wishes for the successful progress of those arms which have been taken up in our great cause. But in order that we may not want a foundation on which to

build for the future, supposing our efforts to be crowned with success, our undivided attention should be directed to what a true political union, a genuine federal constitution presupposes as the necessary conditions of its existence. The system which our ancestors had organized, has been de-composed and annihilated by an *abuse of Form*, and by *languor of Spirit*. It is indispensable for the future constantly to guard against that abuse, and to oppose the return of this languor with vigilance, activity and wisdom; and in the exercise of these virtues alone, we may not only rebuild what has fallen, but secure the durability of the future edifice.

The first care from its very nature belongs to the governments. The experience of the last twenty years has sufficiently demonstrated what disorder in the political system, what extensive fatal consequences, what distrust, what discontent, what coldness between princes and their subjects, what perilous uncertainty in possession, what debilitation of the federal principle, what destructive examples to usurpers, what pretexts for injustice and tyranny have sprung from projects of partition. Every just and conscientious government must first, therefore, set it down as an unchangeable maxim in its own policy, never henceforth to lend an ear to plans which are not founded in the strictest equity. In the next place, though a general code of laws cannot, in the proper sense of the word, be framed for the regulation of a state confederacy, at least no means should be left untried to procure for these maxims a common sanction, and the solemn ratification of treaties. In every considerable alliance, in every treaty of peace, particularly in every congress composed of several considerable powers, the parties must mutually engage themselves not to endeavour to extend their territory by unjust means; and not to enter into any scheme or association directed against the rights or possessions of an independent state, by whatever name it may be called, whether of dividing, of rounding, of concentrating, of uniting, or of indemnifying themselves for other losses. A sort of anathema must also be pronounced by anticipation, against all such as shall project such violations of right, or call upon others to assist in them; so that a lively conviction may be again established in the public mind, that when princes and states enter into combinations with one another, their objects always are preservation and protection and defence against common danger, never the attack and invasion of the innocent.

The second care, that of rousing the public spirit, is the common duty of us all; but here also the governments must lead the way. For if they do not set the example, we have no right to expect that, in an age like ours, so distinguished for general culture, for the development of individual talent, for the refined enjoyment of life, for constantly increasing riches, for growing corruption, for the charm of so many private occupations which tempt to a renunciation of those of a more public nature, and which entice individuals to devote their cares exclusively to their own happiness, their own improvement, their own comfort or pleasures, people shall again take a hearty and lively interest in the public welfare, depending as it does upon the existence and preservation of a great political union. But princes, and particularly those of high rank, are created and live expressly for the purpose of managing the high trust of the general interest. For this purpose they must, before all things, be true to that which to them is dearest. Their most sacred duty is never to permit any diminution of their own rights, but to maintain intact the degree of political weight, importance, and influence, which has been consigned to them; and not to tolerate, under any pretence, the introduction of changes into the general system of the political relations and distributions of power in Europe, by which, sooner or later, they might be driven from their proper stations. But they are no less called upon and obligated to watch over, maintain and defend, the independence, security and rights, of their neighbours, their allies and of every acknowledged and legally constituted power; even those of their rivals, and those of their occasional enemies. From the moment that they no longer feel themselves strong enough to prevent the weakest and most inconsiderable state from being injured with impunity, or robbed of its independence by the criminal and arbitrary acts of a stronger, their own thrones become unstable. We must hear of no insular systems, no indifference to a danger apparently foreign to their own immediate interests, no absolute neutrality, no unconditional seclusion from any important transaction! The fear of involving themselves in endless disputes and continual wars by this policy (the only true and worthy policy) is altogether imaginary, and is suggested by false philanthropy, or ignoble sloth and pusillanimity. The more industry and vigour is employed in checking the first acts of injustice and violence, the less

frequent will be the cases in which it will be necessary to march forth to fight against them in the field; the more steadfastly they hold themselves in a state of preparation, the greater reluctance will be felt to challenge them to combat. In a word, the more perfect, harmonious and stable the federal system of the European states, the greater the sensibility each individual discovers to every violation of common rights, the stronger the tie which binds each member to the collective body, the more rarely wars occur.

When proper care is thus taken to consolidate the walls and joisting of the building, then every individual who possesses any powers within himself may, by a judicious application of activity and continued zeal, perfect and complete the edifice; and however unfavourable the times are, education, and instruction, and information derived from conversation, or from books, will even yet effect a great deal. It is not here the question of begetting what is called cosmo-political feeling – whether the Italian be united in affection with the German, the German with the Briton, the Briton with the Russian, and so forth, is a matter about which we have little concern – all that we contend for is, that everyone should be zealous to promote the prosperity, the glory, and above all the prosperity of his native land, and that he should see and be persuaded that this first and most important of all objects cannot be attained as long as he remains indifferent whether others stand or fall. A conviction of the necessity, and a sense of the excellence of a federal system, will always accompany the existence of true patriotism. Let this sentiment only be cherished and cultivated; and projects of universal dominion will be banished from the earth.

It is impossible that the history of our time should pass without producing some beneficial fruits for us and our posterity. Whether Buonaparte, in the recesses of his haughty and gloomy mind, has really conceived the idea of a universal monarchy; under what form he has conceived it; what progress he has made in forming the project, and when, and how he thinks of realizing it, all this futurity will disclose. But so much is clear and certain, that in the course of six frightful years he has been doing, without intermission, all that he must do on the very worst supposition, and that he has succeeded in things which seem very unequivocally to prognosticate the most pernicious and desperate issue.

Were everything here to close, were his career to be terminated, were our undertakings to be crowned with complete success, and his star to set for ever, is it possible that we could forget what sorrows, what bitterness, what disgrace, what troubles, what convulsions, what a grievous load of present evils, and what anguish for every coming day, was felt throughout the greatest and best part of Europe, from a bare attempt and beginning to effect such a project? And shall we not therefore adopt every expedient which wisdom can devise to prevent the return of these hard trials?

It is necessary above all to recollect that the measures of prevention and security, to which we here alluded, must be the work of a better (and God grant not distant) futurity; *and that this futurity must be acquired by victory*. But in order to be able to give a satisfactory account to ourselves of what we will and must be, it is necessary accurately to know what we at present are. A general review of the existing political relations between France and the other states is, therefore, one of the *desiderata* of the time.

Chapter IV

Of the Relation between France and the other States in internal Constitution

Conformably to the notion we have given of the genuine acceptance of a political balance in Europe, the internal constitutions of the respective states come under consideration not *judicially* but *historically*. In other words, it cannot be a matter of indifference to any state to know what is the internal situation of another at every given point of time; though no one state has the right to call another to account respecting the constitution it has chosen to adopt. For though the internal constitution has an immediate influence upon the strength or weakness of a state, the federal system is not grounded upon degrees of power, but upon the external limitations of this power. The state which is not prevented by any external consideration from oppressing a weaker, is always, however weak it may be, *too strong* for the interest of the whole; the state which can be made to respect the rights of the weakest, though perhaps in itself the most powerful of all, is *not too powerful*.

There is only a single case in which the principle of the balance of power can make it a duty, in the whole state confederacy, to exercise an immediate influence on the internal relations of a kingdom, namely, when by a mortal distemper in the vital parts of this kingdom, by a violent overthrow of its government, by a dissolution of all social ties, a cessation (though perhaps only a momentary one) of political existence ensues; for besides that in such a case of pressing urgency, the principals in the league are collectively called upon by the most imperious MORAL considerations to interfere for the preservation of the most

precious common good, the eternal foundation of legal and social order, the absolute anarchy which invariably accompanies total violent revolutions would produce the most destructive consequences to the general interest of the confederacy; because the state which is a prey to general disorder, as long as this disorder lasts, has lost all its political functions, and is incapacitated from acting as a substantive member of the league; likewise because it is uncertain when it may be enabled to resume a place which it is essential to the interests of the whole not to permit to remain vacant. But even in this extraordinary case – and such a one we were destined to experience – the interference in the internal relations of the state takes place, not because a fear is entertained for an unnatural growth of its power from revolution (which is often indeed the consequence of political revolutions), but on the other hand because a too great debility, or an entire annihilation, is apprehended to follow.

But as soon as a regular government is established in a state, however it may be constituted, whether it has been founded in justice or in violence, whether it is moderate or tyrannical, destructive or beneficial, weak or strong – the state confederacy, as such, has no longer any title to interfere in its domestic concerns. And yet, however little we are disposed to restrict on any side this incontrovertible position, the nature of the thing here presses upon us one consideration which cannot be neglected without the utmost danger. The internal constitution of a state which, from its geographical situation, its natural or acquired advantages, its relation to the neighbouring states, or from the general situation of Europe, has a visible tendency to aggrandisement and overpoise, or which has already attained a degree of overpoise, will, on this very account, be a fair object of anxiety, of sedulous enquiry, and the most attentive observation. For whether the external preponderance of a state, which has arrived at such a pitch of greatness, be facilitated and favoured, or restrained and discouraged, by its internal relations, is manifestly a question of the utmost importance for the whole. We are, therefore, in quality of representatives of the great commonwealth, fully entitled and justified in examining into a subject in some respects foreign to us, not with a view to bring what passes in the interior of another state immediately before our tribunal, but with a view to trace the connection which subsists between its constitutions and our own interests, our own

cares and dangers, our own wants and the measures of precaution they may dictate.

France possesses in its present political constitution three manifest advantages over all the other European states, which must insure it an undoubted preponderance if, in its external relations, it is merely equal to the most important among them. But which, now that the balance is decidedly in its favour, must give to this preponderance a formidable importance: – these advantages are –

First. The unlimited form of its government, in a sense and extent unparalleled in that of any other European state.

Secondly, the decisive influence of the military character upon the whole system, and all the component parts of its constitution.

Thirdly, the occasional employment of revolutionary instruments and forms.

1st. All the monarchical governments in Europe are more or less limited internally. These limitations where they are not in one way or other *legally* and regularly fixed, as is the case in many governments, exist *in fact*, and give evidence of their existence in the opposition which the supreme power often encounters in the execution of its measures, in the variety of providential considerations which enter into its administration, and in the prudence and caution which it at all times finds it necessary to observe. In the monarchies of the middle part of Europe, the original dissimilarities of their component parts, the differences in the local constitutions, legislative rights and privileges of the provinces, contain a visible modification of the absolute principle of their common government. How considerable is the influence of this circumstance, for example, in the administration of the *Austrian* state? With what care – to adduce only a single instance of it – with what tender and anxious care, does the Austrian government go to work in everything that concerns *Hungary*! With what conscientious and estimable strictness it respects the forms prescribed by the old constitution of this kingdom, and by the attachment of its present inhabitants to the laws and ordinances of their ancestors! How far has it been at all times from disposing of the means and resources of this country, according to its own will or discretion, or of deriving an advantage from them proportionate to its extent, population and substantial riches! And yet Hungary, in a statistical point of view,

composes not much less than one half of a monarchy which has been usually, though most imprecisely denominated absolute. In the Prussian monarchy also, though in a less considerable degree, there is an essential difference in the provincial constitutions, and in all the rest of Germany, whether considered as composing a single empire or as divided into different states, the government is everywhere surrounded either with legal or actual restraints.

Besides this, there is another fruitful source of limitations for all European governments, in the existence of privileged orders and great family possessions. The high clergy and the high nobility, where the old constitution remains perfect, and the latter alone where the former have lost their influence, possess a part of the public power, contribute in a more immediate or more distant manner to all great measures of administration, and are posted beside the sovereign as a sort of standing counsel or natural House of Lords. Even in Russia, a monarchical empire, much more constitutionally absolute than most of the states in the middle of Europe, both in its origin and subsequent development, no one can deny the influence which a mighty opulent nobility, endowed with great rights, dignities and privileges, must inevitably exercise, and does in fact exercise without intermission, upon the character and conduct of the government. In a word, as long as there is in a monarchy great and illustrious names, powerful and independent families, extensive territorial possessions, and high social importance attached to individuals; however the constitution of the state may be cast, no government can boast of absolute authority in the strict sense of the word.

In the back of all these, limitations there starts up another still of great consequence, of a consequence paramount perhaps to all the rest, founded upon the power of public opinion. The measures which have been resorted to for the purpose of confining this continually controlling power, by counteracting regulations; may be more or less circumscribed in their operation, more liberal, or more oppressive in their nature; but the result is almost always the same. In one shape or other, public opinion will make its voice be heard; and wherever the supreme power, either upon hereditary or adopted maxims, is administered with paternal mildness, and with a due regard to the prosperity of the people, the rulers

must sooner or later lend an ear to it. In the age in which we live, in spite of the wild and violent outcry against despotism, oppression, and slavery, its influence is become so mighty that it is rather difficult to determine whether greater evil has arisen upon the earth from obstinately resisting it, or incautiously giving way to it. In one of the most renowned states, and in certain critical moments of the history of our times, the latter has been undoubtedly the most productive in bad effects.

In the old French monarchy the limitations here mentioned were all in full activity. In the present day not one of them exists. The levelling club of the revolution has annihilated all the rich variety of local constitution, as it formerly existed in France; all the rights and privileges of the provinces, their usages, their customs, their statutes, their legal and judicial forms, their assemblies, their independent institutions and public establishments, their separate proprietors, their acknowledged relations with the court, their immediate influence and credit; and has, at last, effaced their confines, and even their very names. The present ruler of that country stretches out his dreaded sceptre over an immeasurable expanse, where not the smallest height, or hollow, hill, or dike, is found to impede, interrupt, or lead him out of his way. From the centre of his kingdom, in which an universal uniformity obtains, by means of an omnipotent cabinet, a ministry that trembles at his frown, a fiscal machine wound up to a pitch which makes its springs crack; an omnipresent and omniscient police, an army entirely devoted to him, and a multitude of prefects and under prefects, he rules a nation of thirty millions of people as easily, securely, and absolutely, as the Grand Signior in the good times of the Ottoman empire governed in the seraglio, by means of his pacha's and aga's, his Europe and Asia. The constitutions of the empire, as they are called, do not even attempt by the slightest regulation to impose limits to this monstrous despotism; they are besides, for every practicable purpose, become a mere empty name.

But it is not only the constitutions and rights of individual provinces and towns which have been abolished, there is not a trace to be found of the importance, influence, and co-operation on the part of the higher classes, which were obtained under the ancient government, or of the personal power, weight, and authority by which private men of large property, of great family name, or of distinguished merit, created a sort

of collateral dominion in the state. In the place of the mighty heads of the richly endowed Gallican church, we find a set of hireling priests and bishops, for the most part poorly paid, blindly subjected to the government, and secluded from all the affairs of the world. The French nobility, with all their titles and dignities, their splendour and riches, are gone; those of old families which remain, have either unconditionally sold themselves to the new reigning family, or concealed themselves in distant provinces, where they live in obscurity and quiet upon the miserable residue of their former fortunes and consequence. A great part, perhaps the majority, of the present landed proprietors are new men, who turn pale at the very thought of any material change in the government; and these would adore the chief ruler, though he happened to be a Phalaris, a Nero, or a Thamas Kuli Khan. There is no individual importance, or reputation, or influence on the minds of men existing, to throw as a counterweight to his power in the balance. Before the commencement of the military period, in the course of ten years of horrors, a certain perfection in madness, a certain refinement in crime, were the only means of attaining in France to distinction and power. Since the army got the upper hand, the pretensions of all others have been gradually sunk in the reputation and fortune of one victorious general. Whatever might have had a tendency to eclipse his splendour, is annihilated, condemned, or sent into exile. France presents itself to the beholder like a vast and barren waste, where nothing appears between him and the horizon, but a single colossal arm, which rises like a leafless and denuded trunk in the midst of the desert.

Notwithstanding this unlimited degree of power, public opinion still exists there as well as in other countries of Europe; but from causes immediately arising out of the present situation of France, it is either in complete subjection to the government, or things are so ordered that its voice is never heard. It is in part devoted to the government, because the great mass of the people consider the present ruler as its deliverer from the plagues of anarchy; as having brought the detested revolution to a conclusion; and because even the wiser and better informed part regard, (whether justly or unjustly we shall not now enquire), the bare possibility of a new revolution as the greatest of all evils, behind which lies a bottomless abyss, and all the terrific forms of past days. From this

manner of considering things, and this temper, it is easily conceivable why the authority of the government over the public mind remains constantly the same, though almost all its resolutions and measures in the bygone years, (its conquests, its wars, its nepotism, and so forth), have been at open variance with the true interests of the country. But though the well informed and enlightened are perfectly persuaded of what no one can for a moment doubt, it is rendered impossible for them by a thousand different regulations to communicate this conviction to their fellow citizens.

The present French government is therefore on all sides, and in all possible views and directions, the most absolute that can be conceived, and things, persons, and powers are subjected to its will and disposal in an infinitely greater extent than can happen in any other state.

2dly. In all the monarchies of the interior of Europe, the *military character* maintains its rank, but nowhere is its preponderance so great, nowhere is the government so essentially military, and nowhere is everything so unconditionally sacrificed to military greatness as in France.

Amid the storms of the revolution, and even in that troubled and unnatural state of things which followed upon the explosion of the tempest, neither civil nor political talents, nor social virtue could flourish; and what in this frightful period was called state prudence, and the economy of government, was of a character so little respectable, (the whole fabric of the state resting upon injustice and faithlessness, and robbery, and the most flagitious maxims), that honourable men declined polluting themselves by mixing with it. At the same time, by a remarkable combination of circumstances, which it is not here our intention to elucidate, the spirit of the army was from day to day strengthened and exalted, till at last it attained to that state in which we beheld it during the last years of the war. It was now the only point in the national economy of France on which the eye of the observer could rest without reluctance; and the good fortune which accompanied their arms, seemed to throw a splendid mantle over the nakedness of the state, and, in some degree, to cover its deformities, distempers and crimes. The most celebrated of its generals soon succeeded in subverting its government, a detested and contemptible government, whose fall

all parties considered as a desirable event. From this time forward the preponderance of the military character was decisive, and as, in spite of all the changes of form which the new government experienced, and in spite of all the accumulation of titles and badges of distinction, and pomp, and ceremony, no counterpoise was found for military consequence and fame, this preponderance was naturally augmented and confirmed.

