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Revolution and Reconstruction: The Path of Power from the Italian Campaign to the Congress of Vienna (1796-1815)

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A Dio, che ha sempre illuminato il mio cammino.

Ai quattro pilastri della mia vita, coloro che mi hanno reso ciò che sono e che mi hanno insegnato la rettitudine morale: mio padre Giovanni, mia madre Alessandra, mia nonna Luigina, e mio nonno Giuseppe, che mi guarda da lassù.

Ai miei fratelli Luigi e Alessandro, fuochi inestinguibili per sempre ardenti nel mio cuore.

Ai miei amici, straordinariamente pazienti per aver avuto a che fare con me.

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INTRODUCTION

Quid est veritas[1]*?* When dealing with the history of Power it is inevitable to incur into stark contrasts like darkness and light, injustice and justice, and finally, lies and truth; however, such contrasts are the extremes of an interval within which an indefinite grey, the true master of Power, dominates. The quest for Power has been a founding characteristic of the human being, craving for it and worn down by its absence. Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, married bishop, key player in the establishment of the French Revolution, diplomat and minister under the French Empire, and mastermind of the Congress of Vienna, famously expressed the desire for Power in one of his most popular quotes: "Power wears down those who do not have it". Power is the ability of someone to influence the actions, behaviour, decisions of someone else. In France, from the end of the XVIII to the beginning of the XIX century, Power followed an intricate and compelling path. The historical period analysed is from 1796 to 1815, but with some references to the reigns of Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis Philippe, and then the empire of Napoleon III. The question posed is about how the French Revolution impacted France and Europe in general, what was the reaction of the latter, and how the conflict ended. The frame, apart from the historical interest of the topic covered, is Power: where it was, who held it, how it was managed, how it was effective. The key concepts that help defining and providing such analysis of Power are legitimacy and fear; together with a view of the course of historical events, in particular wars, (secret) treaties, congresses.

The first part considered is focused on the Italian campaign of the French army of 1796-7. Such campaign contained the premonitory signs of XX century European history. The brilliant campaigns conducted in Italy by the French army demonstrated the greatness and superiority of a new but also unscrupulous army that was not inclined to absolute compliance with the conditions of war. In particular, the elite generals commanding the troops stood out in history as glorious leaders, first and foremost Napoleon Bonaparte. In constant dialogue with the Directorate, General Bonaparte issued a democratic constitution to the indivisible Cisalpine Republic, which had become a twin state of revolutionary France (the Directorate was the governing committee of France's First Republic from 1795 to 1799, made up of five members; it was later replaced by the

[1] Evangelium Secundum Ioannem, 18:38, Nova Vulgata 1979.

Consulate). The point is that this constitution was a sophisticated architecture behind which the young general retained Power. Moreover, the numerous victories reported by Bonaparte made his person more and more majestic and imposing, accentuated by the revolutionary propaganda. The political landscape of Europe was definitively altered using ideology by France, which, in pursuit of its own interests, did not hesitate to treat the countries liberated by the pre-existing governments as territories to be exchanged and bartered: prevailing *raison d'état*. The French ideology was the springboard for Napoleon himself, laying the foundations for him to become Napoleon instead of Bonaparte. While Bonaparte, his last name, was used while he was a general, Napoleon, his first name, recalls the custom of European rulers being called by name: for instance, Alexander I, Tsar of Russia, is not famous and known as *Romanov*, but as *Alexander.*

The second part analysed concerns the Congress of Vienna. It was the reconstruction of the previous order, the calm in this case after the storm. Thanks to the good will of some men, Talleyrand *in primis*, it represented the intention of the European statesmen to put an end to an almost continuous war situation lasting just under twenty-five years. Apart from being one of the most luxurious events of its century, the Congress of Vienna restored a balance among powers and those powers returned to be conservative. It was the triumph of what Ferrero calls the "constructive spirit", i.e., an intention to restore, rebuild, reconstruct, with the aim of setting the ground for a long-lasting peace that would allow for prosperity. In this second chapter the ways of thinking and of reasoning of kings, plenipotentiaries, princes, are described, with the aim of showing the differing interests of the nations and how such interests affected the international arena of that time. Moreover, a deep focus on the negotiations has been provided to fully describe the mechanisms and timing of diplomacy. The Congress of Vienna turned out to be a moment of lucidity and common agreement between the brightest political minds of the time, aimed at achieving timeless serenity.

The third chapter focuses on the concepts of fear and legitimacy. Fear has been a determinant factor in the organization of Power under the Revolution and under the Napoleonic Empire. The fear of losing power affected the actions of those wielding it, which in turn impacted its subjects. Widespread fear was caused from rulers that were not backed by the principles of legitimacy. Indeed, lacking legitimacy, those governments showed their strength, their prowess, and wanted to demonstrate that they could do the

undoable, so that such things could replace a missing legitimacy. The legitimacy that was questioned at the beginning of the Revolution was the aristo-monarchic one, bounded with the hereditary principle. The replacing legitimacy, in this case, a combination of the democratic and elective principles, had severe impacts on the French and European orders, since it was based on an imposed freedom. The text delves deep into the life of legitimacy, with the concept of pre-legitimacy, and situations of quasi-legitimacy are considered.

CHAPTER 1: WAR IN ITALY—A TOOL FOR GLORY

A rising general in the fog of war: the young Napoleon

1Napoleon in the French Alps

Napoleon was ambitious, and this is common knowledge. However, he was also smart and prudent: he knew that any mistake could have been fatal to him. It is true, indeed, that when dealing with the Italian campaign, beginning with the conquest of Ceva (April 17th, 1796), Bonaparte was executing orders. For this very reason, and for following meticulously the given orders, he was determined to conquer Ceva without using siege artillery, exactly as the Directorate mandated him to do. It was when, instead, the Directorate left Bonaparte freedom of movement and of operation, that he could manifest his proverbial brightness. Indeed, after having taken Ceva, in stark contrast with the tactics of the XVIII centuries masters, such as Frederick II, the Marshal of Saxony, or the Marshal of Millebois, which would suggest to firmly settle in Ceva, Bonaparte penetrated in the enemy's territory. This is clearly the decision of an ambitious general. However, the French army, extending the lines of communication, was getting weaker, while on the other side the Piedmontese army was reinforcing. Despite this fact, on the 28th of April, Turin declared the intention to negotiate a separate peace with France. The reasons of this were political, not strategic on the military side.

There is in fact proof of the politics laying beneath. During the winter of 1795-6, two or three months before Bonaparte was nominated head of the army, France offered Lombardy to Piedmont, in exchange for Nice and Savoy and an alliance. This proposal was probably connected to the agreements for the armistice that were done for a separate peace. Vittorio Amedeo III, King of Sardinia and Duke of Savoy, declined these agreements, but in Turin there was a strong party in favour of them. The Minister of

England in Turin, John Hampden-Trevor, explained that if Austria, allied with Turin, would not consistently help Turin, Piedmont will fall. This letter, from Mr. Trevor to his respective colleague in Vienna, is dated 6th February 1796, well before the victory of Bonaparte. In fact, from a report sent to Trevor about what Bonaparte said to Fairpoult, the Minister of France in Genoa, it is possible to read: "Although I knew that there was a strong, pro-peace party in Turin, I could never have supposed that it would dare to push the king to accept them"[2]. To be more precise, when the King Vittorio Amedeo III signed the armistice, the French army was close to being surprised with no ammunitions nor supplies.

The Revolution fought for the (not asked) freedom of the peoples against compelling kingdoms, moving toward an objective far from being revolutionary: to build a France recalling the ancient *limes* of the Roman Gaul. This was the continuum of the dream of the French monarchy about the future of the kingdom. The main limitation to this dream was the resistance manifested by the Germanic States, who strenuously opposed the dismemberment of the Holy Roman Empire, the latter being a fundamental condition for the success of the French plan. In order to achieve its goal, France was moved from the inescapable power that moves the Man: the spirit of adventure. The spirit of adventure causes contempt for what He has, while fear of losing it, disgust for the present, dread for the future. The spirit of adventure blinds His fears and inflames His uncertainties, and, although with different intensities, it is present in all humans. Indeed, the life of the man is in fact a small-scale adventure, containing a little amount of spirit of adventure. In a period when this spirit awakes simultaneously in numerous men, such as the Revolution, it is the occasion for the most determined individuals to rise. These individuals share some common features: charismatic, bright, careful to details, industrious, bloody determined, inevitably ruthless. The Revolution has been thus one of the greatest adventures of humanity, a ladder for the most ambitious, capable, and ruthless individuals to reach power. The XVIII century was still an aristocratic century, based on the generation-to-generation transmission of jobs and social functions. This factor had both a negative and a positive aspect. The first was that the hereditary transmission often crystalized jobs and social functions, making them egoistical and corrupt; on the positive side, jobs and social functions were perfectionated, thanks to the family accumulation of

[2] Avventura, G. Ferrero, p. 28.

experience and of efforts. Through this aristocratic vision present in the XVIII century, the doctrine of war and peace of the time revealed that war is evil, because it is against the divine commandment of not killing; however, it is a necessary evil, under special circumstances. Indeed, when two states affirm contradictory claims, the conflict cannot be solved through reason, because there is no law nor judge. However, war is still evil, and as such it shall be reduced to the bare minimum. It is crucial for them to be rare, short, and human, without exaggerations from the winner nor resentment from the loser, always remembering that victory is temporary. The fall of the hereditary monarchy, that began the 14th of July 1789 with the storming of the Bastille and terminated on the 10th of August 1792 with the insurrection at the Tuileries Palace, annihilated the families and groups of families that were letting grow and improve the political, diplomatic, and military traditions of France through the hereditary mechanism. Then, the four regimes that raised from 1792 to 1814 needed rapid and great successes, capable of impressing allies, enemies, and of convincing of their strength and might. The consequences were an endless war situation and a constant struggle to find peace. Indeed, given that France was not convinced of the right of statesmen to govern, the Committee of Public Safety first, and the Directorate later, were forced to demonstrate their capacity of doing miracles impossible for the monarchy. For this reason, the Public Health Committee and the Directorate made strategic plans and did politics in a complex and articulated way, vaster and more structured than the ones of the *Ancien Régime*, but faster, because they lacked time.

The peace crafted by the Directorate was a direct consequence of this reasoning. In fact, to demonstrate to France the capacity to do the undoable, the Directorate sent the army to look for a "glorious and lasting peace"[3], a concept intrinsically contradictory considering the implications of glorious (something that can exalt, glorify) and lasting (something that implies giving a solution to the conflict that is acceptable to the losing party). The improvise weakness of Piedmont gave to the spirit of adventure a first success. Chaos in the continent would be a consequence of this.

After having conquered Ceva, the Directorate mandated the Head of the Army in Italy to move towards Milan, defeat the enemies, and invade Lombardy. The Head of the Army in Italy, Bonaparte, did exactly that. However, in line with the dream of young

[3] Ibidem, p. 42.

French generals to conquer Germany through Italy, Bonaparte's intention was to make profit of the Italian campaign exactly with the goal of arriving in Germany. Italy was supposed to be just a corridor for Germany. With the difficulties encountered due to the defence of Johann Peter Beaulieu, a valid Austrian general, that organized lines of resistance based on three affluents of the Po River, respectively Agogna, Terdoppio, and Ticino, it is plausible that at a certain point, around May 6th, Bonaparte thought about abandoning the undertaking. But the brightness and readiness of mind of Bonaparte saved him: the idea was to go with forced march to Piacenza, in this way not leaving time for Beaulieu to confront on the field. On one side, there was an old expert of the war, anchored to the past concepts of war making and tactics; on the other side, a new, brilliant fresh mind with innovation, ruthless in going through Piacenza, a city belonging to the neutral Duchy of Parma. Moreover, Bonaparte imposed a (heavy) tariff of two million lire, and of gargantuan amounts of horses, grain, oatmeal, and oxen. As soon as Bonaparte went through the Po at Piacenza, the Austrian army was now surrounded by a stronger army, and in the middle of three frontiers: the Swiss, the Piedmontese, and the Venetian. The only way to escape was in turn to violate the rules, and that's what Beaulieu did by passing through the neutral Serenissima to reach Tyrol. In the end, on May 15th, Austria lost the possession over Lombardy except for Milan and Mantua. The same day the plenipotentiaries of the king of Piedmont were signing in Paris the peace treaty with France giving Nice and Savoy with no compensation. However, it is worth noting that when it was proposed to Vittorio Amedeo III to cede Nice and Savoy in exchange for Lombardy and an alliance with the Revolution, he refused. He might have been accused of being inept, but for sure not of being a traitor.

The Directorate was strongly convinced about the victories reported by Bonaparte, but this would not be enough for it to accept the proposal of the young general to go to Germany and decide the peace conditions. The aim of the Directorate was to conclude within the Alps. In fact, the Directorate specifically suggested to occupy first the area of Milan, to then go to Livorno, Rome, and Naples. Livorno was under English influence, while Rome and Naples were at war with the *République*. Therefore, Bonaparte entered Milan with the directions of finding 20 million francs and of hunting down Beaulieu. His additional goal was to change the government. In this sense, all the authorities were substituted with a military agency made of Maurin, Reboult, and Patrault (all of them

were French), that were governing the municipal congress, the State Congress, and the municipal administrations. Continuing his hunt, Bonaparte reached the army that already invaded the Serenissima, and the 30th of May attacked the line of the Mincio at Borghetto. Beaulieu detached from his army 20 battalions and sent them as a supply to the garrison in Mantua, the last rampart of the imperial power in Italy; he then evacuated Peschiera and retreated in the Adige Valley. The Austrians went back to Tirol: Bonaparte had been capable to fulfil his first task given from the Directorate. Strange fate had it that, from his first appearance on the world stage, Bonaparte was the most famous and the most unknown of men; a man the world was never to know as he was; a man of whom one would have seen a 'duplicate' created by the credulous imagination of the crowds, thanks to an extravagant collusion between the most opposing political interests, thanks to his cunning, his ambition, his skill in handling the new weapon of war invented by the Revolution, journalistic mystification and literary bombast, at a time when the mind had almost completely lost control of reality. This imaginary 'double' became the protagonist of a vast romantic vision that was nothing more than a vision of the spirit of adventure with no relation to reality and whose real man, the unknown, would be the slave and ultimately the victim[4]. The great man, the new Hannibal, the young republican hero, the Italian conqueror, the invincible, the immortal: these first military victories in Italy paved the way for the rise of the Napoleonic legend. The Directorate, an illegitimate government that lacked the rule of law, was striving for finding support in the illusions of the mass. It was itself extremely happy to believe in the romantic vision that was developing around such military victories, with Italy as diadem of the Revolution. Moreover, the victories of Bonaparte made the Directorate modulate its opinion on the future of the campaign. In the Directorate's letter sent on 7th May it was categorically denied any possibility to invade Germany and it was ordered to impose a tribute to the duchies of Milan and Parma, as well as for the other subjugated countries under military occupation, an action more or less justifiable with the state of war. In the Directorate's letter of 18th May, instead, it was ordered Bonaparte to "evacuate" all neutral countries to move towards Livorno and to take all the possible wealth: there was now a precise, formal, peremptory order to methodically exploit Italy; in addition, there was no categorical denial of a possible invasion of Germany. Finally, the spirit of adventure also won the Directorate: Italy was

[4] Ibidem, p. 64-65.

no longer the final goal, but a corridor that would provide at the same time the spaces and the resources to invade Germany. The French army was continuously receiving manpower from the Directorate, but no money, guns, nor cannons: it was an army of 40,000 men abandoned to itself, put in the middle of a minefield called Lombardy. Furthermore, this army needed to be on guard with Piedmont, besiege Mantua and Milan, occupy Verona, threaten Venice, and violate four states neutrality while marching towards Livorno.

