German Historical Institute London

THE 2011 ANNUAL LECTURE

Metternich's Britain

by

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I am grateful, and feel very honoured, to be giving this annual lecture, in a series so rich in tradition. And I am very pleased to have at my side, so to speak, a statesman who, more than any other, built bridges between the British Isles and the Continent.

Metternich's Affinity with Britain and Thomas Lawrence

He is a statesman who, at the young age of twenty-one, already embraced the community of Europe in an anonymous pamphlet. He was addressing the Belgians, then under Austrian rule: 'On the necessity of a general arming of the people on the frontiers of France, by a friend of universal peace'. The first sentence reads: 'The French Revolution has reached that stage from which it seems to threaten ruin to all the states of **Europe**'. This was at the height of the Jacobin terror in Paris in 1794 and the last sentence says: 'If you are united the rapacious hordes will flee from you, and the well-intentioned of all nations will join you. To you then **Europe** will owe her preservation, and whole generations their peace'.[1] Throughout his life this Europe drew him as a moral compass since he saw it as the guarantee of a supranational peaceful order. He remained true to this doctrine. In 1858, six months before his death, he wrote that Europe rested on two pillars: on England and Austria. But before looking more closely at 'Metternich's Britain', please allow me a small diversion, via an Englishman who immortalized this European of the Ancien Régime. I am quite sure that anyone who conjures up a mental image of Metternich will always see one in particular. The Chancellor is sitting in a Rokoko armchair – at the age of 46, as we know – his right arm rests gently on the arm of the chair, his hand relaxed, pointing towards the floor; his left arm rests on his crossed legs, his left hand holding a pamphlet; he himself is looking at something

opposite that remains hidden from the observer, smiling and at the same time somewhat detached. This is the famous painting by Thomas Lawrence.

In historical books you will find all sorts on the 'Metternich era'. If you look up 'Metternich' in Wikipedia this picture is the first thing that appears, and you'll find it in every variety of historical books on the Metternich era. If you google Metternich and Lawrence together there are 279,000 hits! As an author, I found out for myself that no one can get away from this picture. I was looking for a cover illustration for my small biography of the Chancellor that I thought was original and not used so often. For the front cover I was considering a little-known bust of Metternich, in the classical style, of 1810. But the editor-in-chief reckoned that it needed to be obvious at first glance that the book was about Metternich and this wouldn't be achieved by the picture I had suggested, but only by one – by the Lawrence!

'Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) was the pre-eminent portraitist of the Regency period, depicting monarchs, political leaders, aristocratic families, society beauties and actresses with bravura flair.'[2] Until January 2011 the National Portrait Gallery was showing an exhibition, for which there is also an excellent catalogue, whose title more or less sums up the period in art-historical terms: 'Regency Power and Brilliance'.[3]

Metternich held Lawrence in extremely high regard and in January 1819 reported to his mistress, Dorothea von Lieven, who was living in London as the wife of the Russian envoy:

> Lawrence started by robbing me of three hours in the morning; he used them to paint my right eye. If he needs as much time to perfect the other details of my person, by the time he has finished I shall be considerably older than I am now. I has captured

the right eye really well, I cannot but recognize it as my own.[4]

And in a later letter he went on:

Today I had my last sitting with Lawrence, that is, the last sitting for the head. The mouth is finished, all sardonic traces have disappeared: I look quite amenable. By the way, I think the picture is wonderful.[5]

So in the picture we can quite rightly see a successful connection between Metternich and Britain. Surprisingly enough, the topic as such – Metternich's Britain – has so far never been dealt with as a whole. There are innumerable analyses of Metternich's international policy, in which Britain constantly represents a key major figure, and after his great biographer Heinrich von Srbik this was established in particular by Henry Kissinger, Paul W. Schroeder, Anselm Doering-Manteuffel or more recently Wolfram Pyta and Matthias Schulz.[6] Implicitly, however, they suggest an ambivalent image of this statesman: on the outside he seems to be the European statesman of peace, but on the inside a restorative politician, for whom the most important things were stability, legitimacy and repression of opposition movements.

A few studies, mostly unpublished, address individual aspects of Metternich's dealings with Britain.[7] All share the ambivalent image, and specifically as regards England the negative characteristics are dominant. Metternich and England, they maintain, stood in 'natural' opposition, since the Chancellor proceeded from the eternal principle of a static order. He represented, they said, the institution of absolute monarchy. He was caught up in the spirit of legitimacy. It was not until relatively late, they maintained, that he had taken a more intensive interest in the island state: after 1814. He

did not give a view about parliament and the parties before 1821, and only after 1830 in any detail. He regarded the English constitution with mistrust. And what he understood by reform was nothing more than repairing the existing conditions. He knew nothing about English history. All in all the emergence of the English state was more or less incomprehensible to him.[8] The polarizing image presented by historiography can be taken even further. According to this, from the 1820s onwards France and England formed a progressive-liberal western bloc. This, it was said, supported the national and revolutionary movements on the Continent. The most passionate exponents of this policy were the British Foreign Secretaries Canning and Palmerston. A reactionary-restorative eastern bloc formed the opposite pole, embodied in Prussia, Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy, declared as the 'Holy Alliance'. To sum up this view: between Metternich and Britain a virtually insurmountable gap had opened up.