The present ruler of France is a fortunate general; but unlike other rulers, who, born to their thrones, obtained in successful wars a military reputation independent of their power, his government is founded merely on his reputation; military exploits alone have opened to him the unexampled career which he now runs; in quality of a soldier, and secure of the support of the army, he overturned the directorial government; as a soldier, and confiding in the army, he has acquired, instead of a limited temporary authority, an unlimited, absolute, and hereditary dominion. – Whether he will be always victorious futurity will disclose; but as long as he is determined to rule, the preservation of his military fame must remain his first and highest care: so closely and so inseparably connected is the existence of no other government in Europe with its military interest. – No other government sacrifices so unconditionally to its military greatness every other interest, every consideration arising out of the state of the country, and suggested by the wishes and longings of the people. Wherever we find a government regularly constituted, mild in its administration, consecrated by right and time, and immediately allied with the prosperity and contentment of the nation, the military power, however high in estimation, is always considered as subordinate to higher objects. What we were formerly accustomed to call military states only merited this denomination, subject to the restriction now mentioned. It was in this point of view that Frederick II, though himself a successful general, considered the army which he had created in the latter half of his reign; and what in the constitution of his kingdom was founded upon military forms did not prevent his successor from acting, (perhaps to too great an extent), upon this in itself excellent maxim, “that the prosperity of the state was the first care of government, and that its military interests were to be consulted only in the second instance.” But it is not the same in an order of things, where in every essential point the advantage of the regent is separated from the advantage of the country;

it is not the same where his authority is only superficially rooted in the opinions and usages of the people, where the government has been established immediately after a stormy revolution by extraordinary circumstances, with much opposition and many perils, and consequently where – however powerful and absolute it may be – it is every moment in danger of being shaken or overthrown in its turn by extraordinary circumstances acting in an opposite direction. The constant care of such a government must always be uniformly to appear strong, and victorious, and formidable, and, above all things, formidable in a military aspect. Here things proceed in an inverted order. If the prosperity and happiness of the state cannot be reconciled with its military interests, the exertions of the government are divided between both; when a preference must be given to one or other, the latter will always carry it. Its military greatness must be maintained, let manufactures, and trade, and commerce, and colonies, and individual prosperity save themselves as they can, or go to wreck as it may please heaven. This is the precise state of the actual relations of France in regard to its military constitution!

3dly. When we reckon the employment of revolutionary instruments and forms among the advantages which the present government of France possesses over all the other states of Europe, we meant exclusively the use which it makes of this dangerous mean in its *external* relations. – How far revolutionary maxims still retain their influence in the interior it is not our object to inquire, and might also be difficult to determine. For there are?) reigns between the revolutionary system and that of an absolute despotism, such a striking and manifold analogy, that it would be frequently very embarrassing to decide whether this or that law, this or that measure of the government proceeded from one or the other. When one sees on all hands the most violent invasions of personal liberty and security, the prisons of state crowded with unhappy persons, who expect no other sentence than what the arbitrary will of an individual may pronounce, military commissions whose summary proceedings are first recorded in the papers after the victims are dispatched; decrees of imprisonment, banishment, and transportation passed under the most nugatory pretexts, and for the most part without any pretext at all; when one sees the most celebrated and execrated master in revolutionary tactics – for whom Collot D’Herbois acted with too much tardiness –

whom the National Convention expelled as too blood-thirsty – invested with the office of minister of police, and reinstated after having been once displaced, – one cannot get rid of the suspicion, that the present French government, not contented with the regular and gigantic powers which circumstances have placed in its hands, now and then resorts for weapons to the still half open armoury of exploded revolutionary tyranny. Here we have only to do with those which it employs against foreign states.

The true fundamental principle of all revolutionary policy is, “that behind the legitimate sovereign of a state there is still another natural and superior authority entitled the sovereignty of the people, which, though usually slumbering, sometimes awakes to molest or overturn the other in the exercise of its undoubted rights.”. This doctrine which has been long ago exploded in every enlightened system of social and civil policy, but which, for common capacities, always has something more or less seductive, was the very quintessence of all the errors and enormities of the revolution; and long before the time of the revolution, of all the great and little, the fruitless or successful attempts of factious insurrectionists and fanatics of liberty. As in the interior of France it was the most effective of all the instruments of fury and crime, it always produced a great proportion of the calamity and misery which the revolution poured forth upon other countries. After this destructive doctrine, that nations not only had an interest separate from, and often opposite to that of their governments, but also possessed the right of persecuting the latter, was by a variety of hellish artifices brought into general circulation; it happened that the confidence of the people in the persons and measures of their princes was in some places entirely destroyed, in many more than half undermined, in all considerably shaken; and that it required not only a hard, but long experience, to break the spell by which for a time every French army appeared in the shape of an ally, a saviour, and deliverer of the people. This delusion is now indeed dissipated, less perhaps by the progress of more enlightened views than by the example of France, from which the people saw what sort of liberty and what kind of equality and sovereignty that nation itself acquired, by the conduct which it so zealously and ardently recommended others to imitate. The danger of seeing these treacherous arts again triumph in another war is certainly

at present not very considerable, but no one can take upon himself to answer that they are wholly and for ever exploded. The great mass of the people is cured; but half enlightened wittlings and giddy speculators, such as we almost daily see thrusting themselves forward in the publications most generally read in Germany (to our shame be it confessed), will not lose their public all at once; and in great conjunctures real traitors will always be found. In every case even a momentary attempt to sow discord between rulers and their subjects must create much trouble, much confusion, much temporary embarrassment, and will give the party which resolves on employing this wicked mean an undoubted advantage over all its opponents.

But the present French government has not only never disavowed the intention of repeating such conduct, but it has both by word and deed fully justified us in fearing a renewal of the practice in the next great war that takes place. This is demonstrated not so much by its furious invectives against England, in which the government is constantly treated as illegitimate, and the British nation (which fortunately pays but little attention to them) is called upon in the genuine stile of the revolution “to cast off the oppressive yoke.”. The extraordinary animosity and jealousy which characterize the relation between England and France may, to a certain degree, apologize for these exhortations, and cause them to be considered as the out-breakings of violent passion. But a more remarkable and decisive circumstance is, that as often as the French government is in any way discontented with another, the first manifestation of its feelings is always made to the subjects. Among the numerous articles of the *Moniteur*, in which the European courts have been traduced one after the other, we shall scarcely find one which does not illustrate this mode of proceeding. Some are written in the formal stile of invocations to rebellion, others are somewhat more reserved and less acrimonious; but if we do not find addresses to the inhabitants of other states as plain and explicit as those which have been published in the case of Sweden, all the political maxims of this insolent and upstart government lead us to believe that it is merely because an occasion has not offered of making them.

It is not our present purpose to examine whether the advantages which have just been illustrated – the absolute constitution of the

French government – the preponderance of the military principle, and the occasional employment of revolutionary instruments and forms – are to be considered as *durable* and *permanent*. This enquiry is out of our province, though no one who is in possession of the data necessary to direct his judgment, and who has the faculty of combining them, can remain long in doubt respecting the result. All that interests us now is, to know that the present French government possess real and essential advantages over the other governments of Europe. All we mean to maintain is, that a power which has these advantages at command has already obtained a decisive preponderance over such as either do not possess them at all, or in an inferior degree, supposing an equipoise to be established between them in other respects.

Were France in point of situation and magnitude an inconsiderable state in Europe, such as Norway and Portugal, or the island of Sardinia, and had it obtained by extraordinary conjunctures these three characteristic advantages, the rest of Europe would consider this, at best, as a political problem, and as a curious subject of disquisition for ingenious politicians, but as of very little practical interest.

Had France, at the conclusion of the former war, returned within its own limits, these characteristic features in its constitution would not have been in that case a matter of indifference; for before the revolution, and before the conquests to which it led, France was already too powerful and mighty not to give a considerable degree of uneasiness to its neighbours by a sudden development of a new system of government. But as no one would have a right to call it to account respecting its internal constitution after it was once acknowledged, we should have had no other resource left than to remain constantly on the watch against every danger that might threaten us from that quarter, and to set about invigorating and new modelling, according to the necessity of the time, our own systems of government, in as far as that could be done without overturning principles and rights.

Had France even remained within those limits which were prescribed to her by the last treaty of peace, still a great change would have been necessary in our views, calculations, measures and arrangements, – such a change as is prescribed by extraordinary conjunctures – for at the time when that peace was concluded, the balance of power in Europe was so

much deranged in its operation that much must have become dangerous which would have been formerly considered as harmless, and yet in this perilous situation we could not have found a just motive for immediate attack, if we remained true to the principles already laid down in their utmost strictness, either in the internal constitution of France, or in the necessities of the rest of Europe arising out of that treaty of peace.

But after the French government, from the moment that the peace was concluded to the hour when the preparations began, showed that the only object it had in view in becoming a party to this treaty was arbitrarily and wantonly, on all sides, to overleap those boundaries which were already too far extended for the common interest of Europe; the rest of Europe acquired an indubitable right to call it to account not only for the steps it had taken since the peace, but also for what it had become by means of the peace, and even to enter on a general revisal of its internal relations in as far as they were more or less incompatible with the general security. For as on the breaking out of the war the treaty of peace was completely cancelled, and the state of things created or sanctioned by the treaty no longer exists under its guarantee, it is now of course permitted to examine whether Europe can ever accede to the re-establishment of the same state of things, and to its confirmation by new treaties.

Chapter V

Representation of the Relation subsisting between France and Austria in the Interval between the Peace of Luneville and the Breaking out of the present War

The peace of Luneville, properly considered, was not the work of an individual power; it was the act of the collective governments of Europe, it was the final result and lasting expression of a general disorganization –

Had this peace been the concluding act of an ordinary war, in which though one party must upon the whole be victorious over another, still a sort of balance is maintained by acquisitions upon both sides, by mutual prosperity and adversity, by reciprocal losses and advantages; or had it been the result of an ordinary congress, where the pretensions of the two parties are discussed with calmness and deliberation, where not only the present moment but the past and the future are consulted, and where by the influence and interest of several powers, who appear as friends, as allies, as arbitrators or guarantees, the progress and issue of the negotiation are often more affected than by the immediate relations subsisting between the principal combatants, it would be lost labour in posterity to endeavour to comprehend how such a treaty could ever have been recorded in the annals of history.

But the treaty of Luneville was the necessary, the cruel result of an unexampled combination of misfortunes, and whether a parallel will ever henceforth be found to it or not, the circumstances which concluded it (for circumstances, not men have done it) were certainly without a precedent. At the end of a ten years war whose original and

praiseworthy object, often indeed mistaken and betrayed though never entirely abandoned or lost, was the salvation of Europe from the destruction of anarchy! – At the end of this most important, eventful and now hopeless and desperate war, Austria stood alone, *insulated* and *forsaken*, opposed to the Colossal power of a revolutionary mass disciplined by time, experience and victory. This power, penetrating by the two principal flanks of the monarchy with an equally impressive force, had encompassed the centre and was every day more and more narrowing its circle; without some event approaching in character to a miracle, or such an effort of despair as could not then be hoped for, a favourable issue was impossible; the monarchy, formerly replete with splendid energy, was crippled for the moment; and at this very moment the negotiations of Luneville were opened. If any friendly star in any one point of the horizon had appeared even then to Austria, if it had obtained the support even then of a single power, if the slightest political diversion, a declaration or even one vigorous word had been thrown into its mounting scale, however threatening the aspect of its fortune was, it might have made some port of safety. Political wisdom would then have done its utmost, sideways of escape might have been opened, artificial delays might have prevented the necessity of immediate decision, time might have been gained, courage and hope might have returned. But it was not enough that the French policy with iron resolution repelled every attempt at participation, Europe facilitated its purpose, and voluntarily renounced all cooperation. The only articulate voice which was heard, either in friendly or hostile accents, from near and from a far, and from all corners of the earth, was peace! peace! and peace on any conditions! None of the courts could be ignorant that in consequence of their thoughtless and blind resignation, the insolence and the demands of France must be carried to the most extravagant pitch; that provided with such *instructions* and subjected to such *mandates* the Austrian government would be compelled to subscribe to a sentence of death upon the whole confederacy if France chose to pronounce it. But all that steadfastness and wisdom could have attempted in other conjunctures, was in vain in that moment of desertion; there was no more room for political calculation, for consideration of futurity, for the fair discussion of important objects. The only terror even of those who were at a distance

from the scene was the continuance of the war: to see it ended eight days sooner they would have offered in sacrifice to their insatiable enemy hecatombs of lands and treasures, of rights and dignities!

With this spiritless disposition of the courts, the complaints of the people, the dejection of the great, the decay of the sentiment of public interest, and the influence of the never-ceasing outcries of the treacherous or scrupulous apostles of peace were all in unison. A considerable part of Germany, Italy, and Switzerland was in fact depressed in a degree scarcely supportable by the evils of the war; the most flourishing provinces of Austria grievously felt the scourge; the condition of the more opulent classes was straitened, painful, and perilous, the condition of the lower classes was equally comfortless. To long for the conclusion of the war in so distressing a situation, was what no friend to humanity could condemn, and no statesman could disapprove. But the characteristic of the time, as well in the cabinets of princes as in the opinion of the people, in every circle of society from the highest to the lowest, in every conversation and written production of the day, was, that no limits were set to this desire of peace; that *peace on any condition* was the universal watchword, the wish of all wishes, the ultimate object of all human efforts. In no other epoch of history has the feeling of present necessity so completely subdued the public mind, as to benumb and paralyze all power of reflection, as to confuse and falsify the judgments of everyone. To investigate what might afterwards happen, to look at the most immediate consequences merely to inquire what was the amount of the ransom, seemed then a sort of martyrdom to the minds of the nations; they would not even know – how and where they were about to fall; and after the negotiation was concluded, and the violent irresistible wish of so many millions was accomplished, had, in place of all other information and formalities, a board with the inscription *peace is signed!* been carried through the towns and countries, the public would willingly have consented to be left in total and perpetual ignorance of the conditions.

At so extraordinary a crisis, if all the courage and political wisdom in the world had been united in a few individuals, they could have effected nothing against the omnipotence of the evil, against the omnipotence of opinion; the die was irrevocably cast, and Austria was more than

justifiable in ceasing to struggle against destiny. There are cases in which a sacred duty calls upon rulers and their ministers to contend with the wishes of the people, with whatever force, with whatever violence they may be expressed; for governments are appointed on the supposition that those who compose them are wiser than the multitude. But there are other cases, though they seldom occur – in which the most enlightened government must give ear to the public voice, even when its demands are pernicious. Such was the case before us; and what gave it its full weight was that the motives for giving up the contest were of a two-fold kind. For even the best informed and the most dispassionate saw that Austria was abandoned to its fate, and that the rest of Europe was dead, breathless, and cold. It was in vain to expect a favourable turn from without; any effective aid; or even an energetic remonstrance, since those from whom alone they could be expected saw nothing so desirable as peace: they and the public were completely at one. This facilitated and hastened the determination to listen to the prayers of the people, and a monarch whose former conduct had shown him to be most laudably familiar with such resolutions, but who, during a ten years reign, had learnt with exemplary devotion to reap in care what was sown in care, and by sacrifices to purchase new sacrifices, could, without violating any duty as a sovereign, adopt this resolution, which certainly was not one of the lightest to form.

Hence arose the treaty of Luneville; the merits of which it is unfair to estimate by the common standard of political and diplomatic perfection. It was less a negotiation than an unequal and hard capitulation, between a superior force, which took every advantage of its superiority, and an inferior, which, though compelled to surrender, would not give up all its fortifications at once. In a desperate situation to make the best retreat possible was the only tactic of an Austrian negotiator. Every position which could be maintained in the struggle, every point which could be saved, covered, concealed, or thrown out of sight, was a victory. But the principal articles of the capitulation were necessarily dictated by France; and as the resolution to surrender could no longer be departed from, no exemption from this compliance could on any ground be hoped for.

When the necessary effects of a treaty of peace concluded under such circumstances are considered, a doubt naturally arises whether it was

really binding. At the time of this treaty there was something monstrous and unnatural, and something which prognosticated death and dissolution, not only in the condition of Austria, but in the whole political body, in the exhausted and consumptive form, and in the haggard traits of Europe itself. An instrument like that wrested by unfeeling violence from the weak and trembling hand of an expiring man, would, at least in private life, be unfavourably looked upon, and would not be received by a civil judge without hesitation and scruple as a ground of obligation. But far be from us the introduction of such maxims in the political relations between states! What was resolved on with an appearance of freedom, and what without any visible application of violence was confirmed and ratified, must be held sacred and inviolable. We can only go so far without danger and with the most perfect right, as to maintain that a convention where all the advantage was on one side, all the burden and loss upon the other, should, in its execution, its operations, and consequences, be interpreted indulgently for the *suffering* and rigorously for the *winning* party. This is the dictate of reason and of justice, and such has been the doctrine held by the publicists of every time. If Austria, therefore, had not conformed to the stipulations of the treaty of Luneville in their full extent; if it had attempted to discover forced interpretations and subterfuges, or if it had seized upon the first opportunity to break in upon the grievously oppressive order of things which that peace created; impartial judges would have excused, and the world would have pardoned what could not have been wholly justified. Not so if FRANCE did it. The slightest violation of a treaty which was so exclusively, in such a disproportionate and unexampled degree favourable to France, was, on her part, a revolting act of injustice, an unpardonable crime.

Let the history of the last four years be consulted, and there we will find what has happened on one side and what has happened on the other.

The Imperial court has observed every article of the peace of Luneville with the most punctilious exactness. It has neither availed itself of the unfavourable situation in which it found itself at the time of its being concluded, nor of the privilege of liberal construction, which, in all unequal and hard contracts, belongs to the injured party, to elude the execution of any engagement. It has given the French government so little ground of complaint, that one can conscientiously maintain,

that, if a conduct such as that which Austria has invariably held for these four years, without a moment's wavering and with a patience almost incredible, had been followed in a healthy order of things, and where the total overthrow of the constitution of nations rendered a long continuation of peace impossible, war must have vanished from the earth.

The ruler of France has, on the other hand, considered the treaty of Luneville merely as an instrument, by the help of which he could – without fear of resistance from any quarter in which resistance could be made – prosecute his plans of insatiable ambition and unlimited aggrandizement: and, as in the memorable interval between the signing of this treaty, and the coronation at Milan, the history of his *interior* administration is that of an unceasing progression from a power confined and modified by laws and certain prescribed forms, to an authority without either bounds or moderation; so the history of his external policy presents an uninterrupted series of unauthorized extensions of territory, of arbitrary transformations of the civil and political existence of states, a constant transgression, violation, and derision of all rights and all conventions. And it is an incontrovertible fact that, (without attempting to accomplish everything at once, and thus frustrating his own schemes), he could not, in the interval in which all this took place, have proceeded with less constraint, with more rapidity and greater violence, had there been no treaty in existence to fetter his operations.