The armies of the Revolution destroyed the rules of war of the XVIII century: they fed war with war, meaning that they were sustaining themselves through looting. The march in central Italy was a double operation: large scale looting of arms, provisions, and goods in neutral states; an offensive campaign against the Pope and the Kingdom of Naples. The King of Naples sent to Brescia the Prince Antonio Pignatelli di Belmonte to negotiate an armistice, that would be signed the 5th of June. The 1st of June, Bonaparte had a meeting in Peschiera with the "Provveditore Generale" Foscarini. After the allegations toward Venice of being complicit with Austria, Bonaparte argued that the Directorate had to declare war on Venice rightly after the occupation of Peschiera from Beaulieu. Furthermore, he continued by saying that his government ordered him to burn Verona, and that he already assigned that task to Massena. Terrified, Foscarini had to consent to the French occupation of Verona. The same day Massena occupied Verona without a single drop of blood. It is important to note that the order of the Directorate was an ingenuous invention of Bonaparte. The 4th of June, Bonaparte invited to lunch at Roverbella two "wise men of the Council"[5] sent from the Senate of Venice, Francesco Battaglia and Nicolò Erizzo. In that occasion, Bonaparte promised to retreat his troops as soon as he would have hunted down the Austrian and he confided to his guests that he wanted to create in the Milan area an independent state to increase the security of the Serenissima. However, he ended up asking 20,000 rifles and 2,000 farmers to work to strengthen Peschiera (just in the summertime, when the land needed arms). The King of Piedmont, signing the armistice of Cherasco, gave a sign of weakness. When governments falter, dark ferments develop among the people: this explains the turmoil near Genoa, where Bonaparte sent a mobile column at the orders of general Lannes. Always thinking about Germany, Bonaparte often asked for more troops, but not for more weapons: he

[5] Ibidem, p.73.

knew that he wouldn't receive them, and he continued to take them in Italy. The looting in Italy persisted: 1.2 million lire from the Legation of Bologna, 150 cannons and 3000 rifles from Ferrara. The 23rd of June, Bonaparte signed a treaty with José Nicolas de Azara, ambassador of Spain to the Holy See. The Pope, at the same time, pledged to close his harbours to ships from enemies of the *République*; leave the citadel of Ancona with its artillery within six days; give one hundred among paintings, busts, vases, and statues; five hundred manuscripts; 21 million lire in French currency; leave the passage for the French troops anytime needed. A crucial last point is of the armistice with the Holy See is Article 5: it highlighted that the French army would have remained master of the Legations of Bologna and Ferrara. In this occasion, Bonaparte improved his capacities in mastering the ability of controlling the effects of uprisings: the Revolution as a weapon of war. It is not odd then to read, in a letter from Bonaparte to the Directorate of July 2nd, about how Bologna, Ferrara, and the Romagna regions could and should become a Demo-Cristian Republic. This new creation would only have positive effects: Venice would not remain the sole strong entity in the Adriatic Sea; the Papal power would be challenged, and Rome and Tuscany would ultimately "be part of the party of freedom"[6]. Going back to the march towards Livorno. Once arrived, the division of Vaubois entered the grand duchy, occupied Livorno, and took possession of the English goods without a shot being fired. The reason behind this peaceful march is that the grand duke offered a huge lunch in favour of Bonaparte, who had to account for this to the Directorate. Bonaparte was impressed by the campaign in Italy: he obtained money, paintings, valuables, supplies, and honour (almost) without fighting, despite the fact that Italy actually had armies and weapons. There are reasons that unravel this unusual situation. In fact, the states of central Italy, the Pope, and the King of Naples gave up because they didn't believe that the French would stay long: to resist was pointless, because the return of Austria would have restored the original order; resistance would have therefore had a higher cost when compared to a few concessions, some of them revocable. It is different instead the course of action of Venice. The Serenissima could save itself only by making an alliance with either France or Austria. The Venetian tradition would have suggested the Serenissima to follow its own interests and thus ally with France, a distant and safe friend, while avoiding any entanglement in an alliance with Austria, a powerful and worrying neighbour. If

[6] Ibidem, p. 77.

Bonaparte were a general of Louis XVI, Venice would have not hesitated; but he was the general of the Revolution. Italy was already at that time, with 15 million inhabitants, one of the most populous countries in Europe and probably the richest in gold and silver under the double form of currency and precious objects. There were churches, convents, castles, mansions in the countryside, all decorated and drenched with sewn satin, taffeta, brocade, velvet, tapestries, sculptures, paintings, marble, porphyry, lapis lazuli, malachite, sacred jewellery, diamonds, pearls, rubies, and much more. In the cities and in the countryside, monasteries were praying, chanting, studying, working, striving to give examples of the Christian life. Since the Middle Ages, the Church continuously drained Catholic countries of precious metals that, once in Italy, were not going back. The industry was instead already decadent, in Genoa, Venice, and Tuscany too. The export of manufactured goods was reduced, with an exception made for Venice. The only industries that were still prospering had to thank local clients, courts, the church, and the nobility. The population seemed happy of its destiny, while life was hierarchically structured. In summary, the spirit of adventure was the enemy of this society arrived at an almost perfect crystallization. Artisans lived humbly but serenely; the rural population of North and Central Italy were also moderately affluent. The administration and bureaucracy were simple, not invasive nor expensive, the armies small, and several public functions were performed, free of charge, by the nobility. A share of the public wealth was socialized by the church, that provided two crucial public services: charity and education. The dominant class was formed by a hereditary aristocracy and a high clergy recruited from all classes. The growth of professional and economic privileges was a warranty for general stability at the same time social, spiritual, and economic, that were suppressing the spirit of adventure. Processions, religious solemnities, festivals of saints great and small, anniversaries, weddings, funerals of sovereigns, consecrations, bishops' funerals, civic festivals, rare but present also public executions, were elements that alternated in order to distract the populace with a resulting saving of money. At the top of this *panem et circenses*, the Carnival, a great national institution. The states that dotted were too feeble to oppose the influence that the papacy had as a spiritual guide, translated as unity in religion and philosophy, arts, and politics. Power and hierarchy were infallible; the official truths were undisputable; the spirit of opposition and heresy was monitored in any aspect: in the religious one by the Inquisition, in politics by the police, in literature and

science by the Academy, in schools by the Jesuits. This task of control was however not difficult: all the classes accepted the current order. Indeed, the people respected wealth, power, and the church: in turn, wealth bowed to power, the clergy and power to the church, that was standing at the top of the pyramid; the nobles, the monarchs, the republics were bending to bishops, to cardinals, and finally to the pope. The marvellous beauties of Italy that are admired were created not only for the divine pleasure deriving from beauty, but also to dazzle and to lull with its enchantment the turbulence of minds. Art was however capable of changing the forms of beauty with a slow intelligence, thanks to its conservative and at the same time revolutionary nature, therefore moving from one formula to the next one. Italy reacted to the anarchic turbulence of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance with a rigid order that pretended to suffocate any seed of discord. Therefore, Italy did not resist to the French invasion not because the *Bel Paese* was weakened by the revolutionary spirit, but rather because there was too much order and no revolutionary spirit at all: a defensive war is a disorder; a maniacal order like the Italian one should have repelled war and tolerated anything before going into those troubles. The spirit of revolt found then in this meticulous order a rare fortune, but at the same time this very universal order didn't give the possibility to the revolt to unravel and develop, remaining just a latent and brute force.

The Austrian army that was descending the Po valley had the potential to put Italy in revolt against the invader; the French army then had to repel the attack and at the same time to immobilise Italy in its neutrality. Bonaparte knew this from an anonymous book printed in London in 1773, *General tactics essay*. This essay was supporting more mobile and agile armies, and the way to transform the army was through the suppression of military warehouses with the consequent army maintenance at the expenses of the civilians. Then, it was necessary to reduce the artillery, to make troops faster and finally to prepare all citizens with a military education. In order to win fear amidst dangers, man needs to believe that he can win. Analogously, the Revolution believed in the *General tactics essay* when it found itself at war with Europe while not having warehouses nor arsenals nor money. The only thing it had was a multitude easily inflammable: enraptured by the Revolution, the French people were capable of obtaining unexpected successes. The new proposed doctrine that was strongly supporting speed at the expenses of the mass of the army expressed in the essay was discovered to be the creature of Jacques Antoine

Hippolyte, Count of Guibert, commonly referred simply as Guibert, considered as the spiritual father of the military futurism that animated the Revolution. This essay was not successful only with Bonaparte; it was also strongly appreciated by Fredrick II and George Washington. Then, Guibert with his book contributed to the success at arms that brought and consolidated the independence of two great peoples in two continents. At the end of July, the army of Wurmser was marching divided in three corps. The first was led by Quosdanovich towards Lake Garda; the second was commanded by Wurmser between the Adige River and the Lake Garda; the third was led by Davidovich, on the left of the Adige River. Bonaparte acted accordingly: the 31st of July abandoned the siege of Mantua, brought all his forces against Davidovich, and won at Lonato; then, he went against Wurmser and won again at Lonato and Castiglione. The young French general applied the Guibertian theory, leveraging on the fact that the French army was made up of men between 20 and 25 years old, opposed to the 30 to 40 years old enemies. The younger army and less used to the barracks was less solid, but more mobile and elastic. After having regained strength, Wurmser and Davidovich decided to descend again in Italy, the first one moving toward Mantua while the second toward the Adige valley. But Bonaparte attacked Davidovich with all his strength and made him go back to Germany; then moved to Wurmser and won at Bassano. The land where the battles were fought was narrow, hilly, and populated, therefore unsuitable for a large-scale use of artillery, while it was perfect for fast movements and ambushes. At this point, the Austrians began to understand that if they would get the French out of the Po valley, the momentum and the speed needed to be perfectly calibrated; Bonaparte instead began to believe that his method could be applied successfully anytime and anywhere.

The 17th of May, entering Milan, Bonaparte sent a letter to the Directorate. He asked the Directorate whether he had to satisfy the people if they demanded to organize in a republic. The Directorate answered that it needed time to make the right evaluations. The 25th of July 1796, the Directorate sent an answer summarizing the main conclusions. To begin with, it stated that it was not within the interests of the French Republic to cause the creation of democratic republics in Italy. Specifically, it was not convenient to form a republic for the Milan area nor for the Papal States; it could be convenient instead for the Duchy of Parma. Secondly, it was suggested to take some territories from the Pope as an indemnity. It was in the interest of the Republic to expel Austria from Italy. The Kingdom

of Sardinia should remain the same, the Veneto should take Trento and Brixen, while the imperial feuds would be attributed to Genoa. The Directorate also aimed at having Trapani, in Sicily, from the King of Naples. The latter and the Pope should also pay an annual instalment to France. It was not in the interest of France to form a league among all Italian powers to resist external enemies and to keep internal peace. How is it possible that, despite the divisions, Italy was still rich and influent at the end of the XVIII century? After the fall of the Roman Empire, thanks to the papacy, it remained a global metropolis. In the Middle Ages, the Pope was not only the spiritual guide of Europe: he was the head of a real empire, with governors, provinces, and tributes; he was an authority that did not need troops to get listened to. From the XVI century, that included the secular conflict of the Renaissance and the religious conflict of the Reform, the empire founded just on the power of the Word began to decline. But up to the end of XVIII century, thus up to the arrival of Bonaparte, the papacy fought with all its strength to save the remaining parts of its empire with the spiritual authority, the political influence, and the money. Indeed, in 1796 Italy's highest incomes were deriving not by flourishing agriculture, not by trade and industry, but by the luxury and wealth coming from the other Catholic countries of America and Europe that were subsidising ecclesiastical offices, benefices, sinecures, employments, commendations of churches and convents, prelates, charity, and alms. To give Italy "freedom" meant to destroy the bases of the system without giving a valid alternative. While in June Bonaparte encouraged revolts in Ferrara and Bologna to intimidate the Holy See, he was not thinking yet about making them two democratic republics. He vaguely mentioned the concept of a Demo-Christian Republic, and yet he did nothing. Reggio asked him to become free from the occupation of Modena, and he advised to wait; when Reggio rose up, Bonaparte remained neutral between the revolting cities and the Duchy of Modena. But after having defeated Wurmser for the second time, Bonaparte, the 4th of October, denounced the armistice with the Duke of Modena, deposed the latter, and occupied the duchy. He then wrote that a congress with the states of Ferrara, Bologna, Modena, and Reggio should be formed. The 18th of October the Cispadana Republic, a federal republic, was founded. It is interesting to note that the 2nd of October Bonaparte sent a threatening letter to the emperor asking for peace, under the requests of the Directorate. It was then difficult to understand why, while obediently listening to the Directorate, Bonaparte decided to go his way, in stark contrast with the Directorate, with

the idea of the Cispadana Republic as an Italian institution. In the meantime, since the defeat of Wurmser, the Italian opinion polarized on two opposite alignments. The victims and the disgruntled agreed to form a party against the *Ancien Régime*: the members were doctors, lawyers, storekeepers, intellectuals that were excluded from the aristocratic constitution, brothers without a vocation, and a few idealists seriously in love with the revolutionary ideals. On the other side there was a more numerous party: the ultraconservatives determined to defend the regime by all means. The revolution that the Directorate did not want to do with laws and decrees, was nevertheless done through unruled war by the French army, showing to the astonished populations that an army of Jacobines without religion could impose its will to princes, kings, bishops, cardinals, popes. But the Directorate did not realize that the physics of force instead of serving Bonaparte was betraying him. The armistices and the peace treaties taken through violence, the violated neutralities, the stolen artworks, the forced contributions, and the battles won were just appearance. The strongest impact in Italy was an internal shock with long lasting consequences. At the same time, Bonaparte perceived a dark and disturbing void around his army. While there were hate and banditry against the revolution, he did not have the necessary strength to answer properly: the French army had many tasks and too many enemies. In a letter from Bonaparte dated 8th of October, he deemed a peace with Naples as essential; he asked for an alliance with Genoa or with the Court of Turin as necessary; he suggested a peace with Parma and at the same time a declaration of protection for Lombardy, Modena, Reggio, Bologna, and Ferrara. But the thing that Bonaparte demanded for the most was one: troops. He then exposed his idea of the Cispadana Republic in another letter, the following day, citing the creation of this entity as stemming from the necessity of containing the influence of Rome. In Italy first, in Germany later, the *Ancien Régime* has been demolished from the disciples of Guibert way more than from the disciples of Rousseau and Voltaire. The war without rules had a stronger influence rather than the revolutionary principles on the destruction of the pre-existing order.