You probably know that I am working on a big new biography of the Chancellor. In so doing I am using, to a far greater extent that has so far been possible, the documents from Vienna and above all the Metternich family archive in Prague. I am still in the middle of assessing all this, so I can only give you a few hints here. What I can say for sure is this: the verdict about Metternich and Britain also reveals the verdict about the Chancellor per se – about his way of thinking and reaching judgements. And if we look more closely, this image is shattered completely.

So to start with I'd like to illustrate this with two quotations that cast doubts on the theory of an insurmountable gulf. In a letter to Princess Lieven of 1819, at the height of the so-called *Demagogenverfolgungen* (the

political persecutions after the Karlsbad Decrees) the 46-year-old reflects on his 'fatherland':

> When it comes down to it I am not Austrian, if birth is all it takes to determine one's fatherland. According to my principles, one's fatherland is more than just the place of birth and the habits of youth. An adoptive fatherland can also exist, which depends only on the heart, but whatever the case: where birth and agreement of principles overlap, there the fatherland is complete. Or Austria is my moral fatherland; which it is because the core of its existence is completely in harmony with my principles and my feelings. In Austria, I am swimming in open water. **If I were not what I am, I would like to be an Englishman.** Without either one or the other I would not want to be anything. [9]

On 23 October 1858, eight months before his death, the eighty-five year old Metternich wrote to Benjamin Disraeli, whom he had got to know in 1848 as Tory leader of the opposition against Palmerston:

> Eight years have gone by since our meeting in **England, the country that I love**, with which I have had the closest relationship for long periods of my public life. Many events that have dominated the political sphere in the course of recent years, and still do so, could be of the sort to disrupt my thought-processes if my convictions were based on a less solid foundation. Ultimately the great maritime empire, which in Europe is not a continental one, and the continental and central power, which is not a maritime one always come together if it is a question of truly general issues or those that directly relate to their interest. [10]

In other words, Metternich admits that he loves England, regards it as the fatherland of his heart, that is, like an adoptive fatherland and not just as a place of exile – and both Empires, the British and the Habsburg, are

actually the pillars on which Europe rests. And he means this from the Napoleonic era right up to the crisis years of his time which he – still mentally very alert – perceived in old age, concerned as he was by the interventions during the Crimean War and about the problem of the declining Ottoman Empire.

England's Parliamentary System and Political Culture – Early Forms

What did Metternich think about the English parliamentary system and the political culture it was based on? Metternich came to the British Isles three times: in 1794 accompanying an Austrian government representative who had been sent from Brussels to London, then in 1814 after the first defeat of Napoleon and finally between April 1848 and October 1849 in exile. How did the first contact with Britain come about? In 1791 the Austrian Emperor had appointed Metternich's father, Franz Georg von Metternich, as *Leitender Regent* of the Austrian Netherlands. In Brussels his son, Clemens, who had travelled with his father and was eager to learn, experienced for the first time the practical business of diplomacy, but also the onslaught of the French revolutionaries who declared war on the *Altes Reich* a year later. In order to get subsidies for this war from Britain, Franz Georg sent the government treasurer Pierre-Benoit vicomte Desandrouin (*Trésorier général des Pays-Bas autrichien*) to negotiate in London. The father saw this journey as a welcome opportunity for his two sons, Clemens and Joseph, to get to know England. As an older chaperone Franz Georg sent along Desandrouin's son-in-law as well. This was comte Hilarion de Liedekerke Beaufort (1762-1841), previously court page to the Duke of Provence and brother of the French King Louis XVI. In 1791 Comte Liedekerke

had fled from the revolution to Brussels and deserves particular attention because he wrote an account of this journey to England, not published until 1968, which sums up and preserves all Metternich's impressions on his first visit to the country.[11] And encouraged by Liedekerke, the man who was to become Austrian Chancellor also kept a diary. It started on 26 March 1794 when he landed in Dover having travelled from Brussels via Ostende. I found this small travelogue written by the then just 22-year old, and until now completely unknown, in his library in Bohemia which has survived in its entirety. Here he wrote down his impressions of England.

He described the stations of his journey – Canterbury, Rochester, Dartford, Greenwich – until on 27 March he arrived in London and immediately took the chance to admire Handel's Messiah at a concert. He observed everything with great attention and amazement. He took every opportunity not only to look at the sights, but also to forge contacts with members of the government and court circles. He even attended an audience of the diplomatic corps with George III.

On one page of his diary Metternich records how, along with Lord Elgin, he visited Parliament. He was fascinated beyond measure by the House of Lords. He wrote: 'These sittings are absolutely impressive and proceed with great dignity'. Metternich considered what he had seen to be so important that, as a memento, he did a small sketch of the chamber. In it, he even captured the order in which the various functionaries sat – 2nd the Lord Chancellor's seat, 3rd secretary's office, 4th the opposition benches, 5th the seats of the ministers, 6th the seats of the Lords, 7th barriers, 8th entries, 9th (behind a barrier) seats of visiting members of the House of Commons, listening to debates in the Lords. One could

ask just how realistic this sketch actually is. In order to know we would need an illustration of the Palace of Westminster from the period before the great fire of 1836. In fact such an illustration does exist, by the German-British book-seller Rudolf Ackermann, who founded a printing press and art school a year after Metternich's visit. His painting of the House of Lords is from the year 1808 and is so prominent that it was included in the *spartacus schoolnet*. It is really easy to recognize Metternich's sketch in this vivid picture.[12]