It is less for the purpose of proving this position – for it is demonstrated as soon as it is laid down – than for the purpose of an historical illustration of these remarkable events, that we now proceed to a short review of them. After all that has been already said, it is almost unnecessary to repeat, that the enterprises of the French government were not injurious only to the private interests of Austria, but that they in effect wounded the interest of Europe in the most sensible and vital points. When we represent therefore what happened after the peace of Luneville as the particular concern of Austria, and as a breach of peace with Austria, it is done on the following grounds: first, because the Imperial court, in concluding that unfortunate treaty of peace, acted as the real, though involuntary representative of the whole European state confederacy; in the next place, because the most considerable acts of violence on the part

of France, and its progress in injustice and usurpation were immediately injurious to *Austria*, and affected the rest of Europe only *through the medium* of Austria and *her* dangers; and lastly, because the greater part of these arbitrary measures were accompanied with circumstances which rendered them offensive in an eminent degree to the honour and dignity of Austria, when considered for a moment apart from the common cause of all other states.

In order to establish a certain arrangement in this disorderly chaos of contemporary, accumulated, and variously blended and interwoven malversations, it will be best to class them together in principal groups, classifying them in the order of the different theatres on which they were transacted. – This will be done under the following heads.

I. Infractions of the peace of Luneville in the arrangement of the internal affairs of *Germany*.

II. Enterprises against *Switzerland*.

III. Enterprises against *Italy*.

This last head, on account of its great extent, admits of several subdivisions, as 1st. *Piedmont*. 2d. *Parma and Placentia*. 3d. *Lombardy*. 4th. *Genoa and Lucca*.

Of Tuscany, Naples, &c. occasional notice will also be taken.

I. Violations of the peace of Luneville in the arrangement of the internal affairs of Germany.

In the seventh article of the treaty of Luneville it was stipulated, that as in consequence of the cession of a part of Germany to France several princes of the empire had lost their possessions, the loss should fall equally upon the whole, and that the empire should adjudge to the hereditary princes who found themselves in this situation indemnities to be taken out of its interior.

The fifth article stipulated that the Grand Duke of Tuscany should receive a *complete indemnity* in Germany for the loss of his Italian states.

These two plain and unambiguous articles were executed in the following manner:

Instead of leaving the conduct and direction of this great German family process to the empire, as the treaty required, France, under the most frivolous pretences and with unexampled presumption, arrogated to itself the right of projecting a plan for completely revolutionizing

Germany, and of giving a new constitution to the empire, without consulting the emperor, but merely with the consent of RUSSIA; transmitted it to a deputation of the states of the empire for their compliance; and, to fill up the measure of insult, fixed the term of two months for its completion. To this violent and affronting conduct the term *mediation* was applied.

Thus was the seventh article of the treaty fulfilled. The following was the fate of the fifth. In this plan of the French government, projected with the blindest and most arbitrary decision from private considerations alone, and directed solely to the accomplishment of its own private ends of stirring up present cabals, and founding upon them its future hopes; a lot was adjudged to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, containing about *one half* of the territorial surface, *a fifth part* of the population, and *four tenths* of the revenue of his former possessions. This was the *complete* indemnity that he was promised by the most precise of all the stipulations of the peace of Luneville.

And not to leave room for the smallest doubt respecting the meaning and object of so outrageous a perversion of the treaty, and effectually to prevent any soothing interpretations of it, such as that the mass of indemnities was insufficient, after the fairest proportional distribution of them, to cover the amount of the losses sustained, some received more than double, and one received even ten times the value of his loss, the indemnity amounting to the full value of all his former possessions!

The situation in which Europe, and Germany in particular, then found itself; that dissolution of all federal ties, that decay of all public spirit, that insulated policy, that selfishness, that indifference, that exclusive thirst of gain, that oblivion of all great and common motives of action, in short, all that we have already described as illustrative of the unfortunate issue of the war, gave likewise to this infamous and detested transaction the power of uncontrolled operation. The *principle* was never once questioned, the competence of the mediatory powers was without difficulty acknowledged; the French partition plan was adopted as a basis of future regulation; only a few of its provisions met with accidental obstacles, and some immaterial alterations were introduced in consequence of unexpected cabals and private negotiations; but, upon

the whole, France had the triumph of having by means of an *organic senatus-consultum*, broken in pieces, overthrown, and annihilated the old constitution of Germany, and of having established a new one in its place, suited to its temporary interests, its known or secret policy, its wishes or caprice.

The Imperial court, – wounded at once in all its great relations, – as supreme head of the empire, as the first and most important state of the empire, as president of the deputation of states, as subscribing party in the treaty of Luneville, as one of the principal powers of Europe, as sovereign of the Austrian monarchy, as intercessor for the grand duke of Tuscany – wounded in so many and so sensible points, would have been more than justified if, supported as it was by the articles of the peace, it had resisted in the most energetic manner that violent infraction of both its letter and spirit, that uncalled for interference of strangers, and, in short, the whole French system. It was deterred by two principal considerations. On the one hand, it was apparent that the same unfriendly influence, the same decomposition of all the elements of the system, the same political indifference which prepared the unfortunate issue of the war, and the consequently disadvantageous peace, still reigned with undiminished ascendancy, and that the evil had even increased in extent and violence; so that an ill-timed effort at salvation might not only fail of its object, but hasten the approaching ruin. On the other hand, the Imperial court, in an affair where its own personal and family interests were immediately concerned, (as well as the security and prosperity of others), could not proceed to the last extremities, without exciting a suspicion that it was influenced by selfish motives and the desire of private gain, without laying itself open to the malice of some and the credulity of others. In these circumstances, tranquil resignation was the only policy suited to the occasion. The indemnity of the grand duke was in later period of the negotiation somewhat, though inconsiderably, augmented. The addition, which was scarcely perceptible in point of population and territory, reduced the sum total of his loss in revenue to somewhere about a *half*; in all other points the will of the stranger gave the law, and from this moment the peace of Luneville, as an article in the great national code, might be considered as annihilated.

II. Enterprises against Switzerland

“The contracting powers reciprocally guaranteed the independence of the Helvetic, Batavian, Cisalpine, and Ligurian republics, and the full power of the inhabitants to adopt that form of government which they may judge most eligible.” – So ran the eleventh article of the treaty of Luneville.

It is indeed to be regretted that the influence of those adverse circumstances, and of that imperiously urgent necessity which gave rise to this treaty, is felt in this as well as in its other stipulations, and that it was not possible for Austria to establish more *precise* principles, more precise preliminary conditions, and more precise limitations in regard to the future constitution of countries whose fate was so immediately and so variously connected with its own. But even as matters now stood, so much was indubitably certain from the clear meaning of the article and from every possible interpretation of it, that France gave up all pretensions to prescribe laws to the Swiss, to fix their internal constitution by direct interference, or forcibly to impede their march, and to substitute its own will and laws to their *independent* election. It was just as little doubtful or ambiguous that to the *independence* of a state the *integrity* and *sacredness* of its territory were quite indispensable.

How far this article was observed will appear from the following account, the historical accuracy of which rests upon public, notorious, and well-attested facts.

Switzerland found itself, in consequence of the destructive revolution which France in the year 1798 effected in its interior, divided into two principal parties, the one of which had for its object the re-establishment of the old constitution (in so far as it was possible and desirable after all that had happened), and the other of which aimed at what was called an *one and indivisible system*, in which the management of all the important concerns, as well of the whole state as of each individual canton, was to be vested in a central government. Of those who since the beginning of the troubles had taken a part, in one shape or other, in the administration of the state, the majority were, upon grounds not difficult to be understood, for the latter system: but could the votes of the Swiss have been collected at any one moment of tranquillity, and had the national voice been pronounced through a free and legitimate organ, the former would undoubtedly have prevailed.

The members who composed the government in the first months of the year 1801 were more or less attached to the principles of unity, and it was easy to foresee that the principal features of any constitution which might be expected from their hands, would tend to the establishment of such a system. Nevertheless some hope remained to their opponents (supported as they were by the good opinion of the nation) of gradually gaining the upper hand, of disconcerting, if not wholly at least in part, the projects of the ruling party, and of thus attaining to a constitution which would have again restored in the greatest possible perfection the ancient character of Switzerland, its old political organization, the laws, the usages, the forms, the mutual relations of the different cantons, and everything to which for centuries it had been indebted for its prosperity and renown. The complete independence of the nation was the preliminary and necessary condition of the fulfilment of such a hope. This had been assured to it by the peace of Luneville, and the first declarations of France announced a determined resolution not to oppose the performance of the promise. The personal assurances of the chief of the French republic were calculated even to excite higher expectations and still more gladdening prospects; for, when he declared to the Swiss deputies of his own free motion: – “That, that constitution which should be most *exclusively* conformable to the *particular character* of their country, its *situation*, its *manners*, its *local relations*, appeared to him to be the best and the wisest” – the true Swiss were justified in hoping that the plan of modelling the constitution of their country after a speculative system, or theoretical pattern, was given up once for all at least by the French Government.

The provisional authorities however, after various discussions and vacillations, adhered to a *project of a constitution* which one of these deputies had brought from Paris to Bern. By a resolution of the 29th May, they convened a general diet which should adopt this project as a basis for the establishment of a constitution. The most unequivocal discontent was manifested at these preliminary measures in the elections of the deputies to the diet, in the primary assemblies of the people, and in the course of all the necessary formalities throughout the whole extent of the country, and particularly in the little cantons situated in the mountainous part of it. The diet assembled on the 7th Dec. 1801, amid the

most violent protestations and the general murmurs of the people, and it had scarcely opened its sittings when the fragility of its composition was visible, and the necessity of a new order of things became every hour more and more evident. A part of the deputies had hardly met when they abandoned the deliberations and protested against all the resolutions; and when the rest wished to proceed conformably to the principle of unity to decide upon the fate of all the districts of the country, including even those which now refused to acknowledge their competence and their representative character, the members of the secession supplanted the provisional government in its functions, and put an end to the diet. This happened on the 28th Oct. 1801.

The most remarkable circumstance in this revolution was the ascendant which the friends of the old constitution obtained, in spite of the most unfortunate auspices, by the influence of public opinion alone; for though the primary agents in it were far from being attached to old principles and forms, though they even commenced their career with a resolution declaring the constitution of the 29th May (this constitution which was the work of French skill, and which was favourable to the system of indivisibility) to be provisionally introduced, they were in a short time obliged to commit the whole powers of government into the hands of those who had first shaken the authority of the diet by a vigorous resistance, and who were the real organs of the people's will. A senate of twenty-five persons (which since the 25th of October was the central point of all public authority,) and a select committee of this senate, invested with the most important offices, was organized in such a manner as to give the opposers of the system of unity the most decisive influence: and *Reding* whom both friends and foes considered as the principal supporter of the old system, and whom the little cantons in particular considered as the guardian angel of their independence, was amid shouts of joy appointed first Landamman with almost unlimited power.

That this order of things gave little satisfaction to the French was soon observable, could the contrary ever have been expected, from their suspicious silence. The Swiss territory however was in the meantime covered with their troops, and it was easy to perceive that without their formal concurrence a fortunate issue could not be expected. *Reding* therefore resolved, for the purpose of putting an end to all anxiety

and doubt upon the subject, on the night of the 30th of November to undertake a journey to Paris.

His first reception was extremely flattering, promises of the most encouraging kind, the acknowledgment of the new authority, the integrity of the Swiss territory, uncontrolled freedom on the part of the cantons to settle their internal constitutions, a softening modification of the treaty of alliance, in short everything which the best intentioned could wish or the most sanguine hope for, was assured to him in the first interviews. But this fair dawn of better fortunes was soon clouded. The negotiations became difficult and intricate, the language of the French ministers became colder, more ambiguous and unfriendly, till at last their real object was disclosed in a peremptory demand: "That *Reding* should divide the chief authority with the heads of the opposite party;" and a letter of the first Consul of France betrayed this secret to Switzerland and to Europe, that, notwithstanding all his hypocritical professions of friendship, the real independence of the Helvetic nation was an abomination to his heart.

From this moment those who observe and understand the signs of the times, could with certainty foretell the fate of Switzerland. *Reding* returned to Bern, and in order to avoid all responsibility, perhaps also from a deep conviction; of the impossibility of resisting with success, he punctually performed what the French government had required. Six new members of the party which favoured the system of unity were immediately introduced into the senate; the select committee was so organized, that this party had even a majority in it; the place of second Landamman, created for the occasion, and several of the most important ministerial offices, were filled with its partisans. And still after so many endeavours to deprive him of authority, the personal importance of *Reding*, and his influence in the business of state, were so predominant and beneficial that he would probably have succeeded in establishing a constitution, if not perfectly, at least in a great degree conformable to the real wants of the state and to the real wishes of its inhabitants, had not his enemy, and the enemy of his country been powerful and treacherous enough to remove him entirely from the theatre of action.

On the 13th April 1802, the senate had adjourned its sittings for eight days to celebrate the Easter festival, and *Reding* for this purpose had set

off for the canton of Schweitz to join his family. The chief authority was in the interim entrusted to the select committee, and found itself for the moment exclusively in the hands of those members who were indebted to France for their places in it. They took advantage of the favourable conjuncture, and with the activity of well-trained conspirators, passed a series of resolutions on the 17th April, which in craft and audacity are almost without a parallel in the history of political factions, which reversed everything which had been done towards forming a constitution, and appointed forty-seven persons of their own nomination, to meet at Bern, and to deliberate upon the old project of the 29th May 1801, and in the meantime they adjourned the senate *sine die* "till it should please the secret committee again to assemble it".

And that no doubt might be entertained respecting the quarter in which these acts of violence originated, or under whose protection and authority they were executed, *Verninac*, the French envoy, who till then had observed a constant silence and confined himself to secret cabals, sent a congratulatory letter to the immediate authors of the resolutions, in which he testified to them his joy, "that they had made so wise a use of their legitimate temporary power".

Reding and his friends in vain resorted to the most energetic means of maintaining their just and honestly acquired authority against this hostile attack; in vain they called heaven and earth to witness of the righteousness of their cause and the treachery of their adversaries; in vain they attempted by the most dignified protests to destroy the effect of their measures: these protests were considered as *voluntary resignations*, their places were declared to be vacated, and successors were appointed to them. On the 30th April the assembly of notables, as it was called, met without either authority or title, but merely by the appointment of an incompetent and self-constituted government, and in less than three weeks a constitution was formed under the protection of the French envoy, and under his daily direction conformably to the project of the 29th May and the principle of indivisibility.

Before considering the operation of this constitution and the events which arose out of it, it is necessary to direct our attention to a contemporary transaction, which, though only an interlude in the drama of Switzerland's subjection, is of the highest importance, particularly

when considered in a political point of view and as a flagrant breach of the peace.

France had already – in order to extract from the calamities which its avarice had brought on every possible facility for its plans of conquest and domination – in the general confusion robbed Switzerland of some of its most important possessions, and particularly of its strongest bulwarks and passes: on the north-west side, the territory of the bishopric of Basle, so interesting for France in a military view, with the entrances into the mountains of the Jura, the passes of Bruntrut, the valley of Munster, Arguel, Biel, &c.: on the south-west, the flourishing city of Geneva become of still more importance to France than before since the union of Savoy: On the south-east, the Valteline, Chiavenna and Bormio. To complete the circle of its conquests one other acquisition only was wanting. The high country of the Valais had for those who have the command of Italy, and who from thence wished to trouble the peace of Germany and Europe, an irresistible charm. The ancient, free, and once powerful and proud people, which inhabited the valleys of this land, opened or shut at pleasure two principal roads out of the Alps, the one leading over mount St. Bernard, the other by the pass of the Simplon. In the then existing situation of things, when the plains of Lombardy were in possession of a French army, and were ruled by French functionaries, under continually varying titles and pretences, the command of the route over the Simplon was extremely desirable, because it secured them the earliest and shortest passage, the most direct channel of communication with the Milanese, and an immediate entry into the heart of Italy.

On the overthrow of the Swiss constitution, and during the last years of the war, French generals and proconsuls, by grievances and oppressions of every sort, converted this once happy land into a howling wilderness; and it is a fact of public notoriety, that in several countries of Europe charitable subscriptions were set on foot to save the miserable inhabitants from famine and death. After (to use the words of a great historian) "everything was profaned, and rifled, and plundered, and trodden under foot", nothing farther remained, except to adopt military precautions for futurity; a military road across the Simplon was begun in the Autumn of 1800, and at the time when the peace of Luneville was signed part of it was already completed. The project was interrupted by

the peace; the French troops retired from the Valais; and if in the eyes of the French government the stipulations of the treaty were anything but a dead letter, they never could again return within this territory.

Their usual policy soon unfolded itself. For the purpose of introducing and covering more violent measures, the then provisional government was required to *give up* the country of the Valais; at first only the territory on the left bank of the Rhone, and afterwards the whole, under the well-chosen pretext that part was not sufficient for the completion of the military road. The provisional government neither felt itself disposed nor authorized to terminate its career in this way; during the sittings of the diet in the month of September, the proposition was renewed, but no decision was passed upon it. When *Reding* at last, by taking the helm of the state, had invigorated the hopes of the well intentioned, and had disconcerted every unpatriotic scheme, no prospect seemed to remain that any negotiation would be entertained which had for its object the public ruin, and the French government was convinced, that without employing violence it could not obtain the so much desired result. On the 25th of December, 1801, it caused the country of the Valais to be again occupied by its troops; deaf to the most urgent representations of the magistrates, to the lamentations of the inhabitants, to the protestations of the government of Bern, General Thurreau pressed forward with his army, seized upon the public chests, threw those who resisted into prison, and contented himself with assuring the ill-treated people in an ironical proclamation: “that the French republic had resolved on doing all this from regard to their welfare and prosperity”.