The 2nd of October Bonaparte sent a letter to the Directorate with his idea of the Cispadana Republic. The Directorate answered negatively, explaining that it was crucial to avoid compromising the future interests of the *République.* Bonaparte wanted to give his army some footholds, but he was faithfully obeying the directions. The events that

were happening in Germany convinced him even more of adopting a cautious approach: the French armies were pushed by Archduke Charles. However the 17th of October Bonaparte informed the Directorate of the newly created Cispadana Republic, and the Directorate responded by asking for caution. Indeed, in the letter of the Directorate of the 28th of October it was possible to read: "we feel like you how much the enthusiasm for liberty present in the citizens of Bologna, Modena, Reggio, and Milan is an advantage for the cause we fight for; we are convinced of the utility we are going to gain, with the success of our weapons, of the good will of the Italian peoples that manifest their desire to shake the yoke of despotism; but no matter how ardent the desire we feel to support their drive towards the republic, prudence and politics together order us to moderate, as far as we can at the present time, the ardour that animates them and the steps that an initial movement might lead them to take"[7]. It would be risky to animate a revolutionary fire that could become fatal to the peoples of Italy. The plan of the Directorate was to wait the fall of Mantua and only then to draw conclusions. Meanwhile, something was happening that needed more urgent attention: Alvinczy was advancing against Massena, and Davidovich was aimed at driving the French out of Trento and Rovereto. These two armies wanted to join on the low area of the Adige in order to march toward Mantua and free Wurmser. On the 15th and 16th of October Bonaparte gathered all his forces and pushed Alvinczy over the Brenta during the battle of Arcole; then, he defeated Davidovich, thus sending him back to the Tyrol. For the second time Bonaparte successfully applied the formula of Guibert: the strength of an army is heavily depending on its speed. The 15th of November the Directorate gave the order to send the general Clarke to Vienna to negotiate a general armistice. However, the heads of the Revolution detested England, Austria, and Russia, and vice versa. Hatred and mistrust inflamed political calculations in both camps. One of the few personalities not inflamed with hate was the Baron of Thugut. Of humble origins, he entered the Oriental School of Vienna and soon became the interpreter to the ambassador of Constantinople. He became rich and wealthy, worked hard, was far from the middle class but farther from the nobility. Cold, tenacious, unscrupulous, creeping, cunning, he was the only stateman of the *Ancien Régime* totally indifferent to the Revolution. In such a chaotic era, he knew what he wanted: to maintain the Habsburg Empire and re-establish the mighty of the House of

[7] Ibidem, p. 129.

Austria in Italy. But by pursuing exactly these aims, this zealous, loyal, and somewhat mysterious servant of the Austrians will become the most fearsome collaborator of the Revolution. It will be he who will deliver the second mortal blow to the *Ancien Régime* after the catastrophe of the monarchy in France.

The Revolution was frightened by England and therefore hated it. Hatred and fear transformed the enemy and made the invitations to negotiate appear like traps. The Directorate knew that while Pitt and his colleagues wanted peace, the King with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Grenville were strenuously opposing any concession in Belgium. On the other side, the English government hated and feared the Revolution. The cabinet of London did not want to obtain a separate peace: it made steps in France hoping to finalize negotiations and inviting the ally, Vienna, to accept, but without success. The continuous tergiversations of Lord Malmesbury tried the patience of the Directorate, that reacted by nominating Clarke as representative to Vienna. The nominee of Clarke rapidly made the chancellor speak, and in sum the message was that Austria was not open to negotiations. England thus proposed to recognise Avignon, Nizza, and Savoy as French territories; in turn, France had to give back to Austria all of its territories in Italy and the Netherlands. As a response, Lord Malmesbury was kicked out of France and "his presence in Paris is useless and inappropriate"[8]. The passport of Clarke, sent to Vienna, was rejected. Vienna kept the talks in Vicenza, and for the general peace Clarke was told to speak with Marquis Gherardini, Minister of the Empire to Turin. At a certain point, the chancellor formulated the three crucial conditions for peace. First, the lands of princes and other members of the Empire had to be given back. Second, His Majesty had to be reimbursed for all the expenses and the losses. Third, the emperor was not willing to give up some of his provinces unless a rightful compensation would take place, considering the wealth and the population of the ceded territory. The Baron of Thugut declared that Vienna was willing to cede to France the Netherlands in exchange for Bavaria and indemnities. For Thugut, the indemnities should not include compensations for Prussia, that was already too large after the division of Poland. Moreover, in conclusion, Vienna was asking for something in exchange for Italy and the Netherlands. To the German indemnities proposed by France, Austria was answering with Italian indemnities; to the revolutionary program to secularize Germany, a program of enlargement of Italy that

[8] Ibidem, p. 145.

would seem conservative. Vienna had a favourite part of Italy, and this would explain the reason why the Baron Thugut refused to discuss about peace with France next to England, while was available to deal with general Clarke remotely. Thugut was hoping that in the conversations with the enemy the name of that province of Italy, that he did not dare to say with the allies, would have been said. At this point, it was crucial to understand whether it was easier to have an agreement with the Revolution or with the *Ancien Régime*.

From Rivoli to Campoformio

The Baron of Thugut wrote eventually to the Marquis Gherardini on the 27th of December. The same day, the congress that had to organize the Cispadana Republic was reuniting. Bonaparte wrote a letter to the Directorate summarizing the situation of the Cispadania. In Lombardy there were three main parties: one that was supporting the French, a second one that would impatiently have freedom and a third one that is friend of the Austrian and enemy of the French. Bonaparte was clearly supporting the first, containing the second, and repressing the third. In the other entities of the Cispadana Republic there were the friends of the old government, the partisans of an aristocratic constitution, and the partisans of a French constitution, i.e., pure democracy. Bonaparte was repressing the first and surprisingly supporting the second instead of the third. Indeed, he explained that the second party is the one of the wealthy landowners and of the priests that ultimately would win the mass, while the third party was made up of youngsters, writers, and men that love freedom and would use the latter to make a revolution. The congress then proclaimed one and indivisible republic, suggesting the congress to revolutionize a part of Italy without making a revolution and to destroy the *Ancien Régime* in agreement with the very classes that were living in it. The congress elected a general government, redacted the oath formula that the four pre-existing governments (Reggio, Modena, Bologna, and Ferrara) had to keep, decided the flag of the future republic: red, white, and green. But the 9th of January 1797 Bonaparte arrived in Reggio and spoke with the president of the congress, Aldini. The day after, Aldini proposed the congress to give a term of ten days to the committee that had to create the constitution, suspending in the meantime the decree that was fixing the general government and instead keeping the four provisory governments until the approval of the new constitution. The aim of the

intervention of Bonaparte was to slow down the congress, and to modify the creation of the one and indivisible republic. Bonaparte was in fact fearing an Austrian attack, and his moderate behaviour was a sage play that would allow him to focus on the Austrians. The Austrians were indeed preparing to free Mantua from the French occupation; Alvinczy was hoping that, impressed by the movements of Provera, the French would weaken Rivoli to save Mantua. At the foot of the Monteboldo, Bonaparte almost destroyed the Austrian army. Now the Directorate sent to general Clarke precise instructions for peace with the Marquis Gherardini: they were no more instructions for an armistice. The French were asking for the Netherlands and the Austrian territories over the left side of the Rhine; however, despite the pronunciation of several Italian states in favour of the revolutionary principles, it was not in the interests of France to compromise its security for the emancipation of these countries: they would have been given back to the Empire; finally, a compensation could have been taken from the Polish territories. Italy was then again to be considered as a hostage as it was planned in the original draft of the 25th of July 1796. But to have the adequate gains, Italy had to be kept intact: no revolution then. Meanwhile, Bonaparte had a huge victory in Rivoli: the "new Alexander"[9] had its first great success. However, Thugut answered that the recent events in Italy did not change the situation: the Austrian conditions would remain the same. The Holy Roman Emperor Francis II sent the Archduke Charles, his brother, from the army of the Rhine to Italy. Francis was convinced that if the French remained in Italy, they would have dominated Europe thanks to the plentiful resources that Italy had to offer. On the 14th of February, the emperor was writing that it was becoming necessary to have a foothold in Venice in order to maintain the Serenissima close to him. We can suppose then that the unnamed entity from Thugut was plausibly Venice, a valid compensation in exchange for the Belgian area. The victory of Rivoli, on the other side, was establishing the winning path of Bonaparte that made history: the first military impactful hit against the *Ancien Régime*.

The Directorate asked Bonaparte to invade the Papal States, because the declared objective was to destroy the centre of unity of the Roman Church. The Directorate wanted the destruction of the papal government, particularly through putting Rome under another power hostile to the Pope, but was leaving almost total margin of decision to Bonaparte. The four pillars on which the Western *Ancien Régime* was based up to 1789 were

[9]Ibidem, p. 161.

Versailles, Vienna, Rome, and Venice. The victory of Rivoli brought the Revolution to believe that it was capable of destroying these pillars. Therefore, the 19th of February Pope Pius VI signed the peace at Tolentino: it was renouncing to Avignon, the county of Venasque, Bologna, Ferrara, and the Romagna area; moreover, the French would occupy Ancona until the peace was set in the continent and would receive around 30 million lire. Another strong effect of the victory of Rivoli is the reinvigorated belief of invading Germany: now, the army of Italy was invading Friuli and from there it would gain Trieste and the Tyrol; the armies of the Rhine and the one of Sambre and Meuse would get over the Rhine; the three armies together would then make an incisive pressure on Vienna to decide on peace. The precious metals gained in Italy would work as capitals necessary for the invasion of Germany. While the Directorate was engaged in Italy and Germany, its plenipotentiary, general Clarke, was loitering through Italy. The 18th of February he met with Bonaparte and explained a proposal he had in mind. It was found out that from 1762 to 1789 the Baron of Thugut received a pension from the Court of Versailles in exchange of unknown services; Clarke was authorized to promise the baron that if he had made peace, then the Directorate would have buried those documents forever, and would have also granted money. At the same time, the congress of the Cispadana Republic established that the future republic would need the territories of Bologna, Ferrara, and Romagna, possibly also with Modena, Reggio, and Massa-Carrara. Milan sent to Paris a legation to ask for the liberation of Lombardy; then Ancona, Urbino, and Macerata followed, demanding Bonaparte new institutions. In Brescia and Bergamo, the party of the Revolution was preparing to detach from the Serenissima. In Italy, the revolutionary party was generally composed by a minority; the majority of any class was hostile, and the Directorate knew it. The heads of the French army wanted to preserve an at least apparent neutrality. Now Bonaparte had the forces to proceed with the German plan: he had around 80,000 men under his command; the Directorate finally decided and was ordering a joint invasion against the hereditary states with the armies of the Rhine, Italy, and Sambre and Meuse. Before marching on Pontebba and Tarvisio, it was crucial to knock out the archduke from Valvasone. After a brief conflict, Bonaparte was crossing the Tagliamento. He feared however that by entering Germany, Austria would get overwhelming forces over his army. The 22nd of March he announced to the Directorate the occupation of Gorizia and that general Massena occupied Pontebba, but peremptory

he wrote that all the forces of the emperor were marching. He asked whether Moreau could move to fight the enemy and thus impede it to reach Innsbruck: Bonaparte was obsessed with isolation[10]. Nevertheless, the 21st of March Massena occupied Tarvisio, and the 22nd of March the French army entered to Trieste: the gates of Germany were now open to France. The same day, Bonaparte was informed that Brescia and Bergamo insurged and were able to drive out the Venetian garrison.

Bonaparte was looking ahead toward Klagenfurt, fearing however a massive defence in front of him. For this reason, before marching for Klagenfurt he waited for general Joubert to arrive in Bolzano and for generals Moreau and Hoche to cover his right flank. But Moreau was slowed down probably due to lack of money. The 28th of March Bonaparte ordered Massena to occupy Klagenfurt the following day; on the 30th he reached Massena, after having told Chabot to open the communications with Lienz, city that general Joubert should have conquered. Bonaparte wanted to extend the front to the west toward Klagenfurt, to the east toward Lienz and the Tyrol, in order to firmly hold the Drava Valley. Unexpectedly, the 31st of March Bonaparte wrote to the Archduke Charles and invited him to intercede to the emperor to begin the peace talks. Bonaparte was not authorized to discuss the preliminaries for the peace: the negotiations were of relevance to Clarke, who at that moment was in Turin willing to deal with Marquis Gherardini. The following day, Bonaparte explained his actions to the Directorate. He wrote: "You will find enclosed herewith a copy of the letter I sent to Prince Charles through my aide-de-camp. If I receive a negative reply, I will have my letter and his printed in the manifesto that I will publish in Vienna: and I plan to do so as soon as I have made some progress. If, on the other hand, the answer is favourable and the Court of Vienna in the urgent circumstances in which it finds itself, really wants to think about peace, I will take it upon myself to sign a secret convention that could be a preliminary to a peace treaty and thanks to which it would be possible to establish the basis for an armistice. You understand, of course, that the conditions I will sign would be more advantageous in the present circumstances than the instructions you gave to Clarke"[11]. The *urgent circumstances* of the Court of Vienna were probably due to the panic of the Court, the government, and the nobility had when they came to know that the French

[10] Ibidem, p. 181.
[11] Ibidem, p. 185-186.

arrived to Bressanone and Tarvisio. The 1st of April, the ambassador of England wrote to his minister that the nobility was revolting and demanded peace at any cost. However, the 2nd of April the Archduke Charles answered with a denial. Therefore, Bonaparte continued marching: the 3rd of April arrived to Neumarkt. The real intention of the young general was not to arrive to Vienna: he did not have sufficient forces to do so, as he wrote to the Directorate the 1st of April. Thus, he called Bernadotte and Joubert to his aid, and the 5th of April decided to march on the route to Vienna. Two days later, he defeated Bellegarde and Merveldt in Judenburg. He told the Directorate that he had in mind a much better peace plan than the one of general Clarke. He was proposing to gain the territories on the left side of the Rhine, the recognition of the limits of the Rhine Republic, the Cispadana Republic, the Duchies of Modena and Carrara, and Mainz in exchange of Mantua. France had just to give back Lombardy and the occupied territories. He then sent a courier to tell Clarke to reach him. The Directorate answered by saying that the constitution of the Cispadana would be good for Lombardy; however, the members of the national treasury should be chosen not by the legislative body, but rather by the Directorate. This was crucial because the current administrations of Lombardy and of the Cispadana Republic were not strong nor regular enough to guarantee at the same time the service of the French army and the wealth of the citizens. The legislative will, according to the Directorate, should temporarily be Bonaparte alone. Moreover, the Directorate was suggesting putting as many countries overlooking the Po River as possible under the same government: this way, such structure would create an entity strong enough to be safe from the emperor.

Bonaparte was the executioner of the will of the Directorate. Precisely, the Directorate ideated a government for the previously mentioned part of Italy that would be based on the Cispadana Republic, which was in turn based on the French one. The Directorate ordered Bonaparte to create in Northern Italy a sovereign state where the people would be sovereign but did not want for the people to declare themselves as sovereign; it aimed at naming that future state as a king of the revolution. Then Bonaparte had to put himself in the place of the people, strengthened by the fact that his army was occupying Italy.