The combined information from the two diaries reveals, beyond admiration for the political, authentically experienced parliamentary culture, six enduring impressions: 1. Their visit to the City of London filled the visitors with admiration for wealth, diligence and British common sense and demonstrated where the money and commercial power came from to support the war against France, destroy French warships and conquer the colonial islands. 2. The opportunity for them, as members of the nobility, to make informal contact with the bourgeois middle classes and the lower classes seemed overwhelming. In Hyde Park freedom and class equality prevailed, without the need for a revolution as in France, and likewise in the taverns and theatres. 3. The theatre and music culture seemed to be of the highest international standard. The four travellers went to many performances conducted by the famous Haydn himself, whom they also met, including an accompaniment on the piano by the well-known Clementi. 4. Their visit to the fleet in Portsmouth harbour demonstrated the Empire's maritime power. The visitors were greeted personally by a British admiral and were able to board a warship equipped with canons – all in all a magnificent and imposing spectacle for them. 5. During a visit to the university city of Oxford they discovered where the

members of the first families of England's political elite cut their intellectual teeth. Oxford seemed to them like a 'veritable palace of knowledge'. 6. The splendid parklands in Stowe and Blenheim revealed, despite their magnificence, a sense of proportion in all things; something that had, in fact, been constructed and was ornamental seemed like a work of nature. Politics led by lawfulness, a modern economy, civilized dealings with the classes, art, military power, science and not least gardening culture – these were like enduring primal experiences that Metternich connected with England and to some extent adopted for his own way of life.

I have dealt with Metternich's original contact with England in such great detail, in order to show you that even at that time he already had a lively acquaintance with England's political culture, and this at a time when he was grateful for counter-images to the horrors of the French Revolution. As a student in Strasburg he had lived through the storming of the town hall in 1790. In Mainz in 1792 he had experienced sittings of the Jacobin Club. The first pamphlet he wrote expressed his great disgust at the hanging of Marie Antoinette, whose last prayer book he was later to preserve in his library. Under the protection of his father, the *Leitender Regent* in the Austrian province of Belgium, in 1792 in Brussels he had questioned Jacobin emissaries about the intentions of the Convent and Robespierre.

In his memoirs, written in old age, he still recalls:

> I was received by King George III with unusual kindness and affability. The relations between the Imperial Court and that of Great Britain were most confidential, and public feeling manifested itself in both countries with the same energy against the horrors of the French Revolution, as indeed their interests seemed to be identical. I thus paid a visit

to England under the happiest auspices, and my residence there brought me into contact with the most remarkable men of this great epoch. In this way I came to know William Pitt, Charles Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Charles Grey (later Lord Grey), and many other personages, who then and afterwards played great parts in the theatre of public life. I frequented the sittings of Parliament as much as possible, and followed with particular attention the famous trial of Mr. Hastings. I endeavoured to acquaint myself thoroughly with the mechanism of the Parliament, and this was not without use in my subsequent career.[13]

Metternich retained this interest in parliamentary life right up to the time of his exile in London, in 1848/9, when he had parliamentary business reported to him and even tried to influence it via his admirer and friend Disraeli. On 22 April 1848 he revealed the enduring influence of his experiences in England:

I have been here now for two times 24 hours and it feels as if the 34 years since I was last on English soil were only 34 days. This great land is, as before, characterized by its indestructible belief in the value of law, of order and of that freedom which, if it is really to exist, must rest on these foundations. And here, too, I rediscover my old friends and that hospitality which is not just mere words but a great feature of this nation.[14]

Constitutions and the English Model

So after that that 'hymn of praise' to the 'great land' it is out of the question to say that Metternich hated constitutions and venerated absolutism. On the contrary: the English constitution seemed to him to be the absolute ideal, in contrast to the abstract hot-house constitutions which, in his view, the French revolution-

aries had produced as if on a conveyor belt. On 12 April 1849 he wrote in a private letter from England:

> I am living here in a community that is not only ordered in the way required to protect life and property, but which also appreciates freedom so much that it is able to deflect with utmost determination the attacks with which lack of restraint threatens public order. So every day I come into contact with men who cannot understand the anarchy prevalent on the continent, which is not at all alien to me.[15]

I shall add a few more of Metternich's verdicts on English freedom and culture: 'Because in England – the most free land in the world because it is the most ordered – all customs follow certain rules, thus a bell is rung one hour before dinner.[16] Or:

> The concepts of freedom and order are so inseparable in the English spirit that the lowest stable boy would laugh at the supposed reformers of order if they wanted to preach freedom to him! What characterizes the English spirit above all is simple practical sense. This sense can be seen wherever you look. The English are only ever interested in the issue, for them the form is irrelevant.[17]

Metternich even defended the principle of representation. In 1844 the Austrian court wanted to abolish the traditional Hungarian constitution. Metternich condemned the absolutist regime. He described the Hungarian constitution as representative, comparable to the English constitution since the estates held more than the limited right to grant taxes. They were involved in the legislative process. Metternich explicitly distinguished between the Hungarian constitution and German models. I quote again: 'It [i.e. the Hungarian constitution] is not a constitution in the German sense, that is, one based on the estates, but a representative constitution founded

on the sovereignty of the king'. And when it came to plans to abolish it and to introduce an absolutist order he warned: 'Legal notions and forms that have survived for centuries cannot be extinguished by octroy'. It was, he thought, essential to strengthen the rights of the Hungarian Imperial Diet again. Procedures had to be – I quote – 'fundamentally reformed'. The experience of other empires such as England, France and even the United States of America should be made use of.