The people of the Valais left no means untried to escape the fate which threatened them. In the strongest and most affecting addresses they conjured the government of Bern “to avert from them this last deadly blow, the bitter calamity of separation. They would suffer and forget everything, their misery might rise to a still higher pitch, they would submit to be ruined and undone, provided this consolation was left them, of sharing their good and evil fortune with their old allies, provided they only retained the name of Swiss.”. When *Reding* returned they besought him for help and hope; he revived their sinking courage only with vague and ambiguous expressions; he had now learned to know the character of their enemies. All those flippant promises of respect

for the independence of Switzerland and the inviolable integrity of its territory, of protection, friendship, and fidelity, he had learned to estimate according to their true value. At the moment when the consul and his ministers were imposing upon his honest ingenuity, at the same moment the orders were given to *Thurreau!* And so far were the actors in this scene from making any retrograde movement in their criminal progress that they even treated the addresses of the *Valaisans* as punishable acts of sedition, and they declared the conduct of the Helvetic government in not rejecting these addresses to be an injury against France.

After *Reding* was removed from the government all serious resistance was at an end, and the work was brought in silence to a conclusion. In the project of a constitution, which came to light before the 17th of April, under the auspices of *Reding*, the Valais with its old boundaries appeared in the list of the Swiss cantons. In that which was decreed by his successors it was without any reason being assigned *left out*. The French government had now obtained its object: to incorporate the country of the Valais would have been an act of foolish presumption, and to have proceeded to avowed conquest without any disguise, so soon after the treaty of peace, would have startled the most daring innovator as highly indiscreet. It was contented with erecting the Valais into an independent republic under the protection of the French, Cisalpine, and Helvetic republics! The road over the Simplon – for this was the great object – was to be kept up at the expense of the three republics, and, (the better to confirm no doubt the *sovereignty* and *independence* of the Valais), all the passes were to be occupied by *French* troops!

A more violent and daring infraction of a treaty of peace, either in spirit or in form, could not well have been attempted; and had circumstances been more propitious than they, were, who would have blamed Austria had it followed up this decisive step with a declaration of war? In defiance of the interests, the wishes the remonstrances of the Swiss; indifferent to the despair of the *Valaisans*, and without asking the consent of any neighbouring court, France, at its own instance, violated the article of the peace of Luneville which assured to Switzerland its independence, and by force of arms lopped off an useful member of the league from the political body. And this act of violence was committed for the purpose of making itself master of a territory which certainly, to

the no small danger and to the mighty detriment of Austria, opened to France, in peace and war, and at all times, a short and convenient road into that part of Italy which lay contiguous to the Austrian states!

In the meanwhile the Helvetic assembly of notables laid a project of a constitution formed in haste before the people for their acceptance, but notwithstanding all the efforts they made to suppress the voice of the nation, it was loudly raised against their work. *Only four days* were given to the people to mark their acceptance or disapprobation of it in the registers of the municipal magistracies, and those who refused or omitted to give their opinion were declared to be considered as approving it. But even this stale and worthless artifice, which had been so often employed in revolution politics, could scarcely procure a majority of names, and much less a majority of sentiments, though it was the only way without further discussion or delay of putting the constitution in activity. This took place on the 2nd of July, 1802, three of the leaders of the ruling party at that time were appointed, one to the post of Landamman, the other two to the offices of his stadtholders; and the people were told without disguise that “if this new constitution was not agreeable to their wishes, still they had no alternative but to obey it.”

The answer to this proclamation was an immediate general insurrection throughout the whole of the east part of Switzerland. The three original cantons set the example; they desired, should everything else be denied them, only to be left to themselves, their ancient laws and forms of government, and to remain disjoined from their former allies, free, independent and tranquil. In the general dissolution of the league this demand was certainly just. But Zurich, and Glaris, and Zug, and Appenzel, and the Grisons, soon declared themselves friendly to their principles and demands; – and the inconsiderate steps of the central government, its harsh, violent, and, to the Swiss, unintelligible language, its passionate measures, its double bombardment of the town of Zurich, the confusion in all parts of the country, soon led to the result which one who was a Swiss at heart must have wished and prayed for. The old order of things was everywhere re-established as far as circumstances would admit. A solemn convocation was held at *Schweitz* on the 27th of September, where, in a few simple articles, the basis was laid for a wise organization of all the relative interests of the states. The persons vested

with authority by the constitution, which had been rejected by the public voice, were driven from Bern to Lausanne, and in all human probability Switzerland would now have obtained a constitution truly independent, such as its interests prescribed, such as the friends of the country desired, and such as had been assured to it by the treaty of Luneville, if Buonaparte had been disposed to comply with this treaty.

On the first breaking out of the troubles, at a moment when the new government with no support but that of an usurped authority, disowned and detested on all hands, and scarcely respected even by its dependents, could only be maintained by foreign power and military aid, he had on a sudden ordered his troops to give up Switzerland to its fate. This resolution requires no comment. The resistance to the new constitution was decided, and had been already unequivocally and loudly pronounced; to favour this resistance to the constitution, and the new authorities it had itself created, accorded neither with the principles, views, nor intentions of the French government. The only possible motive for withdrawing its troops precisely at this moment, was the prospect of a civil war, the prospect of again introducing these troops into the country under circumstances of urgency, and the hope of convincing the Swiss that, without the support and protection of France, there was no longer any salvation for them. That this and no other was the calculation soon became a melancholy certainty.

The newly constituted authorities called upon France to interfere. Their government was overthrown and dissolved; victory had declared in favour of their adversaries; the present was the crisis leading to a new organization which ought to have been permitted to develop itself uninfluenced by foreign interposition. At this very conjuncture *Buonaparte* interposed. In an address of the thirtieth of September – in much the same tone in which *Talleyrand*, *Mengaud*, and *Brune* hailed the approach of the days of terror in 1798 – he thus spoke to the Swiss nation. “I had, it is true, resolved to take no part in your internal affairs, but I retract this resolution; I will be the mediator of your differences; but my mediation shall be effectual, and such as becomes the great nation in whose name I speak.” And at the same time to give satisfactory proofs of the *efficacy* of this *mediation*, he declared everything to be null that had been resolved upon and executed since the flight of the constitutional

authorities, reinstated them provisionally, and summoned a *consulta* to Paris.

The scene which followed upon this letter was one of the most revolting which Europe has experienced, from the time that it became impossible to keep within bounds a despotic and tyrannical power by a judicious and vigorous application of a restraining force, Switzerland was on all sides at once inundated by French troops; between forty and fifty thousand men were destined to lay the whole nation in chains; the speedy subjection of the chiefs, and the unexpected facility of the work required only one half of this army to be employed. They took possession of all the strong posts of the country; they penetrated, as in the year 1798, into the most remote recesses of the mountains; and the most sequestered and sacred asylums of an innocent and harmless people, were once more profaned and destroyed. The violent overthrow of the magistracies, the annihilation of all the influence of the patriots, and the consequent triumph of the French party, was the first military exploit of this terrible army of execution; a general disarmament was carried into effect with the utmost rigour both in the large and small cantons; – a measure of so flagitious a character that it is not easy to conceive how even tyranny itself ventured to order it, or had power to carry it into execution; at last the most distinguished friends of the people were taken into custody and thrown into distant fortresses. After so many acts of cruelty and violence, the Helvetic government – now re-established in its functions – derided the dumb despair into which the nation had sunk, and announced to the wretched people that it was not enough to bear all this, that they must also maintain their oppressors, and pay military tribute to those who had robbed them of their liberty. In fact, not to mention many other grievances, a contribution of more than 600,000 livres was imposed upon the cantons, and levied without mercy or indulgence.

The contrast between this conduct, this violent and wanton barbarity, and the calm tranquil resignation with which the leaders of the Swiss confederacy bowed their necks to the yoke of necessity, completed the gloomy picture. They had begun the struggle on the supposition that France was to remain neutral; to enter the lists with France never had been their intention. The leaders of the convocation which met at

Schweitz resigned their inefficient authority on the 15th of October, a fortnight before the entrance of the troops with noiseless simplicity and dignity, not however without a solemn declaration, “that while they saw themselves necessitated to yield to the *force of foreign arms*, their ancient unalienable right to be their own lawgivers, this sacred right which they had inherited from their fathers, and which was *lately confirmed by the peace of Luneville*, remained in full force and activity; and that according to their most conscientious persuasion, without the free and uncontrolled exercise of this right, Switzerland could enjoy no permanent happiness or lasting peace.”

On the very day that the promoters of the last Swiss league quitted the scene of action with this remarkable reservation, the French government took a step, which, if it could not be explained upon other motives and a different association of sentiments, might have given rise to a supposition, that even in its career of violence it had not entirely lost all consciousness of injustice, and all recollection of its obligations. It apologized for its conduct towards Switzerland, but the spirit, as well as the form of its apology, tended much more to criminate it than the most obstinate silence could have done. If any European sovereign was entitled according to the law of nations to call France to account for its measures, it was certainly the emperor of Germany; he had concluded the peace of Luneville, he was an acknowledged and responsible guarantee of the independence of Switzerland; it could not be matter of indifference to him, the immediate neighbour of this country, to him whose hereditary states came in contact with Switzerland in so many important points, whether France treated it as a conquered province, and its free inhabitants as rebellious subjects. But *Talleyrand* did not make choice of him to whom to address a declaration upon the subject – he chose *the Elector of Bavaria*! It was to the accredited minister of this prince, who took about as much interest in the fate of Switzerland as the king of Etruria or the regent of Portugal; who cared for the maintenance of the peace of Luneville only so far as his *indemnités* were concerned, who confined himself to narrow views of private advantage and keeping aloof from all great negotiations, showed a most complete indifference to everything that happened in Europe – to this person was the letter addressed in which the French government entered into an explanation

of its past and future policy in regard to the affairs of Switzerland. For the purpose of humbling Austria, for the purpose of undermining the peace of Luneville, for the purpose of ridiculing all the rules of decency and the forms of diplomatic intercourse, as well as of sporting with the articles of the peace itself, and for the purpose of informing the world once for all, that France no longer acknowledged any other law than that of its own will, this miserable juggle was resorted to. The execution corresponded wonderfully with the project. At the moment when twenty thousand French troops roamed through every district and corner of Helvetia, disarmed the Swiss, dispersed their convocation with the bayonet, and threw their leaders into prison; in this moment of devastation and horror, this lying manifesto carried an assurance through the medium of a Bavarian envoy to Europe, amazed and panic struck, as it were, by the events which were passing before it, "that the first Consul never had any other object in view than the perfect independence of Switzerland; and that political organization *which it might see good to adopt*."

At last the concluding act of the piece commenced. The consulta met at Paris. In the then existing state of things in Switzerland, in the State of helpless depression to which the patriots were reduced after the recent and complete victory which had been obtained by the partisans of the system of unity, and the allies of France, the latter party were sure in the election of deputies to have a majority of voices; accordingly in a deputation of *sixty*, their opponents had hardly *sixteen* in their favour. The friends of the *one and indivisible system* must therefore have undertaken the journey to Paris with confidence; the issue must have appeared to them not in the least degree doubtful; their long possession of the French support and protection, the triumph which they had just obtained, their present preponderance, everything was in alliance with their hopes: but everything had taken a sudden turn. In a letter of the 10th December, their mediator and protector represented to them, "that a FEDERAL CONSTITUTION was the only one at all suitable to the exigencies of their country and to the character of their nation; that a CENTRAL GOVERNMENT absolutely could not make them happy, that a wise statesman would never attempt to contend with nature, and that such had uniformly been his principles and views." After this unexpected introduction of the business, ten deputies (five of each party)

were invited to private conferences in which this new system was in various ways unfolded, recommended at one time in a high commanding tone, at another with professions of kindness and good will, and was at last declared to predominate. At the same time a new constitution for Switzerland, in twenty chapters, was brought out from the workshop of a secret commission, composed of four French counsellors of state, fixing not only the general relations of the state, but prescribing the whole details of a form of government for each particular canton; and though the authors of this constitution, – their political principles were well known – could certainly not be accused of any attachment to the old constitution of Switzerland, and though if left to themselves they would have been contented to give every possible extension to the revolutionary principle, their work came as near to the old constitution as it could be brought under such a conjuncture, with such instruments, associations and promises; a clear and convincing proof that he who directed the whole had expressly ordered that it should be thus, and no otherwise modelled. – The new federal constitution was immediately delivered over to the deputies, to be by them carried into effect under the title of an *act of mediation*. One of their number, and (that nothing might be omitted which could give an extraordinary character to the whole transaction) this person a supporter of the *federal system*, was appointed first Landamman, the consulta was dismissed and the new constitution put in activity.

To trace with historical accuracy this extraordinary change of things, this unexpected rapid transition from a decided support of a system of unity, to a declared renunciation of it to its true causes, is perhaps permitted only to those who are initiated in the mysteries of the time. Whether Buonaparte at once (in an interval of four or five weeks) – it might be from a new view of things, from the unknown influence of private representations and consultations, or from that violent spring which is sometimes made by an irregular and capricious mind, that cannot bear restraint from love to hatred, and from persecution to favour – *had changed his opinion* respecting the affairs of Switzerland, so as to make him reject the principles to which till then he had accorded his protection; or whether he ideally *all along* had considered the system of unity as a bad one, given a decided preference in his own mind to

the federal system, acted from political motives contrary to his own conviction, condemned what he favoured, and persecuted what he approved, leaves room for a difference of opinion. The latter of the two hypotheses, however, appears to be infinitely the more probable one of the two, and whoever considers all the circumstances with attention, will soon be convinced that it is only in this way we can obtain a complete solution of the enigma.

If the interest and prosperity of Switzerland, if a happy and free development of its fortunes, if the re-establishment of the only constitution which perfectly corresponded with its real wants had been the single, or even the chief object of the French government, it would have found in the course of the two years which had elapsed amid troubles, civil war and multiplied calamity more than one occasion of satisfying its wishes. It needed only to have confirmed the authority which *Reding* had acquired in December 1801; instead of meeting his noble and ingenuous confidence with cold ambiguous declarations, with hollow and fallacious promises; instead of entirely paralyzing his powers, it needed only to have avoided everything tending to diminish his influence, or damp his zeal for the public good; the storms in the interior would soon have passed, the triumph of patriotic principles and old Swiss sentiments over the low party spirit of the day would have been complete, and a truly national constitution would soon have been established. More lately still, when the evacuation of the Swiss territory by the French troops, (no matter from what motives,) had given rise to events of the greatest importance, such as a general expression of hatred against the authors of a detested constitution, a popular insurrection against them, their banishment from Bern amid the triumphant shouts of the inhabitants, and a clear manifestation of the prevailing sentiments of the Swiss; France had only then to remain inactive and observe a wise and strict neutrality, to leave the issue of the whole to the conduct of the acknowledged friends of the people. But the interest and prosperity of Switzerland were by no means the chief, much less the only object of the French government; its happiness and tranquillity were a very subordinate consideration; the first and dominant object was, *that France should continue to prescribe laws to it*. When those very constitutions and laws which Buonaparte had more than once extolled

and pronounced to be the only ones applicable to the state of the country, were opposed, rejected and reprobated, it was because those who brought them forward were too little open to foreign influence, were too little affected to France, were, in a word, too independent. When on the other hand constitutions were taken under protection, and defended with words and arms, the principle and character of which had been loudly condemned by the chief of the French government, it happened because their authors thought they could reckon upon the support of France, and because even the confusion and troubles which necessarily followed upon their introduction, were more agreeable to the French cabinet than harmony and peace established by instruments and means which it did not acknowledge as its own. This is the key to the whole conduct of France towards Switzerland. It was on this account, and this account alone, that the latter country was fatigued, distracted, and tormented, for two long years, France always entertaining a hope that its complete subjection would be the final result. And on this account Buonaparte would not permit the principles of the federal system to triumph, and a constitution founded on that basis which he had long ago acknowledged as the best to be established, till he had brought Switzerland to that state in which he could unconditionally *prescribe* them to it.

Considered in this point of view, his conduct appears divested of that mysterious form in which it at first presents itself. It was not an accidental wavering between the principles and measures of one party and the principles and measures of another, it was an uniform obstinate struggle with the independence of the Swiss nation. Accordingly after all was finished, a naked confession of the truth came at last from the mouth of the mediator. In the conference of the 12th December, he instructed the deputies who were present, respecting the proper relations of their country, as he had projected their establishment from the beginning. "Switzerland", said Buonaparte, "shall be independent in regard to the management of its own internal affairs, *but by no means in regard to what concerns its relation to France.*" This was the last unambiguous result of the long reverses of Switzerland! This was the just and literal interpretation of the article of the peace of Luneville!

It does not at all come within the scope of the present work to analyse or decide upon the merits of the constitution which Switzerland

received in the year 1803. If in spite of the unhallowed source from which it sprung, it should upon the whole appear to be the best of which it was susceptible; if tranquillity, and harmony, and prosperity, and content, flourish under its auspices, if it be established upon a permanent basis, and if the Swiss feel themselves happy under it, it would be an act of culpable presumption to attempt disturbing them in the possession of it. But however great may be the interest that every wise European cabinet, which every benevolent and noble mind takes in their peace and welfare, yet we must not forget that we have another and a higher interest, because on it everything depends. The great *political* question in which is immediately involved the balance of power in Europe, the sacredness of treaties, and the security and dignity of the different states, is not whether the Swiss constitution, as it now presents itself, merits approbation or censure, not what it is, nor what it could, nor what it ought to be, nor what it may possibly be in future, but singly and alone – *how it has arisen*. If the Swiss can forget this, is therefore no one justified in bringing it into discussion? Shall *Austria* on that account, shall *Europe* on that account forget what we all suffered from the wounds immediately inflicted on the Swiss? Was it for the protectors of national right, for the guardians of the public security and prosperity, for so many who thought in the peace of Luneville to have seen a term to the peril and oppression of Europe, to have found a boundary to their reverses, to have reaped the scanty and dearly earned reward of their sacrifices, was it matter of indifference for them to behold Switzerland, which had been declared independent, still, at the end of two terrible years, governed by the agents of France, desolated by the troops of France, and delivered over to the combined plagues of ignominious external tyranny and wantonly fomented internal disorder? To behold it spoiled with impunity of its most important bulwarks of defence and tossed about in restless convulsions from one constitution to another, from unity to federalism, from federalism to unity, that at last it might lose every remains of independence and liberty, which, under all its afflictions, it had contrived in some degree to maintain, in total and unconditional subjection? To behold it at length, only left at rest after the French government, despairing of obtaining a more complete result, had at least brought it so far as to accept its laws and constitutions from its hands,

and to submit to everything which Buonaparte chose to prescribe; and to crown all, to hear its haughty lawgiver declare in the face of Europe, “that the independence of Switzerland was *only so far admissible as it was compatible with dependence on France*”?