At the beginning, the Revolution was an effort to substitute to the traditional principles of legitimacy, the new principle of liberty, including the right to oppose with all the guarantees. However, in Italy the Revolution substituted the mystical legitimacy

of the *Ancien Régime* not with a rational principle but with a patented mystification. The 10th of April, Thugut declared to the English ambassador that he would never accept a peace dictated by an overbearing enemy willing to upset all of Europe. But in Vienna the Court, the nobility, the army, and the people had lost their temper: the 11th of April the emperor nominated Merveldt and Marquis Gallo, ambassador of the King of Naples to the Court of Vienna, plenipotentiaries. The 13th of April, Bonaparte and Merveldt met. The first posed the latter two peace projects. The first one stated that the emperor had to recognise the left side of the Rhine as a French frontier and give back immediately Mainz to France. In exchange, France would give back each of its possessions in Italy, including a piece of the Republic of Venice. With the second project instead, Bonaparte demanded the Austrian Netherlands but would leave to the Court of Vienna the right to ask for more substantial indemnities on the territories of Veneto, up to the Oglio River, with Dalmatia and Istria included. Yet Bonaparte was asking one more thing: to establish a republic in Lombardy. The plan of Bonaparte was not attributable to the Directorate: the latter sent a letter the 7th of April, and that letter could not have already arrived at Leoben on the 13th of the same month. He later began to raise the people against the government but at the same time was sending letters to local authorities asking to re-establish order. Austria began to evaluate the two proposals made by Bonaparte. The first was not realistic: Vienna could not give Mainz nor the Rhine possessions, that belonged to the empire. But the second plan, where France would get the Austrian Netherlands and the Duchy of Milan leaving leeway to Austria to strip Venice, was tempting. Thugut, no longer seeing French troops near Vienna, was preparing for a long negotiation. But Bonaparte was not. The 15th of April, the same day when Thugut signed in Vienna the memorial for the plenipotentiaries, Bonaparte began in Leoben the definitive negotiation, with the aim of finishing it within five days. The Austrian plenipotentiaries did not receive information yet; general Clarke, the only one with the power of negotiation and finalization, had not arrived. Nevertheless, Bonaparte arbitrarily took the power, showing the Austrian plenipotentiaries a letter that Merveldt judged as “not sufficient to examine it closely”. The armistice was prolonged until the 20th of April, with the condition that the decisive answer would not arrive later than that day. The main reason of such impatience was that Bonaparte’s army was lacking supplies; the threat of marching on Vienna was sheer fiction. Satisfied with the proposal, the Austrian plenipotentiaries declared themselves

ready to sign if France gave back Milan together with a piece taken from the states of Venice or of the Legations (Bologna, Ferrara, Ravenna). Bonaparte refused. On the 13th he asked for the Duchy of Milan and thought about making a republic in Northern Italy, because if he did not get the Rhine, he could not leave Austria to gain Venice and Lombardy. Therefore, he was available to give the lands of Venice between the Garda Lake and the Mincio, the Po River, without Istria and Dalmatia, in exchange for Belgium and the Duchy of Milan. France was projecting a republic unifying Milan with the territories from Veneto up to the Oglio River, proposing the Mincio as a remuneration for the Duke of Modena. While the Directorate wanted to end the social dissolution caused in Italy by the invasion, Bonaparte wanted to make peace on terms that would not too brutally disprove the legend generated by his fabulous victories. The Austrians signed the preliminaries for peace on the 18th of April. France was accepting to renounce to the left side of the Rhine and was supposed to give an indemnity; the emperor was giving up the Austrian Netherlands and recognizing the French borders. However, there was also a second (secret) treaty. In this, other than Belgium, the Court of Vienna was giving Milan to France to make it a republic, receiving in exchange all the territories of Veneto from Oglio with Istria and Dalmatia included. The Court of Vienna had some scruples: it did not want to strip Venice with an act of force, it wanted instead a title of entitlement, a regular cession according to the XVIII century's principles. To regularize such formal matters, Bonaparte crafted Article 5 of the secret preliminaries: "His Majesty the Emperor and the executive Directorate of the French Republic will agree to eradicate all the obstacles that could oppose to the ready execution of the previous articles and will nominate to this scope commissioners or plenipotentiaries in charge of all possible accommodations with the Venetian Republic"[12]. Merveldt, in a letter sent to Thugut the 19th of April, specified that Bonaparte pledged to declare war immediately on the Republic of San Marco, to occupy Venice, to cede the Legations in exchange for the other territories and then giving the Venetian States to Austria as a property of France. While the Directorate was the effective responsible of the invasion of Italy, the destiny of Venice was the very first responsibility of Napoleon in front of history; this responsibility was shared with the Court of Vienna and the Revolution. Despite the good conditions that the peace treaty was serving, recalling the terms Thugut had in mind on the 27th of December

[12] Ibidem, p. 221.

1796, Austria acted as a victim of the ingenuity of the enemy. The apparent defeat served Vienna to justify the separate peace, even to England. On the 21st of April the English ambassador, excited, went to see the Baron of Thugut to find out if it was true that Austria had signed the separate peace. The chancellor, afflicted, informed the ambassador that the plenipotentiaries signed the preliminaries without his authorization; he disagreed with those steps and thus he resigned. The government had no more than 20,000 men to defend the capital: a defeat would have been the downfall of the monarchy, so Thugut could not suggest the emperor not to sign the preliminaries.

Bonaparte sent a letter to the government on the 19th of April. Here it is possible to find a "Lombard Republic", that the republican France was pledged to found in the Po Valley according to Article 8 of the secret preliminaries. Then, he wrote that the Serenissima and the Legations would fall under the influence of such Lombard Republic. Finally, Bonaparte explained how the Venetian government was "the most absurd and tyrannical of governments: there is no doubt that it wanted to take advantage of the moment when we were in the heart of Germany to assassinate us"[13]. And he continued, justifying the destiny of the Serenissima as a *raison d'état*. While clarifying the reason of the result of the war, Bonaparte ended up confessing that he signed the preliminaries to save his army, but immediately reversed the responsibility onto the Directorate. The plan was good, but out of obedience he had to follow a bad plan because the Directorate had ordered him to start the campaign twice. The preliminaries of peace were justified as a military operation, over which Bonaparte had full authority. But the most spectacular part of the letter is the end: "As for me, I ask you for some rest. I have justified the trust you have had in me; in no operation have I wished to hold myself in contempt and I have thrown myself today upon Vienna having acquired more glory than is needed for happiness; I have behind me the superb plains of Italy from which the army has obtained that bread which the Republic could not send. Slander will try in vain to attribute evil intentions to me; my civil career will be like the military one, one and simple. Nevertheless, you must feel the necessity that I have to leave Italy; I ask you urgently to postpone the ratification of the peace preliminaries and to delay the orders concerning the direction to be given to the affairs of Italy; I ask for leave of absence to go to France"[14].

[13] Ibidem, p. 227.
[14] Ibidem, p. 230.

It seemed an embarrassed, modest, almost depressed letter, showing the invasion of Germany as a failure. However, three days later, Bonaparte sent the Directorate a second letter with more optimistic tones. The Directorate reacted furiously to the masked failure. Three directors (Reubell, Barras, La Révellière) declared the treaty to be unacceptable; the Minister of Foreign Affairs denounced Bonaparte as a national danger. The Directorate should have rejected the preliminaries by three votes to two, but it did not happen. Only Reubell, in the end, voted against the ratification. Meanwhile Thugut mandated his ambassador to London to notify the English government that he resisted to all the attempts done to dismantle the Austrian-British alliance in Leoben, to pressure England to pay Austria more abundant and more timely subsidies. At the end of April, Bonaparte was completing the creation of the Lombard Republic. In the first ten days of May, Bonaparte, back to Italy, decided to embark on a further project, completely different from what expected: revolutionise Venice. On the 12th of May, the Grand Council abdicated in favour of a provisory municipal assembly: the French troops enter the city. Thus, on the 14th of May Thugut mandated Gallo and Merveldt to ask Bonaparte for clarifications about the ongoing situation. Bonaparte explained the two envoys that there were secret articles following the patent ones, and the first of these secret articles stated: "The republics, French and Venetian, will agree to exchange their different territories with each other"[15]. To reassure Vienna, the young general proposed it to occupy Istria and Dalmatia under the pretext of preventing the spread of the revolution. After having put a democratic republic in Venice, Bonaparte was pushing Austria to exploit the revolution to legitimize the attack on the Serenissima, justified as a prevention to the spread of the revolution. On the 24th of May Bonaparte, in agreement with the Directorate, signed a convention with marquis Gallo. The chaos that was rampant in Veneto, Lombardy, Genoa, Piedmont, Papal States, and King of Naples needed to be stopped: this explains the urgency of founding a republic in the centre of the Po valley, which would be a democratic republic useful for monitoring all of Italy, while creating a counterweight to Austrian influence.

After having signed a treaty with Venice on the 19th of May, Bonaparte left Milan and went to Mombello to spend the summer in the sumptuous mansion of the Crivelli family. He was described as mighty, affable and cheerful but respected and strict. In

[15] Ibidem, p. 237.

Mombello's salons, the vision of adventure overpowered reality in him and prolonged the state of mind he had formed before leaving his country: there was the vision of the Italian war common to all revolutionary France. For a century, history has described Bonaparte, after Leoben, as the general who made Mombello a kind of sumptuous pro-consulate in conquered Italy, a kind of apprenticeship for the empire of the world... A vision of the spirit of adventure! Bonaparte had not conquered Italy, he had only occupied it with his army, and stood there as on an immense ruin ready to collapse under him and around him. He had not conquered Austria, he had brought it, with no little effort, to argue for a partition of territories far more favourable to it than to France[16]. He was there with his sister, a younger brother, his wife, Clarke, and Berthier. On the same 19th of May, Bonaparte proposed the Directorate to establish a democratic republic in Genoa but was not supporting the merger between the Cisalpine Republic (the Lombard Republic) and the Cispadana Republic. Moreover, he was making new proposals to Marquis Gallo regarding the definitive peace: the territories on the borders of the Rhine for France, the territories on the borders of the Adige for the new republic in Italy, in exchange for Venice, the islands of the Adriatic Sea, the Bishopric of Passau and the Archbishopric of Salzburg. While Austria was considering such offer, Genoa exploded: the revolutionary party insurged against the oligarchy in favour of the rights of the people; the people, however, supported the oligarchy, making a massacre of the French and of the French sympathizers. The revolutionary party then turned to Bonaparte, who on the 27th of May sent an ultimatum to the Doge of Genoa. On the 19th of June Vienna answered the proposal of Bonaparte: in addition to what already present in the French proposition, it was asking, according with the Articles 4 and 5 of the preliminaries, the convocation in Bern of the congress of all the allies. The explanation was that the Austrian chancellor did not want to make Venice a democratic republic with antimonarchic principles. Furthermore, according to Article 9 of the secret act of the preliminaries, France had no right to unite Modena, Reggio, and Massa Carrara to the Cisalpine Republic. Finally, the Austrian chancellor ordered Gallo to suspend negotiations until the congress was summoned. Two days later, Bonaparte and Clarke reacted furiously. They replied that the article on the congress (Article 4) was introduced to save the emperor's self-respect, and to invoke the article was a sign of *mala fide*. Paris was suspecting that Vienna was acting under English

[16] Ibidem, p. 248.

hint or that signed the preliminaries to buy time and resume the war as soon as it is ready. The ultimate suspicion was that Vienna agreed with the Catholic and monarchic opposition in France, trying to help the counter-revolution by slowing down the negotiations. On the other side, Vienna was suspicious too: the more Bonaparte was offering, the more Austria was becoming wary; Austria was seeing Bonaparte as a despotic ambitious general that was disrupting all of Italy against the instructions of his government, to satisfy a diabolical thirst of destruction. The French were opposing the convocation of the congress because the allies, called to the congress, would have gone against the dismembering of Venice. Thugut, on the other hand, was trying not to break the thread that was binding him to England: the latter was ever closer to sign a separate peace. Tired of the tergiversations of Vienna, Bonaparte began to organize the Cisalpine Republic, with territories that were still Austrian. Then, he suggested the Directorate to send an ultimatum to the emperor to decide over war or peace; the deadline was the end of August. The 31st of July Thugut criticized general Bonaparte for being intentioned at inflame tempers and create divisions while establishing republics. But the truth was another: no one feared new revolutions in Italy more than Bonaparte. Indeed, each new revolution needed to be defended by him and enlarged the already vast tasks of his little army while increasing the probability of the resumption of war. But the war without rules provoked the dissolution of the Italian society; unable to stop the revolutionary movement, Bonaparte had to threw himself into it: thus, the foundation of the Cisalpine Republic.

In the foreign affairs, the spiritual impenetrability of Austria was damaging France. In France, in the Council of the Five Hundred, a speaker of the opposition was posing the following question: “Venice was neutral, Genoa was a French ally when there was the war with Austria: and how is it possible that the preliminaries of peace are signed with the latter, and that we are at war with Venice and Genoa?”[17]. The young general was accused of having violated the rights of the enemy peoples. Bonaparte reacted vehemently, while his resignation letter remained in the drawer. Meanwhile, the newspapers were oppositional, and they were rapidly spreading among the people: the freedom of press served only the enemies of the Revolution, i.e., the monarchic and the Catholics. The Directorate itself was divided: Barthélemy and Carnot were sympathizing

[17] Ibidem, p. 263.

with the opposition, while La Révellière and Reubell wanted to defend the Revolution; Barras was in the middle, maintaining a balance. The "new Alexander", alias Bonaparte, that conquered in a few months Italy while defeating the strongest dynasty in Europe, was the only diversion to popular discontent and hatred that was quickly rolling out against the Revolution. The Revolution was hesitating: on the 14th of July the commemoration of the storming of the Bastille was very cold; on the other side, the very same day the armies declared faith to the Directorate and hate to the realist opposition; the Army of Italy stood out for its ominousness. The armies were prepared to free the world with force. This time there would be however a metaphysical adventure. Indeed, believing they were defending the sovereignty of the people and the Constitution, the troops pushed the Directorate to defend the sovereign will by annihilating it. A crucial contradiction in terms, that was however the very same substance of the instructions that the Directorate sent to Bonaparte for the organization of the republics in Italy with the young general as its head. This metaphysical adventure would have huge consequences, because it was tried in the sphere of principles, which are the bases of the intellectual and moral order.

In the middle of several difficulties, the Directorate was continuing to negotiate peace, in Lille with England and in Italy with Austria. England was willing to let France settle in Antwerp and on the Rhine, if Austria was agreeing, but demanded colonial compensations from Spain and the Netherlands, French allies. In the Directorate there were two factions: the champions of the Revolution, Reubell and La Révellière, were in favour of granting the allies integrity. Carnot and Barthélemy, that were flirting with the opposition, responded that to find peace in Europe it was necessary to demand some sacrifices to the allies. Meanwhile, the 17th of July the Directorate was dismissing Delacroix and nominating Minister of Foreign Affairs Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, in favour of the indemnities for England.

In Vienna, instead, the negotiations were proceeding slowly. On the 19th of August Barras, Reubell, and La Révellière, with the opposition of Carnot and Barthélemy, sent the instructions for peace with Vienna. The 31st of August, the discussion of the treaty began in Udine; the Austrian plenipotentiaries were asking for a reservation to hold a congress in Bern in case the Udine negotiations failed. The French rejected resolutely this reservation: accepting to go to Udine, the emperor renounced forever to the congress of Bern; if the negotiations failed, war would restart. In the session of the 4th of September,

the first three articles of the preliminaries were accepted, the fourth one (about the congress) was skipped, going directly to the fifth, regarding the peace with the empire. The French asked when it would be possible for the Austrians to hold the congress for the definitive peace between France and the empire, also asking that it be held in Rastatt, according to the convention signed in Mombello. The Austrians answered that they were in Udine to deal for the peace of the emperor in quality of King of Hungary and of Bohemia: peace with the empire was another thing, and therefore the plenipotentiaries had no idea of the time and place of the conferences for peace with the empire. The French, astonished, protested: the emperor was not acting in *bona fide*, quite the opposite. Indeed, he wanted to make peace in Italy while continuing the war in the empire. Then the negotiations continued the 6th of September, beginning with Article 6, on the cession of the Austrian Netherlands and the recognition from Austria of the borders of France decreed from the laws of the French Republic. France presented a list longer than expected: Mainz, Worms, Spires, and a part of the High Rhine were included. But the Austrians responded that their recognition of the French borders could refer only to the Austrian Netherlands. Vienna had no right to rule on other parts of the German Empire: it was the sole competence of the empire to decide on this question, over which His Majesty had influence only as sovereign of His State.