Why did he refuse to grant the Habsburg monarchy the same? During the revolutionary attempts in Italy in 1820 he was several times given urgent advice 'to give way to the spirit of the time', 'not to stand in the way of the nature of things'. Even Austria should be given a modern constitution. Metternich replied to this with scepticism and irony: 'Yes, but what to do! Good God! To grant Germany a good American constitution within three weeks, and thus give an example to Austria and force the neighbours to follow suit?' Without doubt, Metternich maintained, people thought this to be very easy for Austria. 'And this with eight or ten different nations all of which have their own particular language and hate each other'. Here it is that he reveals the deeper reasons for his objections: 'The constitutional process in Austria would result inevitably in a fight of all nations against each other'. Metternich therefore did not criticize the principle of representation in general, but only in cases where it seemed unsuitable to him. In his eyes it was unsuitable as soon as it caused disturbance. He expected a war between the different nationalities. He took Hungary as an example: Lajos Kossuth wanted to **magyarize** Hungary, he intended to make Hungarian the official language. For Metternich this amounted to 'the repression of other nationalities from which the population of this kingdom is also formed'. Applied to

the monarchy as a whole this would mean to germanize it. Such proposals he resolutely condemned.

I would like to frame the problem in a fundamental way: Modern thinking combines the sovereignty of the people with the state or to be more precise with the nation. This is regarded as inevitable in the course of history. For Austria it meant this: Each nationality was induced to demand its own state. Since, however, these individual national states did not exist, they had to be created. Boundaries had to be drawn on the map. This meant war, a civil war of the nationalities. And, in addition, there was one underlying principle: if possible each state should be homogeneous. This meant: Each new national state produced its own minority. In the case of Hungary these were the Slovaks, the Croats, the Czechs, the Slovenes and the Germans – and what about the Jews? They were denied the status of a nationality.

I said that each new national state produced its own minority which counted for less. The political emancipation of one nation as a state enhanced the status of the majority and reduced the others to the state of a minority.

I shall now turn to the crucial argument why, according to Metternich, a representative constitution was unsuited to the whole of the monarchy. For him this meant that in the central parliament one would have to create priorities among the nationalities. In this respect his thinking was similar to the way a political scientist would think about how politics worked best. It was impossible to give all nationalities a share in the government; it was impossible that all languages could be regarded as official languages, etc. Logically, he thought, it was impossible to create a ranking system among the nationalities since, in principle, they all had equal rights.

Joseph II had tried to create ranks according to priority, he had germanized and inevitably had failed.

When I put this thesis to a British colleague, she was reminded of British policy in India; that is, of attempts made there, for the same reasons, to set up a central parliament. Clearly it is not a question of doctrine, but of practicability – to put it in an old-fashioned way: of political wisdom.

Complementary Statehood

These parallels between the two empires impressed themselves on Metternich to such an extent that he felt an affinity with British policy while he was repelled by the French centralistic one based on the model of the Napoleonic universal monarchy. The Habsburg monarchy, however, was not an absolutist empire. It represented what Georg Schmidt has called complementary statehood. To illustrate this: Today's European union also embodies complementary statehood since the Union as a whole represents a stately order, while at the same time it consists of individual state units in their own right which are capable of political action. In Metternich's language the European Union would not and should not be a national state in the same way as the British Empire, the Tsarist Empire or the Ottoman Empire were not nation states. It would be classified as an empire.

The Habsburg Empire was made up of older historical orders. Each order represented legal rights and protected the life, properties and 'liberties' of its members. The Bohemians, the Hungarians and the German hereditary territories could lay claim to older historical rights. These rights limited the rights of the head of the empire. The Habsburg monarchy therefore was no absolute monarchy. But only the institution of the monar-

chy could provide the bond that held the empire together because no nationality was entitled to do this. And the different parts wanted the monarchy in order to be protected against each other. Metternich also recognised this historical quality in the British constitution. He distinguished between an abstract Charter as the product of constitutionalism and the grown constitution as the product of history. In a private letter he stated:

> England alone has a Constitution, of which the Magna Charta is but a subordinate element. The English Constitution is the work of centuries, and, moreover, streams of blood and anarchy of every kind supplied the means. Social order ever progresses in this way; it cannot be otherwise, since it is the law of nature.[18]

In 1847 he warned against a centralized Prussian state constitution: 'I have nothing against constitutions; I respect the good ones and pity the state that has a bad one, i.e. one that does not suit it. But constitutionalism can go to hell; it lives only by deception'. And he went on, to clarify, that he hated words that ended in 'ism', because this suffix made them into party concepts no longer adequate for practical description – like Communitas and Communism, Societas and Socialism, Pietas and Pietism, so too constitution and constitutionalism.[19]

The Metternich Generation and the European Nobility
But it is not just the affinity of historical tradition that should be mentioned: the aristocracies were also interconnected, seeing themselves as a European community beyond national boundaries. The nobility was the last estate to be nationalized. I like to talk of a "Metternich generation" that was still characterized by common

values and experiences. I mean those born around 1770. In principle Napoleon, the great antipode, was also one of them. This generation was formed by the European Enlightenment, a transnational cosmopolitanism, connection with the old-European legal system, which was understood not only as a feudal system of repression but as a legal system which also granted rights to the less powerful. This is how the Holy Roman Empire is described in modern German research on the early modern period. I shall just give you a few representatives of this "Metternich generation" with the years of their birth:

1762 George IV

1766 Joseph Graf Radetzky, Charles Macintosh

1767 Wilhelm von Humboldt, August Wilhelm Schlegel

1768 Kaiser Franz

1769 Napoleon, **Castlereagh**, **Wellington**, Alexander von Humboldt, Ernst Moritz Arndt, **Thomas Lawrence**

1770 King Frederick William III of Prussia, Adam Czartoryski, Robert Banks Jenkinson second Earl of Liverpool, George Canning, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, Ludwig van Beethoven

1771 Archduke Karl of Austria, the first to defeat Napoleon in battle, the younger brother of Kaiser Franz; also Robert Owen and Walter Scott

1772 Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis

1773 Metternich, Louis Philippe of France, Ludwig Tieck

1775 Jane Austen, Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling

1776 Queen Luise of Prussia

1777 Tsar Alexander I

Metternich's British kindred spirits, formed by the same generational experience, were the politicians Wellington and Castlereagh in particular, and the artist

Lawrence – all three born in 1769, that is, only four years older than Metternich. It was on this basis – rejection of revolution and common European norms – that he conducted his policy of reconstruction from 1814 onwards – he deliberately said reconstruction, not restoration. It is easy to forget that the principles of this policy were initially also supported by the British.

The communality was particularly evident in Metternich's relationship with George IV. The Chancellor had already met the Prince of Wales, later George IV, in 1794, as he recalled: 'Our relations, which started at that time, lasted throughout the prince's whole life […]. He developed a great liking for me'.[20] This connection really did continue, for Metternich appealed to the Prince Regent when the formation of the German Confederation had reached a particularly critical phase: in 1819 and 1820. Via his Hanoverian Minister, Graf Münster, the Prince Regent was fully informed about all the measures intended to control and discipline the press, political associations and oppositional *Landtage*. Metternich considered this policy of so-called *Demagogenverfolgungen* to be part of the whole network of Austrian-British principles. These were supposed to complete the work of peace that had started in the negotiations between 1813 and 1815. He considered the year 1815 to be the beginning of a disastrous epoch (une 'époque désastreuse').[21] In his principles he followed the experience he wrote down after passing heaps of dead and wounded as he followed Napoleon's and Allied troops to Paris: 'War is an evil thing. It besmirches everything, even our thinking. That is why I am working for peace, despite the protests from idiots and fools. I would like to have a quick and good peace'.[22]

Until Castlereagh's death Metternich considered himself to be in agreement with British policy. In 1821 he

reported to Kaiser Franz: 'Attachment to your Majesty's person and the whole Austrian system pervades every idea of the King. […] Lord Londonderry [i. e. Castlereagh] encourages his ideas'.[23]

Just how little Metternich was basically a traditionalist and legitimist is shown by the way he assessed the English nobility. He made a distinction between the hereditary peers and the life peers. I quote: 'It is easy to associate the concept of the nobility with the words English aristocracy. This is not quite right. The basis of the English aristocracy lies not in this concept, but in that of great possessions', so that 'someone who is bourgeois today can tomorrow be elevated to the ranks of the high nobility'.[24] 'The titles are the equivalent of offices, and through his achievements anyone can pave the way to them'.[25] Metternich, who himself was upwardly mobile within the class of the nobility – from Count to Prince – , accepted a positively modern concept of nobility, derived from the bourgeois principles of achievement and service, and which by no means defended categorization in terms of birth status.

English Governmental Policy and Parties

In the British political system the King had relatively little direct political influence. Nonetheless Metternich tried, via the King, to influence the innermost aspects of government formation and to prevent the appointment of ministers he did not like. The fact that in the long run this did not succeed is demonstrated by Palmerston, certainly the Chancellor's most powerful antipode. Metternich observed that towards the European public Palmerston tried to depict him as a backward-looking reactionary while the Foreign Secretary encouraged national uprisings and liberation movements on the Continent.

It is fascinating to see how objectively and differentiatedly Metternich described the situation and how cleverly he analyzed the contradictions in British policy. For a start, he didn't simply side with the supposed 'good guys', the Tories. In an instruction to the envoy in London he said:

> I have established quite clearly that the designations Tories and Whigs have ceased to embody a definable idea. When I think about what these parties are in practice I find that anyone who says "Tory", says "conservative", while the designation "Whig" doesn't work at all, given that these are divided into Conservatives and radical reformers. In this respect the Tories have a moral advantage over their opponents, but this advantage has diminished considerably through Toryism being split into moderates and ultras. If you are looking for the difference between the opinions of a moderate Tory and a conservative Whig that is, in my opinion, a useless task'. The difference between the two parties was 'not in what they wanted, but in the way in which they reached their objective.[26]

These are not the words of a doctrinaire ideologue.

Conflict emerged, however, when from 1830 Palmerston started to influence the fate of international politics. Metternich even called him the mouthpiece of the revolutionary propaganda that spoke up for the Greek uprising and the fight for independence in the Spanish colonies.[27] Very perceptively, he spotted a contradiction between domestic and foreign policy. At home the Tories and Whigs both operated as conservatively as each other.