Shall all this be set aside, forgotten and extinguished? No! A compulsory and unwilling silence is not to be construed into a renunciation of an incontestable right. And even if state policy counselled us, and our duty to Switzerland admonished us to treat that production of so much violence and oppression, the present federal constitution which the nation has accepted, as legitimate, it by no means follows from thence that the account between France and Austria, between France and Europe is closed. We have satisfaction to demand, as well for the long oppression of Switzerland as for every other infraction of the peace of Luneville. But in these great concerns there is only one sort of satisfaction to be obtained, the introduction or reestablishment of a system which will effectually prevent a return of similar evils in future.

III. Enterprises against Italy

Before entering upon the facts which are comprehended under this head, it is necessary to cast a rapid glance at the general relations in which *Italy* was placed in respect of *rights* by the peace of Luneville.

This treaty had only decided with precision respecting two objects; the boundaries of the *Austrian* territory and the future fate of Tuscany. Many other relations which were in great confusion, and which required elucidation, were either superficially touched upon or passed over in silence.

That this was a great political defect in the treaty of Luneville, and one which never can enough be regretted or lamented, we are not at all disposed to deny. The pressure of that imperious necessity out of which this defect arose, has been oftener than once alluded to in the course of this work, and is well known to all the world. But here the important question starts up, how far *public rights* were affected by this want of precision, or by this absence of provision in the treaty, and whether they could support or bear out the arbitrary pretensions which France has attempted to rest upon them?

If treaties of peace were to be considered as binding only in regard to those objects which are immediately mentioned and established in

them, then every individual treaty must contain a complete review of the collective relations of the contracting powers, whether old or new, as well of those which have been changed as of those which remain unaltered. But it is long ago become a constant maxim in political negotiations to assume the existing relations between states as a basis of treaty, and to consider them as continued and established in all points where they are not either altered or suspended by the treaty.

The application of this principle is simple and easy as far as objects are concerned which, previous to the conclusion of the treaty of peace, were on all sides fixed, regulated and indubitably settled. It becomes more embarrassing and difficult where the treaty of peace found the former constitution of rights shaken or dissolved, and where its re-establishment or regeneration were obstructed by insurmountable obstacles. Yet even in this extreme case so much is indisputably certain, that no one of the contracting parties from the silence of the treaty can acquire more rights than he possessed when he concluded it. From this principle no exception can take place. For could one, for example, in those extraordinary conjunctures, where all decision upon a doubtful point is purposely waved, or from certain circumstances is rendered impossible, avail himself of a momentary confusion to erect his will into a title, to convert arbitrary demands into legal claims, to construe imperfect possession into perfect property, or to acquire in *fact* what he was not entitled to by right, no person could say where, in the end, he would stop: new rights might thus be created by the silence of a treaty, and at last everything might be declared legal which the articles of peace did not expressly prohibit.

If, therefore, the peace of Luneville either did not absolutely decide upon the fortunes of a part of Italy or left them wholly undetermined, this can in no way be wrested into a proof that it left Italy entirely at the discretion of the French government, or conferred a right on it to dispose of it as it pleased. The peace of Luneville left Italy in all respects not expressly provided for, exactly in the state in which it found it. But as the state in which it found it could not in its very nature be permanent, as the transition from a military anarchy to a regular and legitimate constitution, must be fixed in one way or other, and as it never could be supposed that it could be the design of any treaty to leave the destinies

of Italy to be fixed according to the will of one of the parties interested; it follows with conclusive certainty, that this silence of the Luneville peace was to be interpreted conformably to the principles of national law, not as an everlasting, but merely as a momentary blank, not as an absolute renunciation of all right of interference, but merely as a postponement of the settlement.

The circumstances also which gave to the treaty of Luneville that particular and extraordinary character of intentional vagueness and imperfection, lead to the same conclusion. The Imperial court, at the time the treaty was concluded, was on the one hand not powerful enough by fixed stipulations to establish Italy in that constitution which was best calculated to insure its independence and prosperity, the security and preservation of Austria, and the general welfare of Europe; on the other hand, it was not weak enough implicitly to cede whatever France might have required, had Italy at that time been to receive a permanent constitution. The actual maintenance of the provisional government which then existed, of the military administrations, and of the whole interregnum of arbitrary violence, was properly a tacit convention between the contracting powers, that all decision upon the future fate of the Italian states should be deferred for the time; but this suspending resolution was inseparably connected with a reservation, though not expressed, that a negotiation should afterwards take place upon this subject, and that it should be conducted in a legal way and according to legal forms. For it was impossible that Italy should forever remain in that intermediate state in which the peace of Luneville had found and had left it; this France itself could neither wish nor expect; and even if France had entertained such a wish, the neighbouring and other states of Europe could not long have permitted the existence of such a political monster. But how, (even taking for granted what never can be admitted, that all ancient pretensions had been lost, and all ancient rights extinguished), was a transition from this intermediate state to a lasting and durable constitution to be effected, if it was not done by the co-operation of the powers interested, by new diplomatic negotiations, and by new conventions?

There is either no code of national right in existence, or this conclusion must follow: and in this conclusion we are furnished with

data which enable us to pronounce, that all the enterprises of France in Italy in as far as they transgressed the undefined conditions of the treaty, directly violated its positive stipulations. Every arbitrary step not arranged by previous negotiation and sanctioned by actual convention, to substitute a fixed and lasting constitution in the room of that unstable and provisional government under which the most important states of Italy were left by the peace of Luneville, was as much an infraction of the peace as any violation of its most express articles, or of its most manifest provisions. All that France has attempted and executed in Italy since the year 1801 is contrary to treaty, and cannot be justified by any other plea than that of force; the only difference in its measures is, that some of them have violated the *letter*, others, the *spirit* of the treaty; and the most of them have been contrary to both.

We proceed to the proofs.

I. Piedmont

At the conclusion of the peace of Luneville, the king of Sardinia, though forcibly plundered and sent into exile, was the true and legitimate sovereign of all the Piedmontese territory and population. The hapless fortunes of this house, from that unlucky moment in which a weak and betrayed prince delivered up in April, 1796, to the invading French army all his invaluable fortresses, and with them the keys of Italy, to the period when French outrage – and scarcely can the history of the revolution furnish a more revolting instance of injustice – drove his successor from his throne, and from that time down to the present day are well known. The rights of the princes of Savoy have never been extinguished, they have never even renounced them; none of the other powers has either through the medium of any rightful organ, or in any diplomatic form consented to the forfeiture of their states; the only point which France upon the pinnacle of its vaunted greatness was able to carry against *Austria* and *England*, was that no mention should be made of *Piedmont* in the treaty of *Luneville* and *Amiens*; and *Russia* has never ceased to take the most energetic steps towards establishing a construction of this compulsory silence observed in the treaty, to the advantage of the house of Savoy, and in support of its pretensions.

Besides those comprehensive reasons, why nothing was fixed respecting *Piedmont* in the peace of Luneville, founded in the

disproportion of the relative powers of the parties, in the preponderance of France, and in the deserted state of Austria; there was still another, founded upon a hope that the mighty influence of Russia would be able to conduct the affairs of Sardinia to a satisfactory issue. But however that silence may be explained, so much is incontestably certain, that France by the treaty of Luneville neither came into legal possession of Piedmont, nor obtained any further right to dispose of it than had been admitted before the treaty; and that the fate of Piedmont was neither fixed in the negotiations at Luneville, nor left to be fixed at a future period by *one* of the parties alone. A final settlement, if it was meant to be valid and effectual, could only take place in one or two ways. Either the legal sovereign must be unconditionally restored, or a convention on certain conditions, whatever may have been their character, must have been agreed to between him and the French government, with the consent of all the powers interested in this great transaction. Till one or the other of these happened, the antecedent right of France was confined to a military occupation of the country; every step beyond this was a violent usurpation and direct violation of the peace of Luneville.

Two months had scarcely elapsed after the signing of the treaty, when general *Jourdan*, who was appointed chief administrator of Piedmont, announced to the country its next, if not its definitive destination. In an address of the 19th of April, 1801, he declared to the Piedmontese, “You have been found worthy to be governed by *republican laws*; the immediate consequence of this is, that *Piedmont* shall in future constitute a *French military division*; a general administrator invested with the same powers which the French commissary-general at *Mayence* exercised previous to the union of the four Rhenish departments, will conduct the civil administration; the domains, public receipts, sale of national estates, the police, and the department of justice, will all be arranged on the French footing, and agreeably to French laws: *Piedmont* has deserved to share the fortunes of the republic, to increase the glory of the French nation, and the fame of the Hero, all whose efforts are directed to form the people, which he tranquillizes and blesses with his protection, *into one single family*”. – On the same day there appeared a new division of the country into six departments; the government commission was declared to be dissolved; and with the three coloured standard and the tree of liberty

waving over their heads, it took leave of the *subalpine people* with the following compliment: “The long hoped for day has at last arrived; by that name, which was the fairest in Europe even *before the discovery of the rights of man*, you will henceforth be called; your political destiny is irrevocably decided; the French laws will be yours.”

Their triumph was afterwards found to have been premature; the rejoicings at their patriotic festivals were unexpectedly interrupted by that very voice, which, a short time before, had greeted them as brothers, and which had welcomed them to the bosom of the great family; and which was now lifted up for the purpose of moderating their ardour and setting bounds to their hopes. “The new administration,” – thus spoke General Jourdan in an instruction of the 1st of May – “is to be considered only as temporary; Piedmont is not united with the French republic, and it is not permitted for us to anticipate the views of the French government in premature expositions of them. The decrees of the Piedmontese administration will *not* therefore be passed in the name of the French republic; the public functionaries will *not* dress according to the French costume, &c.”

In order to understand the meaning of this precipitate change – between the two declarations there was scarcely an interval of ten days! – it is necessary to know what afterwards came to light, namely, that the Russian minister at Paris immediately after the first declaration, addressed a serious and energetic remonstrance upon the fate of the Italian princes to Talleyrand, asserting in the strongest manner the cause of the King of Sardinia, requiring the restitution of his states, and insisting on the conclusion of a definitive peace. In the teeth of such a remonstrance to unite *Piedmont* with *France*, would have required more boldness than *Talleyrand* and his master then possessed. Keeping their object constantly in view, they judged it advisable under all the circumstances to take in some sail, and to proceed more gently before the wind; Jourdan was therefore commissioned to retract his premature congratulations, and to wait for more favourable times.

This season soon arrived. In the last months of the year 1801, various changes took place pointing to the concluding act of the scene. The minister of the King of Sardinia was ordered by the police to quit France; the Piedmontese troops were incorporated with the French;

the spiritual institutions were abolished; the laws of France were substituted in the place of those of the country. When at length, in the year 1802, every external obstacle was overcome and surmounted, when England alienated to a certain degree from the affairs of the continent, by the peace of Amiens, had, by a temporary understanding with Russia, put an end to all resistance on that side, and Austria appeared crippled, and incapable of resistance, the decisive blow took place, and a *senatus consultum*, as it was called, declared the Piedmontese country to be a constituent part of the French territory.

When it is considered that so important an undertaking was determined upon, and executed without any introduction, dictated by the law of nations or any diplomatic formality, as if Austria had been blotted from the earth, and Europe had been eternally separated from Italy by an impassable abyss, as if every trace of popular conventions had been effaced, and the lawless will of France set up by the solemn consent of nations in the place of the rights of states; when it is farther considered what the object was to which this undertaking led, the extension of the French domination over a country of inestimable value, and that by this measure alone, even had France at the moment confined itself entirely to it, it had ruined the independence of *Italy*, completed the subjection of *Helvetia*, opened a vast theatre for new conquests, and overthrown the old political system from its very foundations; when it is, in fine, recollected how often the French rulers, even when they had arrived at the point of no longer dreading resistance, and of fixing those limits to their empire which arbitrary caprice dictated, consoled the world with the assurance that these would never be extended beyond “the Rhine, the Pyrenees and the Alps – more they did not desire; there *nature* had erected eternal walls of partition between them and other countries; to break through this line, even if France had a right to do so, would be the excess of folly”; – And that so soon afterwards these eternal walls of partition were broken down, and levelled by a French *senatus consultum* like a rotten paling; that nature (even *their* nature) was solemnly convicted of falsity, and that that was executed in the course of a few months under the silence of dejected Europe, which at so late a period they had not ventured so much as to think of: – It must surely be confessed that it would be more than folly to believe that a power which freed from every restraint, and

delivered up entirely to its own impulses, thus rushed forward in all directions and with constantly increasing velocity, will anywhere stop short, till the scattered elements of opposition are collected, either by wisdom or good fortune, and barriers again erected to break the violence of its progress.

Our only remaining hope now is, that as everything which has taken place in Piedmont since the peace of Luneville has been executed without any just title, without the consent of a single court, and with a perfect contempt of all rights and of all forms, at a future and more fortunate era, when justice and order shall once more predominate, the work of violence, and arbitrary power will be annihilated. However necessary this change, we will show in a subsequent chapter that every peace must be nugatory as long as Piedmont remains a part of France, and that no perfect system of security can be expected till the sovereignty of the house of Savoy is restored. But what enlightened statesman is there in Europe who is not long since convinced of these truths!

II. Parma and Placentia

Respecting Parma and Placentia there was nothing concluded in the peace of Luneville. The fate of these countries also does not appear to be in the smallest degree doubtful. Their sovereign was, it is true, several times in the course of the war obliged to suffer them to be occupied by foreign troops, but a final loss of them was never so much as spoken of, and when the war ended he returned into quiet possession of them.

But during the negotiations at Luneville, *Lucien Buonaparte* had opened a private negotiation at Madrid with the Spanish court. Its immediate object seemed to be a distinguished exaltation of the hereditary prince of Parma, (who was son-in-law to the King of Spain); and the world suffered itself for a time to be persuaded that this step had no other motive than friendship for the court of Spain, gratitude for its fidelity to France, and a wish to confirm the bonds of their alliance; the truth however soon came to light, and it appeared that new plans of aggrandizement were, if not the only, at least the principal inducement to adopt it.

In the beginning of the year 1802, there appeared in the public papers, without either preface or commentary, a treaty between *France* and *Spain*, said to have been signed at *Madrid* by the *Prince of Peace* and

Lucien Buonaparte on the 21st March 1801. By the first article of this treaty, the reigning duke of *Parma* renounced for himself and his heirs all his estates in favour of the French republic, and *Tuscany* was assured to his son as an indemnity for this renunciation. The other articles related to the royal dignity of the Infant, to a reversion of his new possessions to the princes of the Spanish house, in case of the failure of male heirs, to the cession of the island of Elba to France, and of Louisiana, which afterwards became so important.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the French government, in the plenitude of its overweening confidence in itself, was really persuaded that such a transaction as this could become a law to Europe without the consent of the other powers. In every view of national right the contract was vain and invalid, for –

1st, The King of Spain had no title whatever to dispose of the possessions of the Duke of Parma. The father of this prince received his possessions not through the favour of Spain, but by valid and sufficient treaties concluded between the principal powers of Europe; these possessions therefore could only be separated from his house by similar conventions. The future constitution of Italy, which was pretended to be arranged in this partial and nugatory contract, concerned the court of Spain much less than the other principal powers; it was only interesting to Spain in the subordinate respect of family connection, while it interested the other powers in the much more essential relations of security and preservation. To settle the fate of Italy in a private convention between Spain and France, was as unjust and unbecoming as it would have been for France and Austria to conclude a treaty respecting Portugal without consulting Spain.

2dly, Besides the considerable interest which the imperial court possessed in the general rights of its neighbours, it had a particular title to interfere, and to give a decisive voice in settling the estates of Parma. These states, originally a fief of the empire, in the first half of the eighteenth century, in virtue of treaties (such as used to be concluded when a code of national right was still in existence) had come into the possession of the princes of the Spanish line of the house of Bourbon, to whom they were assured in the year 1748, at the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. But it was settled in the same treaty that failing male heirs,

Parma and *Guastalla* should fall into the house of Austria; and in the treaty concluded between France and Austria in the year 1758, the same destination was repeated. The Austrian court therefore might be considered as a reversionary heir to the estates of Parma, and no power was competent to alienate this possession, burdened with that eventual right of inheritance, without Austria's consent. The injury was considerably aggravated by the circumstance that France, as an indemnity for Parma, fixed upon a province of the house of Austria, and robbed it of *Tuscany*, the more certainly to trample under foot its indisputable claims upon Parma.

3d, When the peace of Luneville was concluded, the cession of Parma and the new destination of the hereditary prince was already completely concerted and settled between Spain and France. Why were not these conventions made known at Luneville? This can only be explained in one of two ways. The French government either clearly foresaw that Austria, notwithstanding its embarrassed state would refuse to sanction them, or it thought itself sufficiently powerful to set at defiance all principles and forms: but whatever was the motive, the treaty between France and Spain, and the whole transaction respecting Parma remained destitute of the confirmation quite indispensable to their validity.

Parma, in respect to the French pretensions upon it, stood pretty nearly in the same situation with Piedmont. They had both been passed over in silence during the negotiations, and France acquired as little right to the one as it had done to the other by the peace of Luneville. The only difference was that the presence of the legitimate sovereign, and the uninterrupted continuance of his government, opposed certain obstacles to the measures of France in the case of Parma, which the banishment of the King of Sardinia had removed out of the way in that of Piedmont. But the treaty by which Parma was given up, and the *senatus consultum* by which Piedmont was united, were both plants of the same soil, both exotic productions to the province of national rights, and according to the *spirit* of the treaty of Luneville (for the *letter* of it took no cognizance of them) both must be regarded equally as infractions of the peace.