Bonaparte was furious. The 9th of September, the discussion on the secret articles began. France claimed that Article 1 attributed to Austria Istria and Dalmatia, without the islands that were indeed not mentioned in the article. Austria answered that "the known dependencies of a country were always implied when ruling on the country itself". Arrived at Article 4, on Venice and the Legations, Vienna was demanding to re-establish the old government in Venice, or at least a similar one. The French replied that this matter was not treated in the article at all, adding that the new government was legitimate because it was formed because of the will of the people. Bonaparte, frustrated, sent numerous letters to Talleyrand complaining about the bad faith Vienna was putting in the negotiations. Bonaparte, unwilling to restart the war, had to convince Austria to accept the conditions of the Directorate. The staffing of the latter changed dramatically in the night between the 3rd and 4th of September: La Révellière and Reubell, in agreement with Barras, acted a *coup d'état*, arresting fifty-four deputies of the opposition and the director Barthélemy; Carnot managed to escape. Merlin de Douai and François de Neufchâteau

substituted the two directors. Freedom was imposed with force; the power of the Revolution was justifying itself with a principle while destroying the very essence of it. The result was that the 20th of September the Holy Roman Emperor wrote to Bonaparte stating that, in order to revitalize the dealings, he nominated the Count of Coblenz minister with full powers of negotiation. The 27th the Count of Coblenz met with Bonaparte: the impact was harsh. The count began by revendicating the right of the emperor to summon the congress of allies, Bonaparte denied it. Then, Coblenz affirmed that the dismemberment of the Serenissima was proposed by Bonaparte, but without anything suggesting a revolution that would change the form of government. Bonaparte replied that the revolution was done by the people and not by him. The disagreements continued. Vienna wanted the mainland of Venice, but France wouldn't accept that unless Austria recognized Mainz as a French possession. And Austria was not willing to do so. The Count explained that according to Article 5 of the preliminaries, peace had to be concluded respecting the integrity of the Germanic empire. Bonaparte insisted instead that Article 6 was about the recognition of the French borders from the Court of Vienna. The latter had to recognize the limits posed by the law of the *République*: it was clear, for the young general, that the Article 5 mentioned by the Count had to be respected "insofar as no derogation appeared in the continuation of the treaty"[18]. In the end, Bonaparte declared that France could conquer all Europe in just two years, and that it would not make peace without Mainz. Coblenz replied that the emperor desired peace but did not feared war. The 4th of October the news that the negotiations of Lille stopped arrived in Udine. Three days later, Bonaparte sent an ultimatum to Vienna. Austria would obtain mainland Venice until the Adige River, the Archbishopric of Salzburg and the Bavaria until the Inn River; France would gain the left side of the Rhine. The non-acceptance of these conditions within twenty-four hours would have meant a resumption of the hostilities. Bonaparte told Coblenz that this unjust procedure was not a figment of his mind, but a forcing acted on him by the Directorate. It is interesting however that there was no reference of such ultimatum in any of the letters of the Directorate or of Talleyrand. Instead of refusing the ultimatum, Coblenz asked for a postponement of eight days, the period necessary to send a courier to Vienna. The following day, however, the Count received a letter from Bonaparte where the latter demanded to sign immediately

[18] Ibidem, p. 287.

the definitive treaty, without waiting for the Austrian courier. Coblenz ran to the town of Passariano, Lombardy, asking for clarifications, and the answer was lying in a letter sent the 24th of September from Paris: the ultimatum as such had to be accepted, otherwise the consequence would have been war. Coblenz signed the protocol the 9th of October, but the negotiations of the 11th were stormy. Finally, six days later the treaty was signed in Passeriano, but dated from Campoformio. There were 25 patent articles and 17 secret ones. With the former, the emperor ceded France the possession of the Venetian islands: Corfu, Zante, Cephalonia, Santa Maura (Lefkada), Cerigo (Kythira); recognized the territories of the Cisalpine Republic; recognized the latter as an independent power comprehending the Austrian Lombardy, the areas of Brescia and Mantua, Peschiera, the parts of Venice not given to Austria, Modena, Massa and Carrara and the three Legations (Bologna, Ferrara, Ravenna); the fusion of the new republic with the Cispadana was completed. In exchange, the emperor received Istria, Dalmatia, the Venetian islands of the Adriatic Sea, the Cattaro (Kotor Bay) area, the city of Venice, mainland Venice until the Adige River; finally, a congress in Rastatt was scheduled for the peace between France and the Empire. With the secret articles, the emperor recognized the Rhine as a frontier for France; France pledged to help the empire obtain the Archbishopric of Salzburg and a part of Bavaria; France would return the possessions on the left side of the Rhine to Prussia, and there would be no new claims from the King of Prussia. This was the treaty of Campoformio (Campoformido).

The 2nd of November, the Baron of Thugut wrote to the ambassador in London that urgent circumstances obliged Austria to strike a deal. Vienna was complaining about being a victim of the use of force. However, making an *ex post* consideration, the treaty was not that bad for Austria: while France will keep Brussels and Milan up to 1814, Austria will remain in Venice until 1866. However, neither Austria nor France were satisfied. Vienna wanted to take possession of the Venetian mainland without destroying Venice and leaving the empire untouched; the Directorate wanted to expel Austria from Italy and gain the Rhine, secularizing the Germanic territories. How did these two powers arrive at such a situation? To answer this question, we can go back to the origins of the Italian adventure, thus to the 1795 plan, with the project of invading Germany through Italy. Such project would have worked if France had had Lombardy for a long time and with secure means of communication. But it did not have it, and there was instead a well-

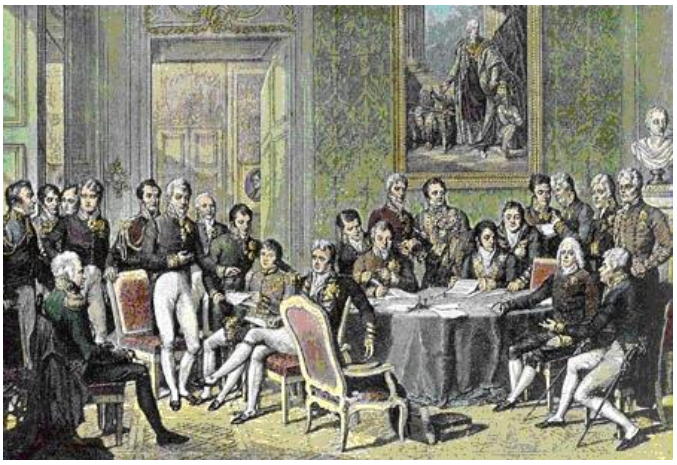
organized Austrian-Sardinian army of around 60,000 men. Only a miracle would have made the Italian Army, with its 40,000 men at maximum, win over the enemy. Generals and statesmen of the XVII century would have rejected the plan as absurd and impossible, but the spirit of adventure was blessed: the unexpected weakness of the Court of Turin was for the Revolution the first of a long series of lucky events. Secondly, all the states showed apathy toward the invasion. Meanwhile, the fast march on Milan, the capitulation of all of Italy, the defeats of Wurmser and Alvinczy crafted and then strengthened the conditions for the idealization of Bonaparte as the "new Alexander". After the numerous victories, the Directorate was then willing to proceed with the full 1795 plan, invading the hereditary states. But near the conclusion, the plan that was brilliantly succeeding, got stuck in a stalemate. Italy was divided into two parties: the supporters of the Revolution and the friends of the *Ancien Régime*. The plan failed not because it was poorly executed, but rather because it was itself intrinsically impossible since the very beginning. To place a bandage over this failure, Bonaparte signed the preliminaries in Leoben, destroying Venice and creating the Cisalpine Republic. These two events would disrupt the equilibrium of the Italian system and then, consequently, of the Western system as a whole. Vienna hoped to slowly acquire and digest Venice; Paris thought the same with Lombardy. Both were daydreaming. In Italy the result was that the Revolution did not free the country: instead, a process of secularization occurred. The Papacy was humiliated, the Church was stripped, and the social life was secularized. Campoformio was not a peace; it was the genesis of a general war that would end only at Waterloo. In 1802, at Amiens, England would lose interest towards the Rhine, including Belgium, asking for nothing in exchange. Despite this, the treaty of Amiens, a bright star of French history, would last less than a year. The main cause of such failure was not Belgium: they were Malta and Italy. As long as France fought within its natural limits, it was the strongest. Campoformio took it outside its natural borders: once it got out, it could no longer re-enter them and got bogged down in an adventure with no limits and no way out. Napoleon and the Directorate, contrary to the traditional belief, were often in agreement. The *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire (9th of November 1799), was not ideated nor prepared by Bonaparte, but by the Directorate gathered around Sieyès. Napoleon was called because he was a celebrity. It was considered enough to give him some soldiers to gain the command of the Paris garrison. The expedient was dangerous, the decree illegal

since the legislative body had no right to create military commands. The 19th of Brumaire, when the parliament was invaded, the soldiers, who were republicans, did not know Napoleon personally, and thus not feeling obliged to obey, refused to march. The coup succeeded because Lucien Bonaparte presented himself to the soldiers not as the general's brother, but in his capacity as President of the Five Hundred, i.e. as the legitimate head of one of the two assemblies. Back to the Treaty of Amiens. From this moment on, the rise of Napoleon continued rapidly. The internal and foreign policy of Napoleon were chained by the fear of the huge conquers done: obsessed by Austrian revanchism, Napoleon decided to weaken Austria more and more. Napoleon made the war to build an empire that would comprehend Spain, the Netherlands, and a part of Germany. The ideas of the Revolution spread in Europe less than the armies of the Revolution: more than with the ideals, it was with force that the Revolution acted in Europe. The strength used to oblige people to be free, instilled in the letter of the Directorate of the 7th of April, was an extravagant abuse of force that established the seed of future abominations. Fascism, Nazism, and Bolshevism derived from that[19]. In 1814, Europe was saved from catastrophe when mankind realized the insurmountable limits of force and mastered itself. But the experience was gradually forgotten by the subsequent generations; the illusion of almighty force overcame the spirits; and a century later, in 1914, the world once again embarked on an immense adventure where it again trampled the limits of force.

[19] Ibidem, p. 321.

CHAPTER 2: DIPLOMACY

The constructive spirit *par excellence*: Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord



2The Congress of Vienna

Two well distinct factions were developing the 14th of July 1789: while on one side the revolutionaries were joyful, on the other, the peasants feared the downfall of society. Indeed, the ancient monarchic authority, despite exploiting them, was also the only authoritative figure that the peasants knew: its fall would have meant ending up in the clutches of brigands. “Revolution” is a term that contains two main meanings. Firstly, we mean a new orientation of the human spirit, an open door to the future: in this sense we talk about Christianity and Renaissance as two great “revolutions” of humanity. Revolution is also the reversal of an ancient legality, the partial or total subversion of established rules. The two meanings are of different nature and are not conditioned by each other. When the two happen at the same time, extraordinary complications then occur. In the French Revolution, the old monarchic legality fell, in the same moment when France was impressing a new orientation of the spirit to the state and to society. On one side, a creative force, on the other a destructive one, that have disrupted, diverted, paralysed, and ultimately annihilated their generating entities. The “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” is the magnificent door opened to the future: a new orientation of the human spirit, promise of a new reign based not on fear but rather on freedom, equality, and fraternity (note how these are three strongly Catholic messages). When authority paralyzed, the masses started revolting, barracks and convents emptied out all over France, soldiers and monks deserted, the army dispersed, justice and police ceased to function, no one paid taxes and lords' fees anymore. Once the law, pillar of society, collapsed, great and humble, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, all began to

tremble equally. After the storming of the Bastille, Louis XVI was a frightened king, full of the responsibilities of power but without power. Without an army, without judges, without police, without law, with a depleted treasury, the Chief Executive could not agree with Parliament nor being its loyal collaborator. For the same reasons, the Constituent and the Legislative assemblies were impotent: for a representative system to work, a solid legality was necessary. Monarchy, though mutilated, scared the Revolution in a way that the latter destroys the former to proclaim the Republic. The fear inside the newly formed Republic begets twins: the guillotine and war without rules. The biggest danger was the latter: through the war without rules, the Revolution struck terror to the enemy. Moreover, France was able to revolutionize Italy, and at the same time many courts in Europe were beginning to be disturbed by the spirit of adventure. At the beginning, the adventure claimed some successes: the Treaty of Lunéville, where Austria accepted the Rhineland arrangement of France; the Treaty of Amiens, where England bowed. But this was nothing more than a fleeting illusion. With a coup the Consulate was no longer decennial but for life; then, another coup re-established monarchy under another form: the Empire. Meanwhile, war broke again. The coups that brought the Empire were inspired not only by ambition and absolute power, but also by fear. After Austerlitz and Pressburg (Bratislava), Napoleon was frightened of the mutilation inflicted on Austria and the revenge Austria might attempt: to prevent this revenge, he destroyed the Holy Empire, proclaimed himself protector of the Rhine Confederation and went to war in 1806. After the victory of Jena, Prussia was fragmented, and it seemed that the two Germanic powers were now doomed. To further weaken Austria, Napoleon wanted to resurrect Poland, creating the Duchy of Warsaw, a weak fragment of nation. Dreading the Bourbons of France, he invaded Spain, at the same time multiplying gifts to his family. At a certain point, the Austrian monarchy, revolving in a state of fear, legitimated the Emperor of France with a wedding.