> In complete agreement with Parliament the government has just taken powerful measures to maintain order in Ireland. Government and parliament are right; but they were wrong when at that time [that was in the Metternich era] they were offended by the

> governments on the Continent when these [that is, the continental governments] passed resolutions to secure the welfare of the public. What is right and proper cannot be restricted by geographical boundaries and the sentence "Everything for me and nothing for you" is wrong in principle.[28]

English policy under Palmerston, he said, was conservative 'for home consumption' and revolutionary 'for exportation', a system that was better suited to English industry than to English politics[29] and which destroyed European international law. He blamed Palmerston for this and also disclosed the deeper reasons for it: 'English policy has become purely objective-related. It is Lord Palmerston who has been the most prominent representative of this dubious policy'.[30] It is perhaps significant that Palmerston, born 1784, who had not experienced the revolution as a child, no longer belonged to the old-European 'Metternich generation'. The latter continued to embody 'European law with pre-national character', the 'public law of Europe'. The new doctrine, implemented by Palmerston and then by Cavour and Bismarck, was the international law of competing national states – inter nationes! – as Anselm Doering-Manteuffel has demonstrated very well.

Nonetheless, his principal opponent visited him straightaway on his arrival in exile. It must have given Metternich great satisfaction to have caught Palmerston out in an inconsistency, where Palmerston himself became the victim of his own ambivalent policy. How important this was to Metternich is demonstrated by a newspaper article preserved amongst the documents he left, which illustrates a process that was embarrassing to Palmerston. The Chancellor considered this article to be so important that he cut it out of the newspaper and underlined various parts in typical fashion. The extract

ended up in the diary of his wife Melanie! The article reproduces a letter from Palmerston to the Italian revolutionary leader Daniele Manin. In 1848 Manin had called for a Venetian republic independent of Austria. In April 1849 Palmerston expressed the British government's keen interest in the great self-sacrifice on the part of the people of Venice. But in spite of this he denied Manin's request that he recognise Venice's independence, even though this would have been largely in line with Palmerston's policy. The Foreign Secretary's argument against it was this: Britain had been part of the Vienna treaties of 1815 and had recognised Venice as part of the Austrian empire. This could only be changed with the approval of the Austrian government. The government of Venice should, he said, please come to an arrangement with the Austrian authorities 'so that the rule of the Austrian Emperor is re-established in this city as soon as possible without further collision'. I must say that I, like Metternich, was quite surprised to find that in the revolutionary situation on the continent Palmerston had recourse, of all things, to European international law and the Vienna Congress Act of 1815 connected with this. After all, all the revolutionaries on the continent, including the Germans, were about to revise this basis.

Press and Public Opinion

Metternich is regarded as a champion of press censorship and an enemy of public opinion if derived from journalists. Here too the situation becomes more complicated if we consider what the Chancellor **had** to do and what he **wanted** to do. He felt compelled to take the measures on the Continent, especially in the Habsburg monarchy and the German Confederation, because at the latest since the revolutionary uprisings in southern

Europe from 1820 he feared that the French Revolution would erupt again, or more precisely, would carry on. The Chancellor kept a note of politically motivated assassination attempts. So far there has been no academic study on this topic – how many assassination attempts, and where, were carried out after 1815 in Europe, particularly between 1819 and 1825, and whether there were motivating models and communications. There was, for example, a successful assassination attempt on the English Prime Minister Spencer Perceval in 1812, an unsuccessful one on Wellington on 2 March 1818, a successful attempt on 13 February 1820 on the Bourbon crown prince, the Duc de Berry, in front of the Paris opera, and a week later with the Cato Street conspiracy an attempt failed to murder the entire British cabinet.

Metternich did not believe naively in a centrally organized conspiracy, but recognized the political strategy of deliberately targeting crowned heads and thereby destabilizing the system in places where it was impossible to get a revolution going and also, in general, of spreading fear amongst the public. In March 1819 the theology student Carl Sand wanted to sacrifice himself by an assassination attempt on a poet who was in the service of Russia. He wanted to commit a national act of heroism. And this is also how the public responded. This is where the problem of press freedom lay. Metternich commented:

> The Liberals have to some extent behaved badly in this matter and the principle of press freedom is hardly well defended by men who respond to their literary adversaries with stabs in the back. It appears, at least, that the only freedom they want is the one that suits them.

In England he discovered that free public opinion could develop and he made full use of the newspapers, many of which he subscribed to. In exile he even joined the public discussion on the opinion market. In a private letter to this daughter Leontine he betrayed what he was up to in terms of press policy behind the scenes. I should like to give you the text in full as it gives a short and sweet summary of the essentials.

> The situation creates for me the role of the champion of reason (I can find no other expression for it), and from this a fact emerges which, I believe, is without example in the annals of England. The first organs of what we call public opinion, and which exert influence on it, the great daily newspapers and periodicals, have put themselves at my disposal and it suffices to read them in order to see in the Times and particularly the Morning Chronicle a complete change in views on the most importance issues. I am sending you a copy of the Quarterly Review, the most important periodical, which deserves a place in every library. There you will find two articles, one of them "Austria and Germany" was dictated by me, the other, which deals with the affairs in Italy, was written under my influence. From this you will be convinced that in this country the truth is establishing itself. The *Spectateur* was an attempt that I brought to the public but which was destined to last no longer than a rocket, because a publication written in French is too expensive.[31]

I haven't got time here to describe the partners who gave Metternich access to the British press. This is a fascinating topic. For he became friends with historians and journalists who interviewed him in the modern sense. These texts still exist and I will be dealing with them in the forthcoming biography.