The fancied pretensions of the French government to Parma were not however carried into effect during the life of the reigning duke. He died suddenly on the 9th October 1802, after appointing a regency

composed of his princess, the archduchess of Austria, and two of his most confidential counsellors. Scarcely had the news reached Paris when the former French resident (Moreau St. Mery) was appointed in the name of the French republic, general administrator of the states of Parma. By a decree of the 23d of October, this person dissolved the counsel of regency, asserted the full sovereignty of the French government, with all the rights and appendages belonging to it, and admonished the public functionaries to instruct the people respecting its real situation, "that it might know how to appreciate, in its full extent, the happiness of being governed by France." He neglected nothing on his own part which could be done to render this happiness sensible to their perception. Not contented with the sovereignty and the revenues of the state, he laid hold on everything which he saw; and allodial property, valuables of every kind, whether in cash, jewels, or furniture, all that the widow might justly lay claim to, or the King of Etruria pretend to inherit, everything, without respect or discrimination, was confiscated by his rapacious hand for the benefit of the great nation. The duchess was forced to quit the country.

The final destiny of this land was kept secret for an unusual length of time. The most probable ground of this delay is to be found in the relation then subsisting between the French cabinet and the court of St. Petersburg. The repeated and solemn promises made to the Russian emperor of an indemnity to the King of Sardinia, prevented the French government from coming to a final resolution to dispose definitively of the only remaining objects, which, in case of necessity, could be offered for this purpose; and in this way from positively declaring what by the bye no longer admitted of doubt, that it was fully determined never on any condition to discharge its obligations. This consideration ceased to have any influence when a rupture with Russia drew near. But even then it is worthwhile to remark the moment which was chosen, fully to carry its plans into execution. When the ruler of France, in the month of June 1805, visited "his possessions beyond the Alps", to use the expression of his journalists, (he was at Parma on the 26th of June), the old provisional administration still existed as it had been established three years before, and though a good deal had happened in the interval tending to throw light upon futurity, there still remained a certain degree of uncertainty

respecting it. It was first after his return to France, after he had learned that the Russian negotiator had gone back, after receiving the first intelligence of the warlike preparations of Austria, after discovering that his ambition had kindled a flame which must soon spread over the whole of Europe. It was first on the 21st of July – for the purpose, as it were, of setting the displeasure of the courts and public opinion at defiance – that the states of Parma were incorporated by a *decree*, (they did not seem worthy of being dignified by a *senatus consultum*), with the 28th military division, subjected to French laws, and organized as French provinces.

When the *grand duchy of Tuscany*, the indemnity of the hereditary prince of Parma for the loss of his paternal estates, received the name of an independent state, and was raised even (whether out of compliment to Spain, from arrogance, or in irony, we know not) to the rank of a kingdom, it was the only dowry which its titular sovereign received with it. In every other respect Tuscany continued to be a French province. Involved in the wars of France, and in all its plans of violence and oppression, the infirm government of Florence was obliged to support French armies; to the ruin of its productive commerce to shut its ports and markets against the enemies of France; and in violation of all the laws of hospitality to arrest travelling English who held its territory as sacred. Leghorn was constantly in possession of French troops, even during the peace with England; when the war again broke out, in the year 1803, it was even declared by the French generals to be in a state of siege; a French *cordon* was drawn along the sea coast; the island of Elba belonged to France, and – in consequence of usurpation on usurpation – the opposite principality of Piombino was now in the possession of France. The continual presence of domineering French agents, the uninterrupted marchings of troops, the irreparable disorder of the finances – everything announced the weight of external pressure; and, to complete the union with France, there was nothing wanting but a short decree, constituting Etruria a department of the Arno, or such, or such, a military division.

II. Lombardy

In the article of the peace of Luneville, which, as we have before shown, assured the independence of Switzerland, the independence of the *Cisalpine republic* as it was then called, and the right of its inhabitants to choose any constitution, which might appear to them most eligible,

were likewise stipulated. All that we have said, and the regrets which we have expressed respecting the vagueness of this article, are again applicable to the present case. But it is equally certain, that however the words of the article may be understood or interpreted, no grounds of justification for the conduct of France in this instance, more than in the others, will be found in it. For to declare a state independent, and at the same time to grant permission to a foreign power to prescribe laws to it, or to confer on a foreign prince the right of taking possession of it, is an evident contradiction. But both these events befell this state after the conclusion of the peace of Luneville, the one in the year 1801, the other in the year 1805; the one when Buonaparte declared himself president, the other when he declared himself king.

Had the French government, when it became a question of giving a regular organization to the Milanese constitution only exercised that degree of influence which necessarily arose out of its former connection with these provinces, its acknowledged preponderance in Italy, and the presence of its troops, no one under the existing circumstances would have found fault with such an interference. But this was not even then sufficient to content the ambition of its chief. In order to render the complete dependence of the Cisalpine republic conspicuous to the world, he summoned the constituent assembly which was to confirm its destiny to Lyons, in December 1801, under the name of an *extraordinary consulta*. Here *four hundred and fifty representatives* were ordered to select *thirty* from their number, to whom was committed the task of framing a constitution in a few private conferences, under the presidency of French directors. Of the proceedings of this secret commission, the consults were kept entirely ignorant; there was no public deliberation, no proposition, no collection of voices, not even the outward form of a sitting, till suddenly, on an appointed day, a report of the whole transaction was read to the assembled deputies, every article confirmed with acclamations, and after the business was thus finished – the *consulta* was dismissed. With regard to the office of first magistrate, the authors of the report declared that in the existing situation of their country, it would be neither advisable nor safe to commit the chief post in the administration of their affairs to a fellow citizen; and that besides, “as the French troops could not leave their territory at an early

period, the welfare of the country required of them to beseech General Buonaparte to be pleased *to take the government into his hands.*” The general complied with their desire, assuring them, that it appeared to him also impossible to find anyone in the country who was qualified to undertake the government.

Of the further arrangements and details of their constitution, as it was called, as usual no person took any notice; the age of constitutions is past; the only thing which foreign states, and particularly the neighbours of the republic learned, not without just astonishment, was that without any explanation of the matter, the empty *Cisalpine* title had been exchanged for the most significant one of an *Italian republic*.

But what gave serious consequence to the farce at Lyons, ludicrous as it was in itself, was the absolute extinction of Lombardy in the formidable dominion of France. The military command of this country was now become a permanent part of its constitution; every shadow of independence had vanished; Buonaparte ruled more despotically and with less control at Milan than he did at Paris: for as yet the *senatus consultum* of the 4th of August, declaring him consul for life, was not past. This was the first bold act of authority that he had exercised since the peace of Luneville, and notwithstanding the general torpor, this was remarked and felt.

The means to which he had recourse to dispel the anxiety and still the murmurs of the world, seemed to have been selected expressly for the purpose of increasing the uneasiness to the highest possible degree. Instead of employing soothing representations, calculated to divert the public attention from the idea of a complete conjunction of the French and Italian dominion, he found it better to circulate it, and by a dry undisguised confession, to remove every tranquillising doubt. In an official article of the *Moniteur* (of the 16th of February 1802), the accession of influence and power which the Italian republic threw into the scale of France, instead of being denied or underrated, was defended on political grounds, and declared to be just and necessary. And here, for the first time, the terrible doctrine was held forth, that all the foreign conquests of France had only re-established a balance of power, which had been destroyed to France’s prejudice by the events of the preceding century; that the Netherlands and the provinces on the Rhine had at

most restored the balance in *Germany*, and had scarcely done that satisfactorily; that still much remained to be done in Italy before arriving at a similar result; and that in setting out, the Italian republic was only to be considered as an equivalent for the loss France had sustained in *Venice* and *Naples*. This justification had, at least, the merit of clearly pointing out their object. The future relations of Lombardy were no longer involved in any uncertainty, and we were not only permitted, but required, to consider it as a territory dependent upon France, or at all events, as a personal dominion of the ruler of France; Buonaparte assented to this interpretation, and the only care was to give a colour to the avowed subjection of this land, which might in some measure disguise its repulsive aspect to the eyes of contemporaries.

In this quarter everything now appeared to be accomplished. There was no immediate French department bound to the consular government by more slavish ties than this Italian republic. Its internal administration was conducted by a servile commission of agency, which knew no other law than the will of their master; a considerable French army covered the land and devoured its produce; *two thirds* of the public burdens were exclusively devoted to the maintenance of this army and to the execution of military projects in which no other than France, or as this might be even saying too much, no other than the dictator of France had the smallest interest. No voice could be raised against him; the most secret expressions of friendship were inquired into and denounced; private letters were treated as crimes against the state, thoughts were construed into high treason. No resistance, no interference, not the mildest re-monstrance on the part of any foreign power: – to submit and be silent was then the order of the day! – there was nothing on either side to trouble or diminish the enjoyment of absolute dominion. The most insatiable avarice would have been satisfied, the most rapacious ambition would have been contented; but *Buonaparte* desired something more.

Scarcely was he crowned emperor when he caused it to be announced, “the Italian republic requires a definitive organisation, and will soon receive that which is most conformable to its own prosperity, to the advantage of the French state, and to the well-understood interests of the neighbouring powers.” Three months were passed in anxious expectation before the curtain rose. Then there appeared at once, as

if it had issued from the bosom of the earth, the resolution of a *new consulta*, appointing the founder of the Italian republic to be *King of Italy*, decreeing the throne *hereditary in his family*, and declaring the future separation of the Italian from the French crown to be agreeable to law, but fixing the period for its separation to be when the French arms have evacuated Naples, the British Malta, and the Russian Corfu. The resolution was on the 17th March in a solemn audience, delivered for acceptance and confirmation, and with the same readiness with which the ruler of France, three years before had condescended to occupy himself with the *great conception* of the Cisalpines, he now determined to be their first king.

The following day he repaired to the senate, and here Talleyrand was called, in a laboured report of the proceedings, to praise the profound wisdom of his master, his exemplary *moderation*, his unparalleled *resignation*, his generous *self-denial*. So far were a cunning perversion of the subject, unbounded flattery, and a contempt of truth, carried in this report, that any one unacquainted with the circumstances, who had read it as a literary curiosity in a distant corner of the world, would not have hesitated a moment about believing that it related to the *resignation* of a crown, not to the voluntary *acceptance* of one, and to the arbitrary *foundation* of a kingdom.

The first thing in the bold undertaking which attracted the attention of the neighbouring states, and which called forth and justified the astonishment, consternation and indignation of the world, in a degree unexperienced before, was the arbitrary nature of the measure, and the miserable nullity of the pretexts which were employed to cover it. If it was once determined, and irrevocably determined, that the *deluded* people of Lombardy (for liberty had been promised them in a hundred seducing manifestos, from, the year 1796 down to the battle of Marengo!) should be vassals of the French empire, and slaves of its despot, then its constitution absolutely needed no new organization. At the time of the consulta at Lyons, this constitution was called *definitive*; as such the rest of Europe, though by no means friendly to its principles, and well aware of what was comprehended under them, had either recognized it, or let it pass in silence. The authors and agents of this new resolution might still, it is true, continue to assure their fellow citizens and contemporaries,

that “the constitution which was declared *definitive* is, however, only *provisional*, a work of circumstances too weak to be capable of lasting; to preserve it is impossible, it must therefore be voluntarily condemned and superseded in the course of that rapid progress of events, by which the present epoch is characterized” – but these must be accounted words without meaning, not susceptible of any serious interpretation, or at best as adapted to the multitude. The only real want of the Italian republic was *the removal of the French troops*, and the accomplishment of its *independence of France*. That neither of these objects was effected by the elevation of its president to the rank of king, is manifest to the dullest comprehension, this change was as foreign to the wishes as it was to the welfare of the land, it was not even dictated by the interest of the chief governor, that is by the interest arising out of his duties and obligations as a ruler. For everything which was necessary to his ruling, and ruling without impediment or limitation, had been already secured to him in quality of president. What could tempt him to go further? The desire of adding to the title of Emperor that of king, or a wish to elevate his relations, and to found new dynasties. Both motives were equally dangerous to the security of the neighbouring states, and to the independence and tranquillity of Europe; and as Buonaparte visibly under their influence, had already without scruple sacrificed to them a considerable portion of his fame, the favour and confidence of many of his earlier admirers, the whole republican scaffolding by which he had mounted to power, and the dignity and consistency of his life, who could now banish the apprehension that no longer any consideration on earth could stop him in his career!

But what rendered the whole transaction still more repulsive and disgusting was the pretension of carrying it through by force of power alone, without the sanction of the law of nations, without any prefatory negotiation, and without the consent of a single power having been either requested or waited for. The peace of Luneville acknowledged the *Cisalpine republic*, and stipulated its *independence*. This *independence* was now, it is true, annihilated, the *Cisalpine* name no longer existed, and the *republic* was become a French province. But however, grievously the treaty had been infringed, and the peace broken by this series of revolutions, there was still a great and wide difference between that

constitution which was produced at Lyons, and the absolute possession of the country transformed as it now was into a hereditary family estate. And in bringing all this about to appeal to no other authority, or seek for no other justification, than the diplomatic rhapsodies of his own sophists, supposes a hardihood in iniquity, an intoxication of insolence which Europe could not bear without forging its last fetters. In that memorable report of Talleyrand, there was nothing said either of the peace of Luneville, of the neighbouring powers, of any obligation towards others, or even of a wish, much less of a want of having this title of king acknowledged. And then when we were justified in expecting a statement of satisfactory grounds of conduct, or at least a sparing exercise of power, or an attempt to evade our reclamations, or a word of kindness to disarm our indignation, or some intimation of future negotiations, or if everything else was refused, at least some form of diplomatic politeness there – will posterity believe it? – We receive the comfortable assurance, “that *France, like the ocean, without regarding inefficient barriers, gives laws to itself, and prescribe its own boundaries.*” (We quote the words of Talleyrand’s report).

If such a conduct could in any way be atoned for, it was not certainly in the way which was adopted, of pouring into our fresh bleeding wounds the ineffectual balsam of deluded hope. Some prospect of a *separation of the crowns* under certain conditions was, it is true, held out, but almost immediately and intentionally withdrawn, lest any distrust in the validity of self-constituted rights, or any consideration for the claims of others, or any respect for principles might incautiously be imputed to the ruler of France. “You, yourself” – said Talleyrand to his master, – “You, yourself, will fix the period of separation, that you may not have one day the *degrading* alternative proposed to you, either to consent to this separation, or take up arms; for then *the respect you owe to your dignity* would prescribe to you, to listen to the *calls of honour* rather than to the *calls of humanity*”.

Besides, this promise was merely a diplomatic artifice, invented for the purpose of exciting astonishment in a gazing populace, and of occupying the attention of the more discerning spectators for a moment, till the throne was securely established. This temporary object was attained; the panegyrists opened their mouths to extol the magnanimity

of their hero, and fancied publicists bowed with reverence to the wisdom and elevation of a mind which, in founding and establishing a kingdom, never lost sight of the great political relations of states, and contrived to interweave a *proposition of peace* in the *very statute of its constitution*. The more skilful soon discovered the geographical bearings of their new situation, and the imposture, which was endeavoured to be practised upon them, was too clumsy to escape detection.

It was soon discovered that the ruler of France had no right to take Italy or give it. The kingdom which he promised to relinquish, when Malta was evacuated by the Britons, and Corfu by the Russians, was no his. Before taking credit for the self-denial of resigning a crown, (we take it for granted that the resignation of it was seriously intended), it must first be shown by what authority he came to the crown. The following is the language which he held to Europe. “I will take possession in virtue of a power which no one dare control, of a neighbouring country, of which there is not a square mile belonging to me, which is already occupied by my troops, though it has been declared, by the last treaty of peace to be *independent*, and of which I have been for an indefinite time appointed ruler and dictator; I will, without waiting for your consent, erect for myself a regal throne in this country. But if those powers with which I am at present at war, choose to accept the conditions of peace which I prescribe to them, then I will display my magnanimity; the country shall be given up, the crown shall be resigned – in favour of a particular person whom I shall then name.” This was the justice, this the wisdom, this the diplomatic penetration which statesmen admired, to which authors offered the incense of praise, and of which, particularly in Germany, (since we must bear the ignominy, we may also confess having merited it), there arose more than one encomiast.

Considered in a general view, the contingent separation of the crowns, instead of affording any ground of satisfaction, rendered the injustice and violence of the whole proceeding still more manifest and perceptible. For in what light must this perfidious clause appear to those powers, which though immediately and deeply interested in the fate of Italy, saw that the performance of the arbitrary condition which France had fixed for its prospective operation was wholly out of their power? For how could Austria and Naples – the two European states which suffered the most

from the union between Italy and France – how could they effect the evacuation of Malta, and evacuation of Corfu? We shall wave altogether the consideration which was however in itself a very important one, that in the present state of things, the continuance of the English in Malta, and the Russians in Corfu, was a most desirable circumstance for Austria and Naples. We shall even suppose for a moment the contrary, and that both these powers anxiously wished to see the English and Russians driven from the places which they occupied, and in general from the Mediterranean seas. Had they any means in their power with which to accomplish this wish? And if the issue of the maritime war, and the result of the negotiations with Russia turned out so unfortunately for France that Malta must be left to the English, and Russia must be permitted to keep troops in Corfu, was Austria, was Naples in a condition to compel either of these powers to forego their advantages? What sense then was there in the conduct of the French government? In defiance of right, and of treaties, a dominion arose in Italy from which the greatest dangers were likely to spring. This dominion was in the first instance proclaimed to be an appendage to France, and the only hope of seeing them in future separated (and how separated, we shall consider by and by!) depended upon an event entirely without the circle of their operations!

Thus did the matter stand, supposing the promise of the future separation of the crowns to be sincere, and supposing its execution to be really beneficial to the powers immediately interested. But neither the one nor the other was the case.

On what was the hope founded that that separation should ever be realized? Upon the word of the French government. Was this an adequate security? Was it reasonable, was it possible to expect that, after so long a dreary experience, after so many broken treaties, after so many violated oaths, after so frequent a subversion of principles and forms, after a retraction of so many engagements, the world should be tranquillized by the words of Talleyrand and his master? Had any one of their splendid promises been fulfilled; was not France, and Germany, and Switzerland, and Holland, covered with documents of their perjured faith? Was the whole history of their government anything else than a constant series of constitutions established one day and torn down the next? And if their own constitutions and conventions could not bind

them, who could flatter himself that a partial and arbitrary declaration would tie them down faster or more effectually, and that it would not share the same fate with a vast number of others which lie dispersed over every page of their annals?