During the cold winter of 1813-1814, in Paris, a man was thinking about the great fear that was dominating the world. Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, born in Paris in 1754 from an ancient noble family, was sent to pursue a religious career at the age of 25. Despite his intelligence, nine years later, in 1788, he was still the Abbot of Périgord. He was leading a debauched life, without covering it: a protest against his century. He rebelled against his mother, his family, the Church, and his epoch. His father

instead judged his son's scandalous actions with a certain leniency, because on his deathbed he had asked Louis XVI to grant him a bishopric. Implacable, his mother had begged the king not to tarnish the church by appointing such a bishop. However, Louis XVI had accepted the dying man's prayer and appointed the Abbot of Périgord as Bishop of Autun on November 2, 1788. He was consecrated on January 16, 1789, went to his diocese, left after a month, and never returned. He went to Versailles for the beginning of the Revolution. It was him who proposed to the Constituent Assembly the secularization of the Church properties, the 10th of October 1789. Breaking definitely with the Church, he sent his resignation as bishop to the king, regardless of the Pope. The 7th of November 1792 went to London, from where he continued to help the Revolution, but at a safe distance. His foreign policy plan was redacted as "Memorial on France's current relations with other European states"[20]. At its conclusion, we can find a suggestion to France and England to agree to free all their colonial possessions, and to convince Spain to do the same. Colonies would not be able to grow unless free. In the document, there are condemnations of conquest wars and of war in general. Rejected by his mother and family, disowned by the nobility, excommunicated by the Church, he was eventually driven out even by the Revolution. The 28th of January 1794, England expelled him: he then went to the United States. the 4th of September 1795, his (few) friends in France obtained a convention decree annulling the 1792 indictment and authorising him to return. Despite being a former noble and bishop, a woman, M.me de Staël, made him Minister of Foreign Affairs. Anything is possible under the Revolution. In a briefing sent to the Directorate a few months after Campoformio, Talleyrand explained that the two opponents represented irreconcilable

3Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord

[20] Il Congresso di Vienna, 1814-1815: Talleyrand e la ricostruzione dell'Europa, G. Ferrero, p. 19.

principles, they distrusted each other, and the Revolution no longer recognised the true nature of force and its limits: it believed that it could achieve everything by winning battles. He literally stated: "The result of weapons is momentary, while hatred subsists"[21]. How was it possible then to reconcile the accuses of being ambitious and of inordinate covetousness while reading such report addressed to the Directorate? In fact, ambition and greed take advantage of the passing moment as if it were absolute, as long as it is favourable to them. Appalled by the unrest in Europe, he also had the illusion that he could found a government on a paralogism in action: the result was a partial reconciliation with the Church, the re-establishment of absolutism, the decision to recall the nobility, the abolition of equality and freedom. But it was not yet the moment to reconcile with the Church for Talleyrand. He was living with M.me Grand, a French woman born in India. The First Consul set in motion all the influences at his disposal in Rome: archivists, theologians, canonists were mobilised. In vain: if Talleyrand had been what he still was nine months before the Revolution, abbot of Périgord, he could have, from a simple priest, passed into the crowd of prevaricators. But he was a bishop: in eighteen centuries, the Church had never allowed the marriage of a bishop. The character of a bishop is indelible. A civil marriage, in front of men rather than in front of God, would have meant a new break with the old nobility, who were almost all reconciling with the new regime. If Talleyrand had been an ambitious cynic and greedy, as he is usually portrayed by history, he would not have hesitated for a moment to sacrifice M.me Grand to his career. But he married her. He understood that the Constitution of the Year VIII, the masterpiece of Sieyès, needed to be sustained by force and lie. Once it was understood to be impossible to govern France in the name of the French people because of the intrinsic contradictions of the Republic, Talleyrand realized that the only option was to restore the monarchy with a new dynasty. Thus, the Empire was born. Talleyrand became Great Chamberlain in 1804 and Prince of Benevento in 1806. In 1805 he was writing to the Emperor about a peace proposal. Napoleon should have driven Austria out of Italy, but also withdrawing France from it, re-establishing the Republic of Venice, dividing the two crowns of Italy and France, letting Austria seek compensation in the East and granting it peace terms that would make a Franco-Austrian alliance possible. But he was not listened to. The Treaty of Pressburg expelled Austria from the peninsula, annexed its territories to the Kingdom

[21] Ibidem, p. 23.

of Italy, subjected the whole Italy to the sovereignty or protectorate of France: quite the opposite of the project proposed by Talleyrand. The Emperor Napoleon and his minister no longer understood each other. Talleyrand prepared the decree for the continental blockade as Napoleon asked. Despite this, in the report that preceded the decree of the blockade redacted by himself, Talleyrand defended the rights of the people and firmly condemned the continental blockade. Obsessed by the fear of a Germanic revanche, Napoleon, in the spring of 1808, dethroned the Bourbons of Spain. With the war in Spain going on, Napoleon aimed to disarm Prussia and Austria. After the Treaty of Tilsit (1807), it was not difficult to deal with Prussia. To disarm Austria would have been more difficult. For this reason, Napoleon tried to negotiate with the Emperor Alexander I, at Erfurt, with Talleyrand. Instead of helping his Emperor, Talleyrand convinced Alexander to resist to the demands of Napoleon. The betrayal of Erfurt still remains an enigmatic historical event. The key to this event may be found in the opposition between the spirit of adventure and the spirit of construction.

Disorder in society is the permanence of the unexpected in human relationships; order is the possibility to foresee how men will behave, at least in ordinary circumstances. The constructive spirit is the set of moral and intellectual qualities needed to discover and impose these rules; the first creation of such spirit is the juridical order. As much as the legal order is the simplest product of the constructive spirit, making good codes and enforcing them requires many rare qualities: a strong and clear feeling for justice combined with great humanity, dialectical acuity and generalising intelligence, and a thorough knowledge of men. Yet, even if it uses all these qualities to accomplish the simplest tasks, the constructive spirit never succeeds in definitively and completely imposing respect for justice on men. The autonomy of the human spirit is such that it never allows itself to be completely dominated. However, despite its weaknesses, the legal order is based on concrete foundations: precise texts and organisation of force capable of reacting against those who break the laws. The task of the constructive spirit is more complex once one moves to the higher sphere of the moral order, where coercion is no longer possible. Every man knows the principles of morality, but in a confused manner, and obnubilated by the whirlwind of the passions, so that he can easily confuse and invert them. What is good for one will be evil for another; the same man will judge good today what he will judge evil tomorrow. The constructive spirit puts order in the

chaos of freedom. It formulates moral rules, trying to sculpt them in the individual consciences, making them categorical imperatives accepted by all: and in this, religions are the most powerful instrument of the constructive spirit. In the decisive moment of choice, the human conscience must regulate by itself. The state, as a sovereign, is not obliged from a superior force to respect the rules that itself or morality posed. However, to avoid becoming the terror of those it is supposed to protect, it should spontaneously accept some limitations. Although the described situation presents its difficulties in the national context, it is even worse in the international context. When the people do not want to live in the wild isolation derived from the continuous state of siege, they feel the need of a certain international order, i.e., of a certain possibility of foreseeing when and under which conditions there could be an attack.

The public order, then, as the moral order, can only exist for acts and processes of self-regulation. But the political self-regulation is the most necessary and the most difficult among all the tasks of the constructive spirit. The most necessary because if it is absent, then men are condemned to live in perpetual barbarism, to discover that force is a tool of man only if he is able to limit himself: abuses of force end up terrorizing the one who commits them even more than the ones who suffer them. Only a mature and sufficiently aware power can understand the implications of limitless use of force; such power would clearly recognize the fallacy, the limits, and the pitfalls of force. When dealing with force, almost all men bow to strength and sometimes, out of weakness, admire it. A certain number admire it and even sincerely adore it, out of inhumanity. Finally, a small select band of profoundly human men, or saints or sages, abhor it. When Talleyrand wrote the *Memorial* in 1792, he was but a sage who distrusted violence and hoped that the Revolution would put an end to the XVIII century's wars of expansion and balance. These wars were provoked by the growing imbalance between the territorial distribution of the monarchies and the forces that supported them: the ambitions of the courts, the wealth, culture, and military power of the states, and the needs and aspirations of the peoples. Wars had multiplied and had become long, bloody, and costly, and had provoked in the European elite the great reaction of the law of the peoples. The latter was a complex tumultuous (and at times incoherent) movement ~~that~~ sought to limit the frequency and violence of wars, and to stabilise peace, by subjecting the force of arms to a system of rules that would correct its abuses and whose source was in the nature of man.

Philosophers and jurists like Grotius, Wolff, Pufendorf, Vattel, developed principles of law on the subject. Churchmen such as Bossuet and Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon sought to impart values such as justice and charity, drawing from Christianity all that was necessary to help man resist the passions unleashed by violence. Finally, writers, including Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and Volney, had created models for statesmen, even if often chimerical, of wisdom and humanity, bringing together reason and sentiment. Montesquieu indeed wrote: "The law of the peoples is naturally founded on this principle: that the different nations must do themselves the greatest good in peace, and the least possible harm in war, without harming their true interests"[22]. This movement, very present and influent in France, exerted a strong pressure on statesmen, generals, and sovereigns such as Louis XIV or even Frederick II in Germany. The movement contributed to create the "war by the book", i.e., the system of self-regulation that impeded to become itself excessively violent and destructive. Talleyrand read the writings both Catholic and secular, that strived to promote law, justice, charity, wisdom, humanity, philosophy, and the Gospel. Six years later, when writing as a minister the report on the peace of Campoformio, he was no longer a scholar who detested war: he was at that time a diplomat, a statesman who noted that the rate of wars was increasing, while at the same time those wars were becoming less scrupulous. Talleyrand was brought by his studies and determination to propose, in 1798, the constructive spirit to the spirit of adventure. Around 1805, he stated that peace could not be seen if Italy had not regained the partial form of independence it previously enjoyed. Prophetic as it may seem, right after Austerlitz, in 1805, Talleyrand understood that such a victory was a double-edged sword, for a winner that was not able to make peace. With a totally different version of the situation from Napoleon, Talleyrand sent his resignations in 1807. After them, he betrayed Napoleon in Erfurt because, following his reasoning, to disarm Austria, a great power, and to subjugate its military force to France and Russia was a huge and monstruous abuse of force that, prompted by fear, would have plunged the whole Europe into a terrifying chaos. To understand well Talleyrand, he can be compared to a seer among the blinds, who risked his own life to save France, Austria, Europe, and Napoleon himself. But how can it be explained that such a man, who loved power, glory, and wealth, had such an attitude when dealing with the general and personal interests? The explanation

[22] Ibidem, p. 42.

lays in the fact that he could no longer break with the Revolution after having revolted against the *Ancien Régime*. Therefore, he ended up in a limbo: he served Napoleon for his thirsty ambition but at the same time he had some reserves because his soul revolted when the abuse of force for which he was supposed to be responsible became too absurd and dangerous. He was doomed to be in a continuous conflict with himself and with the others. With himself because he served the blind by seeing the abyss towards which he could not stop them; with the others because the Church detested him, the nobility disowned him, the Revolution and Counter-Revolution distrusted him. His relationship with Napoleon shows the most intriguing pair of men so brilliant but at the same time so different. On one side, an outperformer, on the other, an adventurer; on one hand, the constructive spirit, on the other the spirit of adventure; one was a true realist, the other an illusionist. Spied on from all sides, persecuted left and right, at the mercy of Napoleon, Talleyrand lived between 1810 and 1814 like a man condemned to death, not knowing whether the next day he would receive a high office of the Empire or a cell in Vincennes prison. But despite this, he stubbornly sought in his solitude the means of his personal salvation in the common salvation.

In Talleyrand's *Memories*, it is possible to find, among the various topics, ideas, and events that he deals with and writes about, a philosophical dissertation on the foundational elements of power. He was questioning about the future of France after Napoleon. He firstly excluded the family of Napoleon, Austria, Bernadotte, and the Duke of Orléans as possible succeeding entities to Napoleon. Then, made some reflections on the usurpation of the French monarchy: "The triumphant usurpation in France had therefore not made as great an impression on Europe as it should have. Spirits had been affected more by the effects than by the cause, as if those had been independent of the latter. France had then fallen into no less serious errors. Since under Napoleon the country appeared to be strong and quietly in possession of a certain prosperity, the persuasion had arisen that it matters little to a country on what rights its government is based. On further reflection it could be seen that this strength was only precarious, that this tranquillity had no solid foundation, that this prosperity, which was partly the result of the devastation of other countries, could not last"[23]. Indeed, by making a comparison between Spain and France and their respective efforts against the enemy, it is possible to observe some differences. In fact,

[23] Ibidem, p. 54-55.

Spain, with no money, no army, weakened by a government of incompetents, under an inept king, was able to fight against a gargantuan power (France) for six years and win. France, instead, that reached the highest glory of strength and power under Napoleon, succumbed to the Sixth Coalition after a few months of invasion. Talleyrand continued: "France was indeed calm, it is true, under Napoleon, but its tranquillity was due to the fact that an iron hand squeezed and threatened to crush everything that moved, and it could not without danger loosen its grip for a single moment. On the other hand, how could one believe that this tranquillity could survive who had put all his greatest energy into maintaining it? Since he alone by the right of the strongest had become master of France, could not his generals, after him, take possession of it in the same way? He had shown by his own example that a little skill or luck was enough to seize power. How many would not have wanted to try their luck with such a brilliant prospect? France would then perhaps have had as many emperors as armies, and, tearing itself apart, would have perished in the convulsions of civil war"[24]. Talleyrand believed then that it was crucial for Europe to ban the doctrines of usurpation and to substitute with legitimacy to avoid chaos. Under a system ruled by force, power is just a perpetual fight among those that, believing to be the strongest, yearn to command. To avoid such a scenario, for the power to be the diadem of reason and the maker of rules, its subjects must collaborate with a certain spontaneous consent, voluntarily bending to its orders. The subjects will not bend spontaneously if they do not recognize that power has the right to command, whatever the necessary force to impose its orders. Force is not the genesis, but rather the servant of the right to rule. Power may not be easy to recognize, especially when passions and interests abound, and when there aren't rules are accepted as right and reasonable when dealing with the attribution of power. These rules begin with the extremely simple though relevant factor of excluding the unworthy. In the western world, the rules for the attribution and the transmission of power were deriving from two principles: heredity and election. Heredity, accompanied by a thorough education and supported by vigorous traditions, can provide the state with a well-prepared workforce; with election, any electoral system presupposes that the electors (cardinals in conclave, princes-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, or universal suffrage of our time) have a certain natural or transcendent capacity to choose. Therefore, when Talleyrand referred to legitimacy and

[24] Ibidem, p. 55.

usurpation, it is plausible to infer that usurpation is present when power tries to justify itself with a principle of legitimacy not accepted by those who obey or is not respected by those who rule. The legitimacy of the monarchy results from the ancient state of possession, as for private individuals the legitimacy stems from the right of ownership. Time is necessary for the creation of legitimacy, but not sufficient. If all the governments require some time to be accepted as legitimate, they need a principle of legitimacy that is simple, clear, consistent with itself both in theory and in practice. The Directorate was not able to become a legitimate government: it gave to power the tools to oblige the people to exert sovereignty exactly as the power wished; the delegation of the people can only legitimise power if it is a free act. A captive sovereign is a contradiction in which the principle of legitimacy is destroyed by its application; a principle that is destroyed in application becomes a mystification; and time cannot transform a mystification into a principle of legitimacy, which should ensure order and peace. Napoleon could maintain his monarchy thanks to his numerous victories; once defeated, he would not have the courage to sign a peace that could demonstrate his loss, nor the strength to impose that to France; only a legitimate government would have had the courage and the strength to do so. And the only legitimate government possible in France was the old monarchy. A part of the population still believed in the divine right of the king, while no one longer had faith in the democratic principle, after the many falsifications that took place under the Revolution. Talleyrand thus continued: "Thus, once the needs of France and Europe were recognized, everything had to contribute to making the restoration of the Bourbons easy, because reconciliation could take place frankly. The Bourbons alone could, at a similar moment and without danger for Europe, drive away the foreign armies that occupied the country"[25]. However, Talleyrand believed that the ruler alone, the brother of Louis XVI, would not be able to restore the old monarchy and therefore bear the weight of power. For Talleyrand, the ruler would have had to surround the throne with representative institutions, at the same time recognizing the right of opposition with the freedoms it entails.