The Link between Traditionality and Modernity,
and its Limits

In conclusion, I should like to look at the connection between traditionality and modernity and the limits of what Metternich dared to change instead of just defending the status quo. The question that occupies me is this: to what extent could Metternich cope with the changes of modernity, he, the *Reichsgraf* from the Mosel, the feudal lord, the noble who rose to become a prince, the supposed 'coach-driver of Europe', the early industrial entrepreneur, owner of an iron foundry in Bohemia with 400 workers and a workers' housing estate, inspired by social issues, a man who admired advanced English technology and used it as a yardstick for the machines used in his works?

There is one touchstone that seems to reveal his limits: his attitude to British electoral reform in 1832, when England must have been on the brink of revolution. The burning question, for him as well, must have been: What reforms would prevent a revolution? When the government participated actively in the reform, he feared ruin. 'I consider England to be as good as lost'.[32] And his comment on the electoral reform of 1832 was:

> Lord Grey, an old reformer, finally put the thing in motion from the top down; since then England is exposed to ruin and further proof has been delivered to the world that states only go to ruin through the guilt of the governments. As long as the highest authority remains pure and firm, the buzzing remains in the lower regions; once the upper tier starts moving, then the counter-balance disappears and the buildings either collapse in on themselves or else fall on their neighbours.[33]

In his view, the state had to retain the authority to act against the movement. He was wrong in his diagnosis. He failed to recognise the opportunity of actively steer-

ing the movement, thereby removing its revolutionary power. Basically, he was constrained by the strategies of the Habsburg Monarchy. And these he described to his mistress Dorothea von Lieven in October 1820. This happened in the context of the outbreak of revolution in Naples:

> My life has fallen at a hateful time. I have come into the world either too early or too late. Now, I do not feel comfortable; earlier, I should have enjoyed the time; later, I should have helped to build it up again; today I have to give my life to prop up the mouldering edifice. I should have been born in 1900, and I should have had the twentieth century before me.[34]

This led him to the resigned conclusion: 'What I have done so far was negative. I have merely fought against evil, rather than doing something good'.[35]

We often forget here how strong the power of internal resistance was, starting with the Kaiser, via various archdukes, right up to the man who was omnipotent in internal affairs, and who lorded it over the finances, Graf Kolowrat. This makes Metternich's willingness to make decisions given the approaching revolution of 1848, when new scope for manoeuvre seemed to be opening up, all the more surprising. Two weeks before his resignation he declared:

> Everyone wants something to happen. But the house is too old and in need of too much repair for it to be possible to open up doors and windows in the walls. We would have to build something new. I am not lacking in ideas for this, but have not the power or the time.

Anyone interested in Metternich and Britain can study at least two things: firstly he or she will learn that Metternich orientated his political judgements to the particular situation that prevailed. You cannot understand him if you just look, point by point, at the princi-

ples he expressed. You always have to factor in that in one and the same issue he reached various judgements depending on which political situation he had in mind and which long-term consequences he reckoned with. So we must make the effort not just to understand his judgement in each case, but also the issue that was part of it. For example: in 1820 was there really a catastrophic scenario in Europe of political terrorism or was there just either exaggerated propaganda or subjective persecution complex? Secondly, so far the question has never been asked whether, given his long life, Metternich evolved in his judgements, because his historical knowledge and political understanding had grown. Of course, he himself makes it difficult for us because he claims never to have changed his principles and apart from that never to have been wrong. I don't believe him in this. Only the facts can help us here.

Metternich chose Königswart near Karlsbad in Bohemia, in the present-day Czech Republic, as his retirement home. He said of himself that the Rhine was flowing in his veins. With the emperor and at conferences of the German Confederation he spoke German. His last wife was Hungarian. He corresponded with his wife and his children in French. He would have liked to be an Englishman and would have liked to live in Italy because of the warmer climate and its ancient culture. This is a state of mind which was possible in the supranational empires of Old Europe. It is my opinion that we should not analyze his transitional period solely against the background of the emerging nation states. Old Europe persisted for a long time. I think I have shown that the new principles such as the combination of representation, nationality and the concern for one's "own" state had a great potential for creating unrest. It would be ahistorical to ignore this. I'm exaggerating my

thesis a bit: The constitutional thinking of the nineteenth century linked nationality and self-determination to the soil, to the territory, and required frontiers. This idea created the explosive force, the dynamite of the century. Metternich recognized this explosive force. He looked for ways out, without success. His highest political aim was not the nation, but an order that secured peace, not only on the international level, but also within the states. This included participation.

The question is whether nation-building in the 19th century included more than just the collateral damage of progress. In the end wasn't Metternich, the old European, more farsighted and progressive in his fears about the threatened collapse of a Europe of national states than his supposedly more progressive liberal and democratic opponents?

Translated by Jane Rafferty (GHIL)

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[1] Cf. Richard von Metternich (ed.), *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren* (hereafter NP), 8 vols (Vienna, 1880-84), vol. 1, pp. 340 and 345 (English translation, Metternich, *Memoirs of Prince Metternich 1773-1835*, 5 vols (London 1880-82), vol.1, pp. 340 and 347), emphases W.S.

[2] This is how the text on the cover of the exhibition catalogue describes the painter. Cassandra Albinson, Peter Funnell and Lucy Peltz (eds), *Thomas Lawrence: Regency Power and Brilliance* (London, 2010).

[3] Remarkably, the catalogue does not mention Lawrence's painting of Metternich.