And even if at last, contrary to all expectation, this much vaunted separation actually had taken place, what would Italy, or what would Austria and Europe have gained thereby? The statute of the 17th March had declared the crown of Italy to be hereditary in the male offspring, *whether natural or adopted*, of the French emperor. To him alone it was left, unconditionally left, to appoint his successor. His choice would therefore at all times have fallen upon the person on whose devotion, docility, and obsequiousness, he could most surely depend: far more than a son or brother could be, the new ruler would have been, in the most proper sense of the word, a creature of his hands. Add to this, the French troops which he had never promised to withdraw, but whose continuance in the country he had on the other hand taken every occasion to declare to be necessary to its welfare, would never have evacuated Lombardy, or even if they had retired for a short time from the states of Milan, the possession of Piedmont, of Parma, of the Vallois, of the roads across the Alps, and of all the entrances into that part of Italy, put it in their power to return as soon as they thought fit. The stamp of a French province, whether it was considered geographically, politically, militarily, or morally, was so deeply engraved upon this country, that nothing but an entire dissolution of its parts could efface it. When all these promises were weighed, it was impossible not clearly to see the result. Could a king of Italy, appointed under such circumstances, be anything else than a French Stadtholder? And was it not an insult to the human understanding to talk of the future independence of the Italian kingdom?

But the courts who were injured and alarmed by this precipitate proceeding were not even permitted to have the satisfaction of lodging their well-founded protests. Their consent was never solicited, no justificatory declarations were made, no soothing explanations given, no sooner was the resolution formed than it was carried into effect, as if a treaty of Luneville had never existed, as if there never had been acknowledged any mutual obligations in states to give an account to their

neighbours of steps which tended to destroy their political relations, and to effect total revolutions in the orders of things established by treaties; as if France had an interest apart from all the other states of Europe; or to speak more correctly, as if enthroned high above all other states, and equally indifferent to their approbation or censure, it had only to seek in its own will for its justification, and for the sanction of its acts in the acts themselves.

While the half of Europe protested partly aloud, partly in silence, the coronation at Milan was celebrated with affected pomp, and with many mortifying and some menacing circumstances. One of the most significant undoubtedly was, that in the whole course of the solemnities, in no speech nor reply, nor congratulatory address, nor personal nor ministerial declaration, was there the smallest mention made of the renunciation of the Italian kingdom! The promise of the separation of the crowns appeared now to have passed into oblivion, and he who was bold enough to choose the inviolability of so young a usurpation as the ground of his motto (*Dieu me l'a donnée, gare à qui y touche!*) had done his part to banish every hope of a voluntary renunciation of it, or a voluntary limitation of his power to the land of chimeras.

IV. Genoa

The state of Genoa, or the Ligurian Republic as it has been called, was one of the countries which was declared independent by the eleventh article of the peace of Luneville. That this stipulation, at least for a long time to come, could be nothing more than an empty form it was easy to foresee from the geographical and political situation of this state, from its want of internal strength, from the total extinction of its ancient aspiring spirit, and from the established influence of France. But though it seemed for a time precluded from the enjoyment of real independence, it was an object of no inconsiderable value to retain even its shadow and name, for as long as a nation is able to retain even this, the hope still remains to it, of availing itself of some fortunate turn of circumstances for the restoration of its affairs; and of rising from the deepest and most forlorn state of decay into its former independence.

In the course of the first four years after the peace, Genoa experienced a fate similar to the other republics which had been created, revolutionized, or transformed by France. Constitutions followed upon

constitutions; the order of things which was one day proclaimed as a state of repose after the storms and troubles by which it had been introduced, was set aside the next, to make room for some other new definitive plan, the chief officers of state were appointed by the French government, French troops occupied the strong posts of the country, and the French marine was recruited by Genoese sailors.

Such was the course of things till the year 1805, and such was then their general aspect, as to render it presumable that the brittle fabric would at least survive the times of trouble. Before the coronation took place at Milan, a Genoese deputation, with the doge at their head, appeared with an offer of thanks for the generous protection which had been accorded to the Ligurian republic by its great friend and neighbour. In the answer to the address of this deputation there was no intimation given of any new project or approaching revolution. In a short time after, however, the French minister, *Salicetti*, accompanied the most tractable members of the deputation back from Milan to Genoa, assembled the senate in the greatest haste, communicated to it the wish of the chief ruler of France and Italy, and in the course of four-and-twenty hours carried through a resolution, declaring it to be necessary to *unite the republic with France*. By the means which are usually employed in such cases, a quantity of votes were soon collected confirming this resolution; on the 4th of June it was delivered at Milan, and the sovereign of Italy was pleased most graciously to receive the proposal. "I conform to your desire, I will unite you with my great people;" – such was the sentence by which Genoa was for ever blotted from the list of independent powers.

The pretext under which this was done, for no attempt was made to justify it, left everything which had ever been devised before in the mode of announcing similar acts of violence in frivolousness far behind. It was said the extension which England had lately given to the right of blockading sea-ports, has changed the whole political relations of Europe; no weak maritime state can henceforth maintain its importance; by the effects of this system, as well as by the devastation of the African pirates, Genoa has fallen into a situation of decrepitude; its union with a mighty power, whose flag will afford protection to its commerce, is necessary to the welfare, security, and the existence of Genoa; in this necessity, and in the wish of the inhabitants of the country, consists the title of France to

adopt this measure; “ they constitute the only right which Buonaparte acknowledges as valid.”

In this extraordinary piece of reasoning had the premises been as true as they are false and unfounded, still the conclusion would not follow from them. For by the union of Genoa with France, Great Britain would not be prevented from blockading Genoa, and if the French navy could not secure the Genoese against a blockade, as allies, how was it possible that it could protect them against it as subjects? Besides all that this republic had suffered, either from blockade or maritime wars, and what it still continued to suffer from these and other causes of its decay, was absolutely and exclusively the effect of French injustice and oppression. If France had suffered Genoa to remain neutral in its maritime wars, as it had been for centuries past, England would have had no occasion, and never would have thought of blockading the Genoese coast; they alone were responsible for the consequence who had forced this state, contrary to its wishes, and contrary to its clear and urgent interests, to take part in a war from which resulted this grievance, uncompensated by a single advantage or the smallest indemnification. But to crown all, it was a most unheard of pretension, to act as if there had been nothing on earth that required consideration excepting *France* and *England*, and their mutual relations and pretensions; as if a (true or imaginary) right which the French government maintained against the British, could justify enterprises immediately injurious to the rights and relations of other powers which took no part in these contentions. For had it been an established point that *England* had occasioned and rendered necessary, in the French sense of the word, the annihilation of the Genoese state by the violence and injustice of its measures; still it remained to be shown on what ground *Austria*, *Russia*, *Naples*, and *all the other European states*, were not to be consulted upon such a proceeding before it was carried into execution.

The appeal to the will of the people, as it was called, more offensive and insupportable than it would otherwise be as coming from the mouth of a despot who set everything at defiance, was least of all calculated to support this absurd argument.

It is a most difficult question whether even the legitimate sovereign of a state can, of his own free will, resolve on its total dissolution and

its subjection to a foreign power; whether such a political suicide can be excused by any formalities, or justified by any circumstances of embarrassment. But so much is indisputably certain, that if a step of this nature can be made completely legitimate, it can only be done by the consent of the powers who have a more immediate or more remote interest in the state, the fate of which is to be decided upon. In this way, and in this alone it is supposable, that the defect in the validity of the act, when resting merely on the authority and competence of the government of the individual state, may be supplied by the common sanction of all the governments interested in its fortunes.

The possession of the Genoese territory was an acquisition of considerable value to France, in extending, rounding and fortifying its dominion in Italy. The importance of the matter in dispute, and the increase of power resulting from the new accession, would have justified the strongest remonstrances on the part of its neighbours, and every kind of resistance. But so much were people accustomed to consider the encroachments of the ruler of France with patience or indifference, so great was the preponderance he had already obtained in Italy previous to the last conquest; in a word, so unlimited was his influence in the Ligurian republic, while it still retained the name of independent, that this enterprise would probably have passed like many of a similar character, without making much stir, had not two extraordinary circumstances concurred to render it quite insupportable, and to kindle a flame which soon extended over all Europe.

The one of these eventful circumstances was the choice of the time for its execution. Fatigued with violence and oppression, and impelled almost against their will by the hopeless and forlorn prospect of a series of never ending vexations, to make an attempt for the deliverance of Europe, two powers of the first consequence, had, precisely at that period, concerted measures for stemming the progress of the overwhelming flood, and setting bounds to the torrent of usurpation. Various arrangements had been taken in the Austrian monarchy since the beginning of the year 1805, but particularly in the course of the Summer, which clearly enough announced a determination to exchange habits of unqualified resignation for a disposition to active interference. The emperor had disapproved the arbitrary proceeding of founding an

Italian kingdom, as strongly as was compatible with the existing policy and situation of his cabinet; he had declined recognizing it; he had during the residence of the French emperor at Milan, in the course of all his declarations and acts, and of the whole memorable scene of the coronation, observed a complete silence, which must have been more intelligible than words, accompanied as it was with warlike preparations, which were every day less and less disguised. The emperor of Russia had already declared himself much more decidedly; for two years the most serious misunderstanding had existed between him and the French cabinet, which had originated expressly in the affairs of Italy. That he had formed the resolution to take up arms in defence of the balance of power in Europe, in case the object could not be obtained by means of negotiation; and that this resolution was fully matured and ripe for execution, no one was ignorant, who had the smallest means of discovering the secrets of cabinets and the disposition of princes, and least of all, therefore, Buonaparte. He learned, even on his arrival at Milan, that it was the intention of the emperor to send to him immediately an envoy extraordinary, to explain the most important points of dispute between them; he declared himself ready to receive him; he knew that the fate of Italy was the principal object of this mission. And in so critical a moment he proceeded to a new act of revolutionary violence in one of the most important states of the Italian territory; and to a fresh conquest in time of peace, by way of once more reminding the powers who called him to account for his preceding conduct, that no consideration was sufficiently strong, and that no calculation of consequences was longer effectual to conquer in his ungovernable mind the restless and insatiable propensity to progressive dominion, or of proving beyond the possibility of doubt, that he was finally and systematically determined to pay no regard to any remonstrance, to act at every given moment according as circumstances might dictate, and to treat the world as his disposable property.

The second, no less important, and infinitely more revolting circumstance which distinguished this event, was the bold, undisguised and unqualified violation of a sacred and voluntary promise: that "*no state shall henceforth be incorporated with the French empire!*". This solemn unequivocal declaration was twice repeated in the course of three months, in moments of the highest interest, in the presence of

France and of Europe, with all the calmness and dignity of a mature, deliberate, and determined purpose. After Buonaparte had ascended the Imperial throne, and again, on the decisive day when he assumed the title of king of Italy, these tranquillising words resounded, in numberless addresses, in the enthusiastic panegyrics of his servants, and in the acclamations of his admirers in every country of Europe, who seemed intoxicated with joy. But two months had scarcely elapsed when the sound had expired for ever. Of such a wanton, audacious, unprovoked, and unqualified breach of faith, there was no example in the whole history of the revolution, including even its worst times; whether a parallel instance, all circumstances considered – the uncalled for formality of the promise – the giddiness with which it was violated – the shortness of the intervening time – the magnitude of the object – the publicity of the whole transaction – is to be found in universal history, I am inclined to think that those who are most conversant with it will be disposed to doubt.

The conversion of the republic of *Lucca* into a principality under the protection of France, was a miserable appendage to that desperate measure. People were now prepared for everything. Whatever had been once considered as affording security against insolence and power was long since irrevocably lost, now the last props of individual confidence had fallen in, and all that presented itself to the astonished eye was a dark and troubled futurity, in which nothing could be distinctly perceived, but the inevitability of more dreadful evils, and a bitter alternative offered to the best portion of humanity, of forlorn subjection or a bloody resistance.

Chapter VI

Origin of the War

We have seen in the foregoing pages how the peace of Luneville, in all points where it set bounds to France, was infringed, violated, and set at nought; how *Austria* was injured and insulted; the *German empire* modelled according to French caprice, and in subserviency to French interests; *Switzerland*, after being harassed and tormented, subjected to a constitution framed by foreign legislators and imposed by a foreign might; the country of the *Valais* separated and subjugated; *Piedmont, Parma, Milan, Genoa, and Lucca*, under many various titles, but all of them by arbitrary violence and a bold defiance of all national rights and forms, swept into the vortex of French domination. It now remains for us to show, how it happened that these events at last roused the unwarlike, long-suffering, patient disposition of the age, to resistance, disinclined as it was to every vigorous undertaking, and prepared as it was to carry the yoke; how it came to pass, that in minds where scarcely any other feeling reigned than the desire of peace, a resolution was engendered of immediate and active war.

The situation in which Buonaparte found himself after the conclusion of the peace of Amiens, was unparalleled in the history of civilized nations, (for barbarous conquerors are sometimes carried more rapidly from earth to heaven, and fall with proportionate rapidity): it was the proudest situation to which the caprice of fortune, favoured by an enterprising spirit and no common talents, had ever raised a mortal. He governed in the interior of France, of France, extended on all sides in the highest and boldest sense of the word, ALONE: for all the limitations, such as laws,

the pride of ancestry, local constitutions, rights of particular orders, or norms consecrated by antiquity, which before his time, had surrounded and circumscribed the power of the most absolute sovereigns, had been submerged in the waves of an overwhelming revolution, and had left no trace of their existence behind; and to attempt finding out new limitations was in vain, after the stuff from which they must be formed had vanished under the hand of the destroyer. In the desert of universal equality, there are only two constitutions possible, a pure and perfect democracy, or a pure and perfect despotism. The gulf between the two is filled with various shades of anarchy. In this gulf the French nation had wandered for ten horrible years, passing from one degree of misery to another, drenched in blood and tears, an abomination to itself and the world. A republic of thirty millions of men was long ago acknowledged to be a chimera, the dominion of a single individual was the only alternative left; and those who would have been startled in more favourable times by the very idea of absolute power, regarded it now as a haven of safety, to which, fatigued with the storm, they resorted with joyful confidence. That Buonaparte was all-powerful, and that his dominion was subjected to no limitation, was a circumstance most decidedly favourable to the popularity of his government. A great majority of the nation anxiously longed for internal peace; whatever advanced or secured this object was considered as a benefit, under whatever condition it was obtained, and at whatever price it might be purchased. An overstrained effort at liberty had produced such monstrous evils, that a circumstance now happened, for the first time perhaps, unprecedented even under the happiest governments; absolute subjection was solicited from the sovereign as a favour! The two great parties, in which were concentrated all spirit and talent, all power of action and enterprise, all principle of movement, and all the elements of resistance were worn out, weakened, and dispersed; the royalists by hopeless defeats, by the loss of their foreign allies, by the relaxation or apostasy of their friends, and by the want of a rallying point; the republicans by the failure of their plans, by their inability to found a constitution, by the recollection of the horrible devastation caused by their maxims or their leaders, and by the dislike and detestation of the people. Even the remains of both these parties were, indirectly at least, in league with Buonaparte. The preservation and establishment

of his power appeared to both the most desirable object, while neither expected to triumph. The friends of the old constitution beheld in it a salutary dictatorship, which, though fixed for a series of years, or even for the period of a single life, would, by destroying the last revolutionary principles and forms, prepare the way for the return of monarchy, and for its reestablishment upon an immovable basis. The republicans were contented with it, because in the titles of their new rulers, and in the cant of the sovereignty of the people, which was retained in the first proclamations of the government like an antiquated law stile, they saw some faint resemblance of their dreams, and perhaps thought they discerned the omens of a happy futurity.

In this memorable interval, the *external* relations of the state were not only on all sides secured from danger, but to such a degree advantageous, respectable and imposing, that to judge from probabilities, they must have been supposed adequate to supply every want, either of that moderate disposition which is contented with dignity and repose, or of that impetuous and aspiring spirit to which it is but one thing to live and to reign. On all points of its extensive confines, France was surrounded by states which either carried its yoke under the name of allies, or which, being deprived of all means of resistance, and lying open to its invasion as soon as war was declared, might be considered as the bulwarks of its colossal power, or as its advanced posts. There were only four powers existing in Europe, which, by a union of their strength, (for none of them now was individually formidable), might undertake the execution of plans alarming to France, and among all the four, there was not one at that time who did not ardently wish either for a good understanding or an everlasting peace with France, or at least a peace for several years. In *England* the desire of repose was become so predominant, that the nation was pleased with a peace such as that of Amiens, and the more disadvantageous this treaty was, the more deeply interested were the ministers who had concluded it in its maintenance, for the possibility of being able to repose for some years under its auspices, was, in fact, the only merit it possessed. Accordingly it could not escape any observer that the British ministry at that time, far from entertaining warlike ideas, were entirely occupied in retrenching their expenditure and ameliorating their finances, till the end of the year 1802, and even

till the commencement of the following February, only three months previous to the renewal of the war; and that they had as the foundation of their system of government, and as the rule of their conduct, formed a resolution rather to suffer a great deal than to attempt saving themselves by having recourse to arms. – A similar, but much more determined resolution, was the principle of the *Austrian* policy. No thought of resistance, no wish of avenging the past, not the slightest symptom of dissatisfaction under all the blows which it received in its most sensible part was observable in this court, formerly so vigilant about its interest, and so tenacious of its dignity. It had even – there is no longer any reason for concealing it – unfortunately conceived Buonaparte's power to be the only remedy for the great distemper of the time, and the instrument by which the re-establishment and maintenance of the internal security and stability of all states were to be effected. On no side to circumscribe the progress of this power, in favour of its anti-revolutionary character, – for to this cause they were good natured enough to ascribe it – to pardon its political preponderance, to spare, to nourish, to support, and to consolidate it – that was for several years the uniform and invariable system of the Austrian cabinet. – The principles of the court of *Prussia* had never varied from the time of the treaty of Basle; even in the stormy period which preceded the exaltation of Buonaparte, they were uniformly favourable to France; and they were much more so now, when the establishment of a regular government gave some security and a fixed direction to the system of policy which they had dictated. – *Russia*, from the extraordinary turn which the political affairs of the empire had taken at the conclusion of the reign of Paul the First; from the personal character of his successor, from the maxims and views of his ministers, from his wish to take an immediate part in the affairs of *Germany* which produced the treaty of Luneville – perhaps even from an incorrect idea of the spirit and intention of the new French government – was not only at peace, but in friendly relations with France. Where the capacity still existed – and this was confined to a few cases – all disposition to war was extinguished; and it is a certain and momentous fact, that at that time, in the whole circumference of Europe, there was no hostile sentiment except in the mind of an individual.