In 1813 Talleyrand was offered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After he rejected the offer, Napoleon thought about sending him to Vincennes; but then thought about something else: he decided to appoint Charles-Maurice member of the Regency Council,

[25] Ibidem, p. 65.

the organ that substituted him during war. Interesting to note that it would have been easier to break out from the jail of Vincennes rather than from the Regency Council. Talleyrand was talking to everyone: he even met in secret with Aimée de Coigny, a fervent realist, who aimed at restoring the Bourbons. But in his position, with his life at stake, Talleyrand could not expose himself, and thus could not tell or manifest what he thought. Meanwhile, Austria, with the objective of overthrowing Napoleon, did not hesitate to recognize and help one of the usurpations that the French Emperor imposed in Italy, the Court of Naples under Murat. Talleyrand was more uneasy than before: Europe was opening the negotiations with a man that should be destroyed by Europe itself, right in the moment when it was possible to annihilate him. The Prince of Benevento did not hesitate to go into action by sending a letter to Nesselrode written with invisible ink. The Baron of Vitrolles, Talleyrand's herald, went to the Allies explaining that to make peace it was necessary to firstly break the negotiations with Napoleon and then reinstating Louis XVIII. The 12th of March, Metternich coldly replied that the matter regarding the future of France did not regard France; moreover, the Allies were ready to make peace with the government that France would have given itself. Five days later, the baron went to the tsar. The latter, though less cold than Metternich, did not have sympathy for the Bourbons, judging them uncapable of governing. Finally, the 19th of March, de Vitrolles met Castlereagh in a café: the latter explained how he and the regent were personally in favour of the Bourbons, but the public opinion was not. While the Allies were winning in Russia, in Germany, in Spain, and more, they were increasingly frightened. Indeed, for each victory they were reporting, they had to take on the burden of countries now without a government, in which, despite the military occupation and perhaps because of the occupation itself, revolutionary ferments, provoked and compressed by the Napoleonic regime, were maturing. The apocalyptic territories, afflicted by famine, plague, and the war itself, infected the spirits with rapidity and violence. France was suffering the invasion with an unexpected passivity that disturbed the Allies. They tried then to make peace with Napoleon, but the more they were fighting, the more peace was becoming difficult to make. The old monarchies of Europe were at war against a state that was strengthened by the fame of its extraordinary power. Each loss that they inflicted to France diminished the reputation of its power and thus its force. The more the reputation of its force was compromised by the defeats, the less Napoleon was available to recognize in a

treaty to have been defeated. In November, in Frankfurt, the Allies seemed to be prone to offer France its natural borders. After Bordeaux had a revolt on the 12th of March, giving thus a strong sign against Napoleon, Talleyrand was more convinced to approach Louis XVIII; he thus became more open with Aimée de Coigny. Meanwhile, the 20th of March Napoleon suffered a defeat at Arcis-sur-Aube, and went East, trying to pull back the Allies; they however decided to continue, and the armies of Prussia and Russia marched toward Paris. While chaos dominated Paris, the Empress and the King of Rome left Paris. The 30th of March, the Russian and Prussian troops attacked Paris, defended by the Duke of Ragusa and the Duke of Treviso. The same day, hearing the news that Napoleon left the capital to the enemy and that the following day Russian and Prussians would have entered Paris, Talleyrand saw the chance to execute his project and went to meet the foreign envoys. His life was at stake: being a high administrator of the French Empire, his attempt to communicate with the Russian Empire was an act of rebellion that would cost him his life.

Talleyrand believed that only a legitimate power, Louis XVIII, could have made a long-lasting peace with the Allies, if the latter had not abused of their victory. He wanted to remain in Paris, meet with the Tsar Alexander and convince him not to negotiate with Napoleon; then, he aimed at deposing Napoleon to recall Louis XVIII and craft a liberal constitution for France. But this plan had several difficulties. First, Talleyrand could not remain in Paris: Napoleon ordered the Council of Regency to leave the capital. To go over this issue, Talleyrand asked Remusat, the commander of the national guard at the border of the Champs Elysees, to block his way when he came to the door to follow the French empress.

After this, there was however another problem: he and Alexander were enemies. So, the evening of the 30th of March, Talleyrand went to the Duke of Ragusa, looking for Fëdor Grigor'evič Orlov or Nesselrode. Once there, he gave the following message to Orlov to be sent to the Emperor Alexander: "Do you want us to talk a second time, as in Erfurt, about the salvation of the world? I am ready". The point was that only the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia were in Paris because the Emperor of Austria and Metternich were in Dijon. Moreover, no representative of the British government was in a Russian-Prussian headquarter: this meant that the answer to Talleyrand's question had to be taken from Alexander with the responsibility for the entire Alliance. Timing was

crucial: under the combined impressions of the entry of allied troops into Paris and a solemn declaration that France would remain intact, as to the situation it enjoyed before the Revolution, the Senate could, without encountering resistance, depose Napoleon and recall Louis XVIII. After the deliberation of the Senate, it would have been easy to make the soldiers lay down their arms, and then restore the Bourbons and parliamentary institutions. This was quite an ambitious project to execute in a day to conclude a conflict that went on for twenty-two years. The day he went to Orlov, Talleyrand also met with Alexandre-Joseph de Boisgelin, who was representing Louis XVIII. The morning of the 31st of March, the Prince of Benevento met with Nesselrode, who told him that the tsar accepted the offer and decided to meet in Rue Saint-Florentin. There, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, the Prince of Schwarzenberg and the Prince of Lichtenstein (both representing Austria), Nesselrode, the general Pozzo di Borgo, the Duke Dalberg, and Talleyrand discussed the future of Europe. Three (secret) conditions were achieved during that meeting. First, a regime of freedom was needed for France; second, power had to progressively humanized through the free consent of the people; finally, rules of international politics based on justice were established. The external order and the internal order of states are linked: peace will only last between states ruled by governments free of passions and unbridled ambition. On the Russian side, the problematic of the fall of the monarchy in France was not fully understood at that time. Indeed, despite westernized by Peter the Great, Russia, separated from Europe by Poland, had been concerned with European affairs only occasionally and at intervals. Catherine II, making profit from the chaos generated by the Revolution, took over Poland; after that, the main focus of Russia was still the East. Meanwhile, the French Empire grew larger year by year, terrorizing Europe and itself terrified and intoxicated by its own greatness. Despite having found these conditions once he ascended the throne, in 1804 the 27-year-old Tsar Alexander initially decided to take action to rebuild the European system. But then, given Prussia's inertia, Austria's

4Portrait of Tsar Alexander I

weakness, England's indecision, and his own temperament, Alexander decided to destroy the European system, guaranteeing good compensations to Russia by allying with Napoleon. Aged thirty-seven, with a past made of an involuntary patricide, three coalitions against France and the alliance with Napoleon, the war and invasion of 1812, the war of 1813 in Germany, and to conclude the march on Paris, the Tsar took revenge with his army in the French capital, with the aim to make a durable peace that would allow the world to live again. Unable to make peace with Napoleon, to avoid being lost in a vacuum, Alexander correctly deciphered the message sent from Talleyrand. The 1st of April the Parisians found in the walls the following message: "The armies of the Allies occupied the capital of France. The allied Rulers accepted the vote of the French nation. They declare: that the peace conditions had to contain stronger guarantees, when it came to crushing Bonaparte's ambition, but they will be much milder, if with a return to a wise government, France itself will offer the assurance of resipiscence. The allied Sovereigns therefore proclaim: that they will no longer deal with Napoleon Bonaparte, nor with any other member of his family; that they respect the integrity of ancient France as it existed under its legitimate kings. They can also do more, since they always take into account the principle that for the fortunes of Europe it is necessary for France to be great and strong; they will recognize and guarantee the Constitution that the French Nation will want to assume. They therefore invite the Senate to appoint a provisional government that can provide for the needs of the administration and prepare the Constitution that will suit the French people. The intentions I express here are shared by all the Allied Powers, Alexander"[26]. The tsar went back to the ideas he had in 1804, signing the first act of courage of the Allies in twenty-five years. It was now time to reconstruct.

The Treaty of Paris: the long path of diplomacy

The 31st of March 1814 the destiny of Europe was decided for a century by two men. They aimed at the restoration of peace and of public law, the reconciliation of states, the humanization of power. The 1st of April, the Senate named a provisional government of five members with Talleyrand at its head, with the scope of crafting a constitution that could suit the French people. Two days later, Napoleon was deposed by the Senate. The 5th of April, the project of the constitution was approved at unanimity by the Senate,

[26] Ibidem, p. 104-105.

though there were 63 members present out of 140 total. The 11th, the plenipotentiaries of the Emperor, i.e., Calaincourt, Macdonald, and Ney, signed in Paris the treaty that regularized the future of the Bonaparte family. Napoleon signed it the day after, accepting to go to the Island of Elba with a pension of two million and a half francs per year. The same day, the Count of Artois, brother of Louis XVIII, went back to Paris, after twenty-five years, as lieutenant of the king. Principles are like bones: they sustain society as bones do with the body; they grow, and they die. The legitimacy of Talleyrand was alive, born from the conjunction of the monarchic principle together with the popular sovereignty. There was however a problem to solve: the conflict between the Senate, a phantom, and realism, the skeleton. Despite having been an instrument of the Napoleonic regime, the Senate believed it had the power to give the chance to Louis XVIII to be king only after having ratified the constitution. But the realists, on the other side, thought that Louis XVIII never stopped reigning, because the power was immutable, given that it was conferred to him by God. To solve the *impasse*, Talleyrand, together with Fouché, convinced the Senate to entrust the government of France to the Count of Artois, with the title of lieutenant general of the kingdom waiting for King Louis XVIII to accept the constitution. The 15th of April, the Emperor of Austria arrived in Paris, with Metternich and Castlereagh waiting for him. The three of them were not very happy of the manifest of Alexander in France: for them, Alexander had been overly conciliatory. It is extremely important to remember that in just one day the hand of Talleyrand brought peace in Europe, liberating it from war: this helps explaining the happiness of the people when the tsar arrived. Metternich had a different opinion of Alexander. He considered the latter as a hysteric, not serious nor savvy, and even dangerous.

5Portrait of Metternich

Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar, Prince of Metternich-Winneburg zu Beilstein was instead a clever aristocrat, prudent and more inclined to bow to force rather than to contrast it. While Talleyrand was a philosopher capable to coordinate reality with the principles that hold it, Metternich was an artist capable of naturally understanding reality. He was not

enough a philosopher to trust any principle, like Talleyrand did. Metternich hated viscerally the Revolution, seen as a new orientation and subversion of rules, but thought that it was an incurable disease. Indeed, posed limited trust in the Church and in the monarchy, the natural enemies of the Revolution. He mistrusted everything and everyone: France, Louis XVIII, Napoleon, the Bourbons, Talleyrand, Alexander, the Revolution, the Restoration. Castlereagh was very different. He was a spirit crystallized by the political empiricism of his government, understanding nothing of the passionate exaltation and ideological cataclysm that transfigured Europe. Instead, he saw an imbalance of forces harmful to England, which had to be eliminated, forcing France to return to its former borders. Talleyrand, Alexander, Metternich, and Castlereagh were the quartet in charge to put an end to more than twenty years of conflict. The peace treaty is in general something complicated: on one side, there is the coercive action from the winner, that needs however to be accepted and to receive consent from the loser. The consequence would be that otherwise the peace treaties, being in their nature an imposition of the force, should last until the force can impose them: once it ends, the defeated would no longer have the moral duty to respect the treaty and would thus rebel. But in such conditions the peace treaties would just be truces. The preliminaries of the 3rd of April were the second act of courage, after the manifest of the 31st of March, taken by the Allies. They were leaving the French territory before having concluded peace. Everything was ready for the peace, except made for Louis XVIII, that was suffering for a gout attack. After having arrived, he accepted the text prepared by Talleyrand in agreement with Alexander, but with profound reworkings. The constitution of the Senate was refused, but the guarantees asked in it were respected. The reason of such decision was that the Senate as an entity was deriving from the Revolution and was thus lacking the authority to give France the freedom the latter was aspiring to. Louis XVIII did not attribute his reintegration to the Allies, nor to Talleyrand, nor to himself; he was reinstated as king thanks to the principle embodied in his person. He then returned convinced that he owed the crown only to his own right, superior to circumstances and to the accidents. The articles that the king liked least were 2 and 29. In the former, he had been recalled and elected by the people, whereas his intention was to be Louis XVII's legitimate successor instead. In the latter, he did not agree with the portrayal of himself as being the agent of the agonizing revolution, but rather as a sovereign inspired by God to perfect the institutions of his people. The 3rd of

May, he entered the capital and substituted the provisional government with a definitive one. Talleyrand became the Minister of Foreign Affairs of a cabinet and Prime Minister of France. However, a ranked nobleman, an apostate and married bishop, a former minister of the Directorate, of the consulate, of the empire, he could not be a duplicate of the King of France by the grace of God. The 13th of May, as Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Kingdom of France, he was in charge to negotiate peace with the coalition: England, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, Portugal, and Spain. The Allies were re-establishing the law of the peoples, with the connected moral scope aimed at wisdom, fairness, and humanity in relations between men and states. To reconstruct the European system, the Allies were proposing acceptable conditions to France. The latter received Mulhouse, Landau, and Chambery; England gave back the colonies, the deposits, the fisheries that France detained until the 1st of January 1792 in America, Africa, and Asia, exception made for the islands of Tobago, Saint Lucie, Ile de France, and San Domingo, that now had to be given back to Spain. The Allies renounced to any form of indemnity: they did not even ask to get back the artworks that the Revolution gained *manu militari*. They were focused on the fate of the territories that were conquered and occupied by France, having in mind that sovereignty could be considered as achieved from the conqueror only if the defeated sovereign would confer it via treaty. Therefore, the territories that France gained with the Treaty of Tolentino, 1797, were kept, while the others that were taken in 1808 were given back to the Pope; the same with the King of Sardinia. Considering that this process was going to take a long time, the Allies concluded peace with France in Paris, with the expected continuation of negotiations in a congress in Vienna. The conditions for this congress were established in Paris through articles and secret clauses. Article 6 declared that the Allies were pledged to France to respect the independence of Germany, Switzerland, and that part of Italy which was not to be attributed to Austria: that is, not to enlarge these countries to the detriment of France with disguised protectorates. The second secret article was a commitment of Austria to take nothing more than Lombardy and Veneto; the third secret article established the independence of the Netherlands, ruled by the House of Orange. Finally, the fourth secret article organized the borders on the Rhine, creating an equilibrium between Prussia and France. The first secret article was the foundational pillar that demanded France to commit to accept the principles according to which the powers would distribute

territories, a thing that France did the 30th of May 1814. On that day, winners and losers collaborated to make a durable peace with a real constructive spirit. This was possible thanks to Talleyrand, that was the role model of the respect of the defeated since its opposition to Napoleon after Austerlitz. England, Prussia, and Austria had their requests already present in the agreements of the 30th of May, but Russia did not.