[4] Emil Mika (introd.), *Geist und Herz verbündet. Metternichs Briefe an die Gräfin Lieven* (Vienna, 1942), pp. 127f.

[5] Ibid., p. 136.

[6] Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Metternich. Der Staatsmann und der Mensch*, 2 vols (Munich, 1925, reprint 1954; vol. 3 Munich, 1954); Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored. Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (London, 1957; German edn Düsseldorf, Vienna 1962); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford, 1994); Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Vom Wiener Kongress zur Pariser Konferenz. England, die deutsche Frage und das Mächtesystem 1815-1866 (*Göttingen, 1991*)*; Wolfram Pyta (ed.), *Das europäische Mächtekonzert. Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongreß 1815 bis zum Krimkrieg 1853* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2009); Matthias Schulz, *Normen und Praxis. Das Europäische Konzert der Großmächte als Sicherheitsrat 1815-1860* (Munich, 2009).

[7] Paul Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil über die politischen Verhältnisse Englands* (Diss. Bern, Horn, Vienna, 1954); Eva-Renate Rohl, *Metternich und England. Studien zum Urteil des Staatskanzlers über eine konstitutionelle Monarchie*, typescript Diss., University of Vienna 1967; Martin Sadek, *Metternichs publizistische und pressepolitische Betätigung im Exil (1848-1852)*, typescript Diss., University of Vienna 1968. Andrea Stahl's Munich Dissertation

on this topic, 'Metternich and Wellington', will be published shortly.

[8] All opinions from: Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil* (as note 7).

[9] Metternich to Lieven 21.06.1819, National Archive Prague, Acta Clementina, RAM-AC 6, C 19.4, fol. 46 f., emphases W.S.

[10] RAM-AC 13, Krt. 1, Fasz. 25; cf. Rohl, *Metternich und England* (as note 7), p. 3, emphases W.S.

[11] Christian de Liedekerke Beaufort (ed.), *Le Comte Hilarion. Souvenirs et Biographie du premier comte de Liedekerke Beaufort*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1968); the notes on the journey to England are on pp. 190-252 ('Voyage en Angleterre de M. le vicomte Desandrouin avec MM. les comtes de Metternich fils et M. le comte de Liedekerke Beaufort, son gendre'). Without the valuable help of my colleague Tim Blanning I would have felt far less secure in interpreting Metternich's sketch of Parliament - many thanks!

[12] Cf. http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Plords.htm (08.07.2012)

[13] NP, vol. 1, pp. 18f (in the English translation vol. 1, p. 16).

[14] Metternich 22.04.1848 to Leontine, NP, vol. 8, p.148.

[15] Ibid., p. 207.

[16] Metternich 20.12.1848, NP vol. 8, p. 199.

[17] Metternich 02.05.1849 to Leontine, NP vol. 8, p. 217 f.

[18] Metternich, *Memoirs* (as note 1), vol. 3, p. 366.

[19] Metternich 10.02.1847 to Canitz, NP vol. 7, p. 366.

[20] Ibid., p.19.

[21] NP, vol. 3, p. 285.

[22] Maria Ullrichová (ed.), Clemens Metternich – Wilhelmine von Sagan. Ein Briefwechsel 1813-1815 (Graz, Cologne 1966), p. 232. The original text: 'C'est une vilaine chose que la guerre! Elle salit tout; jusqu'à l'imagination et je tiens beaucoup à ce que cela ne m'arriva pas. C'est pour cela que je travaille malgré les cris des sots et des fous, à la paix: – je la veux vite et bonne'. Cf.: 'La route est si remplie de chevaux morts et d'horreurs que j'aurais voulu aller plus vite encore. Ce spectacle continuel de destruction est effroyable et il me fait mal au coeur', ibid., p. 231.

[23] Metternich 24.10.1821 to Kaiser Franz, NP, vol. 3, p. 491 (in the English translation vol. 3, p. 556).

[24] Metternich 28.02.1849 to Schwarzenberg, NP, vol. 8, p. 477.

[25] Metternich 07.09.1848 to Leontine, NP, vol. 8, p. 180.

[26] Anderegg quotes from the instructions to Dietrichstein, 21.12.1845; Metternich later develops identical ideas on 01.08.1852 in a letter to Graf Buol, NP, vol. 8, pp. 321 f.

[27] Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil* (as note 7), p. 33.

[28] Metternich 22.07.1848 to Leontine, NP, vol. 8, p. 172.

[29] Metternich 24.03.1857 to Graf Buol, NP, vol. 8, p. 395; cf. also Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil* (as note 7), p. 41.

[30] Metternich 01.08.1852 to Graf Buol : 'La politique anglaise est devenu simplement utilitare. C'est Lord Palmerston qui a été le représentant le plus avancé de cette politique douteuse', NP, vol. 8, p. 322.

[31] Metternich 17.01.1849 to Leontine, NP, vol. 8, pp. 205f.

[32] 'Je regard l'Angleterre comme perdue' – instruction 09.05.1836 to Hummelauer, from Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil* (as note 7), p. 47.

[33] Viktor Bibl, *Metternich in neuer Beleuchtung. Sein geheimer Briefwechsel mit dem bayrischen Staatsminister Wrede* (Vienna, 1928), 27.05.1832, p. 318; cf. also Anderegg, *Metternichs Urteil* (as note 7), pp. 46f.

[34] NP, vol. 3, p. 348 (in the English translation vol. 3, pp. 394f.).

[35] 15.12.1819, NP, vol. 3, p. 299.

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