It is not our present object to show how the person in whose favour all this was arranged by the most wonderful combinations sported with his good fortune in the *interior*, and exchanged for equivocal enjoyment a glorious immortality; how he rejected everything which could have mitigated sovereignty, conciliated respect with love, and rendered obedience sweet to sit enthroned on ruins; how he in place of a symmetrical structure of well-regulated liberty and order, reared for the place of his dwelling a gloomy gigantic tower of iron despotism; how after everything had been changed, ridiculed or abolished, and after awakening around him the discontent of mortified hope, the bitter feelings of oppression, and a trembling dread of futurity, he renewed the system of terror under other titles and forms, strode from violence to violence, and left his stunned and trembling nation no organ of complaint; how he arrived, feared and detested, at an unnatural dominion, which while it lasts threatens every expression of public opinion, every development of national energy with galling fetters, and which when once it falls leaves nothing behind but an abyss of new revolutions, the fearful problem of a new political creation, and the insecurity of all things. But it coincides with our plan, cursorily to point out how, in his *external* relations, he not only forgot all national rights, but also all national and personal interests, acting as he did under the impulse of impetuous passion, which prompted him in less than three years after peace had been concluded once more to convert Europe, still fatigued and exhausted by its former struggles, into a field of battle.

He first drove England to war, not indeed by immediate attacks, not even perhaps by preparations announcing immediate attack – what has been said upon this subject must be accounted for only by momentary anxiety, and must not be judged according to the rigour of the letter – but by something which operated more strongly than any military arrangements, or naval equipments, by the loud and daily manifestations of a restless, empoisoned, deadly hatred, carried even to madness against the British government and nation. Those peerless invectives in which England was represented as the scourge of the world, its most distinguished statesmen as criminals, its policy as an infernal tissue, its political and commercial constitution as incompatible with the prosperity or existence of the other European nations, those calumnies, those curses first illustrated and commented upon by menacing reports

of dangerous projects that were in contemplation, and at last confirmed in official conferences by personal threats and unheard of confessions – these were the hostilities which ought to have been enumerated in a warlike manifesto, and which must have called England to arms, if it was not prepared to sink without a struggle.

The author of these aggressions would no doubt have preferred making them with impunity, by way of giving vent to his spleen, to engaging in a war which at that time could not by any means be welcome to him. It would no doubt have been more advantageous to wait till Malta was evacuated, (which would have proved ruinous to England), till the great undertakings of reducing St. Domingo was accomplished, till the French trade and the French navy were re-established, and till he had profited from three or four years of peace, for preparing the instruments proper for the execution of the boldest and most wicked of his plans. But to mingle peace and war in the most unnatural union, to manifest at one and the same moment his hatred to the British name in calumnies and threats, and indirect declarations of hostilities, and to enjoy all the advantages resulting from a cessation of arms, from the pacific disposition of this deeply injured nation, and from the conscientious observance of treaties on the part of its government, was a contradiction which all his art was unable to reconcile. After, from the violence of his conduct, war was become unavoidable, he was enraged that he had broken a profitable peace at an improper time; this is the only inference which can be drawn from the mad outcry which was on all sides set up against England, when it took the only part which was left for it to adopt. It was easy indeed to prove the injury resulting from the war to France upon grounds of policy, and the French writers of manifestoes, always sure of their public, did not fail to avail themselves of this circumstance to throw the blame upon England; but this war was altogether foreign to state prudence, it originated solely in the blindness of passion.

Not long after it had broken out with England, the relations between France and Russia experienced a similar rupture without any political motive, in defiance of the interests of France, and in all human probability, contrary to the secret wishes of its ruler, but all other considerations lost their importance, when resentment at the failure of a mistaken calculation, or indignation at the slightest attempt to restrain

his impatient lust of dominion, required a sacrifice. The Emperor of Russia made proposals to become mediator in a peace, opposing in the true spirit of mediation Buonaparte's partial expectations and gigantic pretensions. From that hour this monarch appeared to him in the detested light of an abettor and accomplice of England. He immediately resolved on rejecting the proposals of mediation, and to treat the Russian minister at Paris with undisguised hostility. The arrest of his secretary of legation at Geneva, the arrest of a Russian chargé d'affaires at Rome, and the imprisonment of both in the Temple, were the introduction to a scene in which the representatives of the different courts in Europe were to learn what the new government of France meant by what it called its respect for the rights of nations, and its return to those beneficial forms which the revolution had banished, and was a foretaste of similar mortifications which they might all one day experience. Lord *Whitworth* was the first object of them, Count *Marcoff* was the second.

The Emperor of Russia however, wished the preservation of pacific relations so warmly and sincerely, that notwithstanding the unfavourable impression which these hostile and violent proceedings had made, a bare return to a milder conduct and common prudence would have been sufficient to prevent a breach. In March 1804 took place that memorable catastrophe, by which an innocent and excellent prince of the royal blood of France was seized by French troops in the territory of a German prince, where he had long lived in the most inoffensive manner, dragged to Paris before a revolutionary tribunal with barbarous cruelty, and immediately condemned to die. It was impossible that the court of Russia could be a partner in that silence, that cowardly and criminal silence which, with the exception of the Emperor Alexander and the King of Sweden, all the European powers, stunned and petrified with terror, observed on this proceeding. Yet so firmly was the Emperor determined, even in this truly critical moment, when a just and venerable feeling would have excused the most energetic language and the strongest measures, to give a preference to a tone of mildness, that in the note which he caused to be delivered to the diet of the empire, no notice was taken of the black character and innate turpitude of this nocturnal murder, but it exclusively adverted to it as a breach of the law of nations, an invasion of a foreign territory, and a violation of the rights of a free state. This note

was followed by that remarkable correspondence in which Europe was instructed in the enlightened system and exalted policy of the Russian monarch, and from which it learned with grateful admiration, that he who was threatened far less than any other with immediate danger, was animated with the most generous and lively interest in the common security and welfare. As nothing could be more diametrically opposite to dispositions of this nature than the manner of thinking of the French cabinet, a formal rupture was the natural consequence.

The transition from this rupture to actual war was, nevertheless, from the great distance of the two powers, and the state of numbness into which all the rest had fallen, slow and difficult, and perhaps never would have taken place, had not new acts of violence, exercised in countries in whose fate Russia had taken a particular interest, widened the breach, and had not the most wanton insults finally precluded all means of reconciliation. The Emperor had pledged himself to demand the re-establishment of the kings of Sardinia and Naples, in their former rights, indemnity for the loss they had suffered, and as much security for the future, as under all the circumstances could be expected. That negotiation had proved fruitless, though the satisfaction of these Italian princes had been expressly stipulated in a secret treaty, which was signed at the conclusion of peace between France and Russia in 1801. What could have been appropriated to their indemnification had sunk piece-meal into the all-devouring gulf, and on the foundation of an Italian kingdom their last hopes were extinguished. Even now the Emperor of Russia, though already prepared for war, lent an ear to pacific counsels. He empowered a confidential minister to make one other trial, whether there was any feeling of justice, any humane consideration still existing, any possible limit which impetuous and stubborn force would still acknowledge, by no means to deliver an imperious ultimatum as has been given out in a hundred lying reports; but to make a calm and dignified appeal not only to the *ruler*, but to the *man*, for the restoration of order and the preservation of peace in Europe. This last attempt, the author of which has only incurred the reproach, and a glorious reproach it may be called, of conceiving it to be possible to attain his object in such a way, this last attempt failed like all the foregoing ones. The accounts of the intended proposition were received with unequivocal aversion

and offensive coldness, and immediately after the negotiation was broken off, before it had even commenced, the Russian plenipotentiary received, as a preliminary answer to all his well-meant instructions, the decree which incorporated Genoa with France.

In the meantime the Austrian court had likewise felt the urgent necessity of setting bounds to its patience. We have already shewn the manifold occasions of discontent, and the weighty grounds of hostility with which this court had been furnished. But to provoke Austria to war was no easy task. The keenest shafts of injury had fallen blunted when pointed against the pacific spirit of the Emperor; his modest zeal for everything that is good, and his honest and tender anxiety for the welfare and happiness of his people. Besides, the imperial court had been abandoned for several years, not merely without any prospect of assistance, but as if it had wanted enemies, exposed to the oppression of those who alone could yield it succours, till at last, as in all similar situations, the circumstance of having suffered much became a reason for suffering more. In the last months of the year 1804, it is true the Russian cabinet had entered into a more intimate connection with this court, and into confidential consultations with it upon the common interest, but one must be very ill informed indeed respecting the progress and character of the intercourse then subsisting, to believe that had the affairs of Europe remained in the situation even in which they at that time were, and in which they continued down to March 1805, any warlike resolution would have been adopted. It required a new provocation to overcome the mass of difficulties, of cares, of indisposition, of open and secret opposition, which on all sides obstructed the path to such a resolution in will, much more in execution. The constitution of Italy must once more be violently shaken, the French dominion extended by proclamation of a new kingdom, by arbitrary caprice; a despite of forms and realities, a contempt of all the relations and duties of neighbouring powers arising out of the law of nations, must be pushed to the uttermost in one great and comprehensive act of violence, finally to drive the court of Vienna to a resistance to which it could not have been tempted by any one of the preceding measures, nor by them all put together. Nay more, after so much had been done, it still depended upon him who had kindled the flame either to nourish or extinguish it. The aversion

to actual war, the longing desire of setting any bounds to the evil by means of pacific negotiation, of arriving at any tolerable result, even if it was not satisfactory, at any decent compromise; with duty and honour, was everywhere, and particularly at Vienna, so much superior to every other feeling and to every other propensity, that any proposition which had a specious appearance of justice; and moderation, would have been grasped at with alacrity and joy. The union of Genoa and the failure of the Russian mission left Austria no alternative.

After the most obstinate aversion to war had been on all hands overcome by a long series of unjust and hostile measures, the French government thought fit, precisely as it had done in the year 1803, on the rupture with England, violently and bitterly to complain of the natural and necessary consequence of its own provocations. It now appeared all at once as the oppressed and suffering party, now every attempt to stop its career of violence was a criminal invasion of its rights; the most justifiable measures of defence were denominated treachery; and a common effort to avert common ruin was the result of a dark conspiracy produced by British gold, or by the cabals of some ambitious ministers; the only author of the war was now converted into a panegyrist of peace, he was represented as never having entertained a more ardent wish than the preservation of peace in Europe, and those who had wantonly violated it were delivered over to the abhorrence of the present and every future age.

It was extraordinary enough that a part of these cunning complaints, however revolting their injustice may be, were not wholly divested of a certain character of speciousness. In this case, as well as in that of England, Napoleon would not have been displeased to be delivered from a war which he had himself rendered unavoidable. What in his vocabulary is meant by peace – the liberty of doing whatever is suggested to him by the feeling of unbounded power or momentary desire, and the unconditional subjection of his neighbours to every new form of his increased and insupportable domination – *that* he wished to preserve and to see its enjoyment interrupted, occasioned to him serious pain. He had shortly before the breaking out of the war, published a declaration of remarkable *naïveté* and great significance “We wish, said he in this declaration, for the continuance of peace with the continental powers, *because the continental powers are now in that situation in which we have*

always wished that they should be." These few words contain more than could have been said in a hundred manifestoes. Whether he ready intended and really expected to be able to pursue his plans of gigantic ambition to the term of their full accomplishment, till every independent power was overthrown, and till the universal establishment of his empire without going to war in the old sense of the term, or whether the period was not yet arrived, when by a fresh irruption of his arms, he meant to destroy the remains of political liberty in those few states which still retained a small portion of it, we do not take upon us to decide; so much is certain, that at the time when Austria and Russia put themselves into a posture of defence, and adopted a tone of resistance which left him the alternative of a voluntary renunciation of some of his most extravagant pretensions, or an immediate contest; a continental war was not at all agreeable to him.

It is evident that the resolution of the combined powers to oppose with a common force his formidable system of aggrandizement was, when considered in this point of view, the best and wisest they could have adopted. "Our situation – they said in reply to him – has been for a long time such as we did not wish it to be, and it is our duty to bring about a change in it, precisely because it is agreeable to *your* wishes. If you are looking forward to a more favourable moment for completing our ruin this is sufficient to inform us that of all the moments still remaining to us, that which we now choose is for us the least unfavourable. But if you have resolved to complete our subjection without going to war, war is the only alternative left us for the preservation of our existence and honour; on this our only hope depends, faint as it may be, from our past errors and the misfortunes to which they have led. The path which you point out to us leads to direct and hopeless destruction. To waste our energies in listless inactivity, in spiritless languor or in lingering illness, to seclude ourselves from every source of aid, support, and co-operation, to live insulated and forlorn, without friends or connections, from whom we can expect either sympathy or relief, till at last you push us into the pit you have dug for us – this is the *peace*, this the mortal slumber in which you invite us to indulge; these are the wise maxims in which you advise our ministers to act. It is impossible that it can be inconsistent with our interests to resolve on doing the contrary of that which our irreconcilable enemy advises us to do. Besides this, our present situation admits of no wavering between

opposite systems, of no hesitation between choosing this or that line of policy, between caution and courage, between concession and resistance, we are urged by an imperious necessity. To fall in glorious submission, or in a noble struggle, is the only alternative we have left. To conquer you now is difficult; but to live without having conquered you is impossible, and to die despised and dishonoured is to die twice."

So clear and intelligible, even to the meanest capacities, was the situation of Europe at the time that the most obstinate of the French sophists fell into the most pitiful embarrassment, when it became necessary for them to oppose at least specious arguments to the respectable and incontrovertible reasonings which the Combined Powers brought into the field of public discussion. It could not even escape their blind admirers to what miserable resources they were driven, when they were obliged to combat the strong and convincing facts, which were stated by the armed powers as the ground of the war. It was remarkable to see in particular, what motives they ascribed to Austria, if possible to shut the eyes of the world, or, at least, of their own nation, (which was doomed to believe what was most incredible, because it had no means of learning the truth), to the notorious and public history of the origin of the war. They had recourse to two methods of delusion for the purpose of disguising the truth. The one was the miserable story that Austria had prepared for war for the purpose of *conquering Bavaria*, and of extending its dominion in Germany; the other which had been tried a thousand times before, was that *English gold* had formed the coalition against France. The former of these deceptions could not impose on the most ignorant out of France. The manner in which Austria and Russia had expressed themselves in the note of the 3d of September, respecting the nature and object of their common preparations, did not leave even the colour of probability to such an accusation. But had they observed a complete silence respecting their views in Germany, and had this silence been interpreted as a ground of suspicion that projects of aggrandizement were entertained by the Austrian ministry – in its present situation and temper! – it must still have been made credible, that the emperor of Russia, whose clear and evident interest must have prevented him from becoming a party in such a system, had, by some extraordinary motive, been converted into a favourer of it. But after the Allied Powers had of their own free motion declared that they absolutely had no change of the existing constitution of the empire in view

– a declaration which no one called upon them to make, and which they certainly never would have made of themselves, had they had a contrary intention – it required uncommon courage to expect any effect from that complaint, even in a French manifesto. The *military occupation* of Bavaria every one perceived was a necessary, an unavoidable step, if a war was to be undertaken against France out of the Austrian territory; but that Austria's intention extended *further* than to a military occupation, this the Bavarian court never ventured to allege, in all its bitterness against the Allies, in all its slavish subjection to France, in all its malignant allusions to occurrences of an earlier date. It looked more like a sportive joke than a serious complaint, when they pretended to accuse the emperor of attempting to *extend* his power and influence in Germany by *illegitimate* means, at a time when all the world saw that he could scarcely employ the most *legitimate* to *maintain* that which still remained to him; so much was the relation between this monarch and the empire shaken to its lowest foundations by the peace of Luneville, and the unfortunate negotiations at Ratisbon.

The mode of explaining political connections, the true origin of which is clear as day, by the influence of *English gold*, is one of those pitiful artifices which a man of integrity is unwilling to spend time in exposing, because it is unworthy of being made the subject of serious controversy, and has been besides so often employed as to have become quite stale and disgusting. If one sometimes advert *en passant* to such loose and absurd allegations, it is merely lest the ill-informed should infer from a total silence, that no reply can be made to them. It has been often enough shown, that pecuniary subsidies may advance a war, alleviate its burdens, and contribute more or less to carry it on; but that they never can produce a war. If England were in a situation to entice only one of the principal Continental Powers by means of money to warlike enterprises, which were in any way contrary to its true interests, it must be able to procure sums large enough to convert war into a financial speculation for the power it had so enticed; a condition, the absolute impossibility of which it is needless to prove to any one at all acquainted with the matter. Subsidies are *means* of war, and as justifiable means as soldiers, ships, and artillery; but never since wars have been waged have they been the *object* of war; and could the British ministry hold out guineas in as great abundance as flint stones, it would nowhere find an ally, had not motives of a higher nature, arising either out

of immediate necessity or voluntary choice, independent of all subsidies, previously determined it on war. The present war was so evidently the result of pressure and necessity, that any attempt to mislead the public opinion by fabulous declamations respecting its origin, might fairly have been considered as desperate; but what may not he undertake who has imposed silence on his contemporaries! If the Austrian court after so many provocations to resistance, had needed any external incentive, and even if we were to admit that its definitive resolution was to be ascribed to foreign influence, it would still be a wanton perversion of truth to suppose *England* to be the source of this influence. It was *Russia*, and Russia alone, which by its example, by its encouraging language, and by its mighty preparations, gave to the councils of the Austrian cabinet, not an unnatural direction which they would not have themselves taken, but merely a more precise character and a degree of stability, to which, at last, all considerations gave way. So little were the resolutions of Austria influenced by the charm of British gold, that there was not any direct negotiation, scarcely an immediate communication on the subject, between the courts of London and Vienna, previous to the actual breaking out of the war.

It is a consolation to think, that all the worthless means which have been employed to overpower the voice of truth, will scarcely survive the day that passes over us; and that the injured world, though it may want organs with which loudly and victoriously to avenge itself, has the satisfaction of seeing the imposture discredited and despised. The consequences of this war depend upon the more or less favourable development of many relations which are still problematical, upon the energy and prudence employed in execution, and upon the counsels of Providence; but so much is certain, if the result shall turn out as fortunate as the motives were holy and just, as the resolution was praiseworthy, and as the objects were laudable and important, the hour of salvation is at hand.



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