Thanks to a telegram sent by Friedrich von Gentz, we know that the Emperor of Russia aimed at forming a separate state, the Kingdom of Poland, and crowning himself the King of Poland. While it was thought that Alexander wanted Poland and not really the liberation of Europe, it must be noted that Russia had nothing to gain from peace. Moreover, it was devastated in 1812, and though Alexander was rebel in nature, he had to recognize a duty that the army, the chancellery, the administration, and the nobility imposed at the end of every victorious war to the tsar: an increase of territory. This was the supreme duty of a tsar, after all the sufferings imposed on the people of Russia, and Alexander recognized that the only currency that Russia accepted was land, not glory nor prestige (accepted instead in Europe). The tsar was furious when the constitution was *octroyée* by Louis XVIII; indeed, despite being very close to the original one, it was the nature of the Constitution that angered the Russian Emperor: he considered such concession humiliating for the people. The constitution of the Senate was a pact: Louis XVIII was becoming King of France because the people called him, and the acceptance of the constitution from the king also entailed the acceptance from the people, through a regulated plebiscite. The actual charter was instead a concession of Louis XVIII, King of France after the death of Louis XVII, and heir to the same title of the ancient lineage of the kings of France. For this reason, Alexander, infatuated with liberal ideas, was sincerely outraged against the Court of France and Talleyrand for Louis XVIII having refused to receive the crown from the hands of the people. The real issue was not however to craft a new constitution, but to apply it; between 1789 and 1795, three excellent constitutions recognized the right to opposition, but did not apply it. The liberal infatuation of Alexander also helps explaining the idea he had for giving to the newly created Kingdom of Poland a representative constitution. This project, despite seeming unrealistic or strange, had serious justifications. To begin with, Napoleon's equivocal policy with Poland reinstated a strong national sentiment, and a hate against Russians and Germans with it. So, to put the Duchy of Warsaw under the Russian influence by giving

a liberal example entailed an innovative solution. This was not an easy task for the tsar: the contradiction of the liberal and the autocrat within the same person was evident, and the (chimeric) Kingdom of Poland would have demonstrated the real liberal commitment of Alexander. While in London, the four minister of the allied sovereigns had time to make numerous important decisions. First, the Pope sent Cardinal Consalvi to protest against the treaty of the 30th of May, that was recognizing Avignon to France. He explained that he was not the sovereign of the Church States, but rather a custodian, because the sovereign was Jesus Christ, and the Pope did not want to surrender what did not belong to him. The ministers answered that the public law of the XVIII century was effective for everyone, no exceptions made. While in May only Austria opposed the Polish plans of Alexander, in June Metternich also convinced London about the danger of such plans. Preparing his return to Russia, the tsar unseated the triumphal arches being prepared for him and made the humblest of entries into his empire. He had won the war, but Russia was covered in wounds; his modest return was a way of acknowledging that everyone had been partly deceived and that no one had any reason to claim the honours of triumph. Furthermore, the conflict that had appeared during the war continued in the peace: offices and salons, high bureaucracy, and great nobility, who had been hostile to the French alliance, began their opposition to the Tsar's Polish projects. They wanted Polish annexation but not a Kingdom of Poland, detached from Holy Russia and governing itself with representative institutions. In France, the legislative body, which became the Chamber of Deputies, and the Senate, which became the Chamber of Peers, demanded everything necessary for the right of opposition to be a reality of the new regime, starting with freedom of the press. This polarized the people: on the right, they demanded a general purge of administrators, the dissolution of the army, the re-establishment of the provinces and ancient parliaments, and the suppression of all political freedoms; on the left they denounced the charter as an illegal abuse of power, denying the existence of a constitution without the mutual contract between king and people. To go on with this *impasse*, Louis XVIII wanted the monarchy to succeed there where the Revolution failed: he conceded the right of opposition not only in theory, but also in practice. He had this courage thanks to the legitimate power in his wield, handed down for centuries. Freedom is not possible if it is not under a legitimate government, be it republican or monarchical.

The plenipotentiary of the King of France arrived in Vienna not as a Prince of Benevento, but as a Prince of Talleyrand.

The whole of Europe had the possibility of governing the fate of the states left without sovereignty. This was a new right, differing from the law of the peoples. The king and his minister wanted to include France in the decisions over those territories, creating this way a superior authority, that would be able to establish, with a certain primacy, both the principles and their interpretations. But the 22nd of September, the plenipotentiaries of the four allied powers, i.e., Metternich (Austria), Hardenberg and Humboldt (Prussia), Castlereagh (England), and Nesselrode (Russia), deliberated that only the four powers could convey among them on the distribution of the countries that became available after the peace of Paris. They were open to include in the discussions also France and Spain, being ruled by rightful governments, to debate on the distribution of the territories, but only after the four powers are already in agreement among them. Spain was later no longer authorized to discuss its matters, Sweden and Portugal were completely excluded, while France retained its right to object after the deliberation of the four powers. The four powers, by acting this way, disowned the public law of the XVIII century, adopting the principle that conquest generates sovereignty, the same pillar on which the Revolution rested on. How did this turnaround happen the 22nd of September? First of all, Alexander needed the expansion through Poland, and thus sent Nesselrode to work for this matter. To gain Poland, Alexander promised Prussia the Kingdom of Saxony, the only German state that remained faithful to Napoleon until the very last moment. Saxony was occupied by the Allies and the king was almost a prisoner; according to the law of the peoples, his consent was necessary for the sovereignty of his states to move to Prussia. The law of the peoples was then a threat for Alexander, who was ready to destroy it to obtain the Polish settlement. Moreover, the constructive spirit present in Paris was becoming increasingly evanescent, awakening the ravenous appetites of greed. The 30th of September Talleyrand received a note from Metternich that was proposing to assist to a preliminary conference in which there would have been reunited the ministers of Russia, England, and Prussia; in the note there was also a reference to the fact that the same question had been asked to Labrador, minister of Spain. The Duke of Palmela, ambassador of Portugal, was protesting for not having been invited to the preliminary conference. Sweden, without its plenipotentiary, could not even protest. Present in the conference there was also Gentz,

that would have been the secretary of the meeting. The document presented was rejected by Talleyrand and by Labrador, and the allied powers immediately withdrew their first note and drew up a second, more modest one; once this was rejected too, they postponed everything until the 2nd of October. Having understood this uncertainty of the Allies, the 1st of October Talleyrand vigorously denied the pseudo-right of force, reaffirming the superior right of Europe. He then met with the tsar, and they had an historic conversation. While Alexander was arguing that the personal gain was the overlord of the European relations, Talleyrand highlighted the supremacy of the law before the benefits. Then the tsar manifested that he would have gone to war rather than renouncing to the territory he was occupying (Poland). The changed attitude of the Emperor of Russia was conditioned by his mistrust towards France and England, and to the clash against Metternich. For the latter, there could be an explanation in the figures of Lady Bagration and of the Duchess of Sagan, that had been the lover of both the Austrian chancellor and the Russian tsar.

On 4 October, in the salon of the Duchess of Sagan, Metternich presented Talleyrand with a new project drawn up by Lord Castlereagh, explaining that the new project established that the proposals of the four powers were only the inferences of the first secret article of the treaty of 30 May.

The day after, Talleyrand reaffirmed Europe's superior right over vacant territories, displaying that Europe was a system of states that needed to live together in an equilibrium relationship. These states were living beings, and the balance could not be forcibly imposed from the outside by a more powerful state or group of states that arbitrated: this balance had to have satisfied the vital needs of all states. All Europe had to contribute to the foundation of the new system. The same day, the plenipotentiaries met again, but the conference was very quick and inconclusive. The 8th of October, Talleyrand received a message from Metternich, that included the hour of the next conference and an invitation to meet before it to deal with important matters. In the meeting, Talleyrand presented the main conditions of France: the King of Saxony should not be completely deprived of his territories; Russia should not enlarge disproportionately; finally, Luxembourg and Mainz should not be given to Prussia. Metternich answered that their positions were extremely closer than it seemed. One difference was that Talleyrand wanted to exclude Murat explicitly and categorically, while Metternich was more undecided. An important victory of Talleyrand was that the next conference would have

been opened with the respect and in conformity to the principles of public law. In the environment of Vienna, where the four Courts had often conflicting interests, the insistence of France on public law was fundamental to reinstate the constructive spirit at the negotiating table. To reinstate public law, it was crucial to preserve the legitimate powers, such as the one in Saxony, and eliminate the illegitimate ones, such as Murat in Naples. Only the legitimate states would have the clairvoyance and courage to respect the rules of public law, ensuring a balance of peace acceptable to large and small states.

When Talleyrand was talking to the minister of the four great Courts about principles, public law, and the unity of Europe, he had a sceptic public that however was not deaf. Not deaf because they were men of the XVIII century, used to a certain system of public law; sceptics because they were not sure that victory was definitive, and they were not sure whether France was truly sincere or was just trying an alternative strategy to cannons. The Congress of the 8th of October was different from the previous meetings. Indeed, while the latter were aiming at solving a controversy among two or more belligerent powers through a peace treaty, now the peace was already agreed and the enemies were reuniting like friends that, despite not having the same interests, wanted to collaborate to fulfil and confirm the existing treaty. The powers that concluded the peace of Paris being within their rights to determine the entirely new meaning to be given to the word 'Congress' and consequently the form that seemed most appropriate to them to achieve the end they had in mind, used this right to the advantage of all the parties concerned, inviting the plenipotentiaries assembled in Vienna to deal with their matters by the most rapid and effective means: the confidential route. This is how the Congress constituted itself without formalities; the council of the powers that created it just reserved for itself the general direction of the negotiation. Moreover, the presence of many monarchs, ministers, first- and second-class plenipotentiaries made for the European powers a fast dialogue, without the obstacles that distance brings with it. The confidential route was an idea coming from Metternich, meant as a medium between the exclusive direction of the Congress from the four Courts and the official organization of a sovereign and legislating Congress. The three weeks between the 8th of October and the 1st of November, the official opening of the Congress, quickly became an anticipation of the Congress itself, where the plenipotentiaries were invited to deal with the most important matters through confidential and free communications. All this was accompanied by

parties to the sound of violins and a waltz *tempo*. The magnificence and the splendour of these feasts had to be proportioned to the greatness of the political power, to the rank of the guests, and to the meaning of the events that were offering such occasions. To do the honours of his palace to an emperor and four kings and the honours of his capital to the whole political world and the highest nobility of Europe, the Emperor of Austria Francis I had to draw the pomp of the most unashamed magnificence. Indeed, each day there was a new event happening: banquets, concerts, masked balls, hunting matches, tournaments, carousels, representations of tragedies, and so on. Around the ballroom there were small lounges where kings and ministers discussed the great affairs of Europe; sovereigns and plenipotentiaries could recognise each other and negotiate; this was very convenient for the plenipotentiaries: at these festivities they could approach sovereigns, kings, and emperors without requesting a hearing by the protocol route.

Through this confidential route, Metternich excluded completely from the negotiations Talleyrand: the four powers concerted together to isolate the French delegation. But there was a point where the disagreement was strong: the destiny of the Duchy of Warsaw. Castlereagh was the spearhead of the opposition against the Russian occupation of Poland, recalling that the treaty concluded the 27th of June 1813 among Austria, Prussia, and Russia established the partition of the Duchy of Warsaw among the three allies. While recognizing the amazing qualities of the tsar, Castlereagh did not understand the Russian necessity to enlarge disproportionately with such a move. He was proposing, as an alternative, to make an independent Kingdom of Poland, underlying how the plenipotentiaries of the allied powers would have strenuously opposed the Russian Emperor's proposals. Meanwhile Prussia wanted the whole of Saxony and Mainz, in exchange to be on Castlereagh's side on the Polish situation. When Prince Hardenberg communicated this to Castlereagh, the latter agreed instantaneously, stating that the sovereign of Saxony posed himself in a difficult situation, and his sacrifice could be necessary for the future peace in Europe.

The 14th of October the representatives of Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Hannover, and Württemberg deliberated that it was necessary to form a committee with the task of preparing the Constitution of Germany; this constitution would have been applied after having given communication to the other Germanic States, without, however, giving them any opportunity to discuss and approve it. This was a manumission of the five most

powerful Germanic Courts on the future of Germany through the exclusion of the smaller states and of the Congress.

The 17th of October Talleyrand wrote to Louis XVIII an alarmed letter about the situation of Europe and of the Congress. He explained how in the high spheres of the Germanic society there a will was to unite all of Germany under a single government, with the support of university professors and young people. For France, this would be catastrophic. At the end of the letter, Talleyrand was asking the King of France for an authorization and for special instructions to answer Austria whenever the latter would have explicitly asked to be supported against Russia, even with the war if necessary. The Congress appeared to be doomed, because something was not working properly in the confidential route: the intractable resistance of the tsar. Castlereagh discussed extensively with him; Metternich met Alexander four or five times, trying to get the King of Prussia close to him to negotiate. The French position was more focused on the independence of Saxony rather than on the Polish matter. After a heated argument with Talleyrand, the Emperor of Russia was furious: after having faced so many dangers and accepted so many responsibilities, the unexpected opposition of his allies, who compensated him by menacing his Polish throne, exasperated him. On the other side, the allies did not expect such an impediment. To deal with Alexander, the Princess of Bagration was even employed on the night of the 31st of October. The visit had lasted from 10.30 a.m. to 2 a.m., so there had been time to talk politics as well: but the princess confessed how there had been no positive results in this regard. Fear was dominating: England and Austria were frightened about the Polish ambitions of Russia, all the small Germanic States feared the Prussian fury against Saxony, and the four Courts were scared of the Restoration and of the dangers that were threatening it in France. The tsar, on his part, was beginning to consider Austria, England, and France as his worst enemies, with little trust remaining for Prussia. Talleyrand himself was slowly believing that Castlereagh wanted to craft a huge Prussia allied with Austria that would isolate France in the continent. Metternich was accused of armoury, of cowardice, of duplicity, of venality, of frivolity, of putting off urgent business to rush to gallant appointments.

Talleyrand was called by Metternich the 5th of November, Castlereagh and Nesselrode were already there. Having understood the necessity to call France into the Congress and not letting it with the small powers, Metternich was reassuring Talleyrand

that the Congress would have soon been summoned. The first thing they discussed about was Italy. The King of Piedmont and the Pope took back their territories, restoring the *Ancién Régime*; the government of Lord Bentinck was reinstituting the Republic of Genoa as it was before the Revolution. The Duchy of Parma was a vacant territory; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany followed a compelling pattern: the Grand Duke ceded through a regular treaty Tuscany to France, which in turn ceded it to the Duke of Parma, who in 1811 left it to Napoleon with a promise of a future Kingdom of Lusitania. Given that the promise was not maintained, the last transfer was null and void: the widowed Maria Luisa of Spain, Queen of Etruria, never ended being the legitimate sovereign of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and therefore the Congress had to give her back her states. However, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I (father of Louis I of Etruria, who was the husband of Maria Luisa of Spain), in September went by his own will to Palazzo Pitti to take back the government of Tuscany. So, the Queen was claiming the power through the treaty made with Napoleon, while Ferdinand I took advantage of the "ancient state of possession"[27], that for populations exhausted due to anarchy could be more valuable than a treaty. To make the things more complicated, Murat was in Naples: in a moment of difficulty, Vienna made an alliance with him guaranteeing him his possessions, and now there was no idea how to manage that relict of the Revolution. The biggest fear of Metternich was that Murat could become the head of all the discontented elements that had supported the revolutionary government and attempt to create a single, independent Kingdom of Italy. However, during the discussion of the Italian affairs of November 5, Metternich proposed to deal with the Murat problem later, while Talleyrand insisted to manage this issue during the Congress. For Talleyrand, a unitary State in Italy could not arise, because there was no dynasty that could claim monarchic legitimacy over the whole territory like the Bourbons had in France. Moreover, the democratic legitimacy, now distorted by the Revolution, made the principle of popular sovereignty odious, so the majority rejected it. The only way an Italian State could form was in the shape of a military dictatorship without legal basis; the sole way to establish peace in Italy was through legitimate governments, that were the ones overthrown by the Revolution. For Talleyrand, the same was valid for Germany: to be unified without exposing Europe to serious dangers, it was necessary for the country to be unified by a government with a sufficiently recognized

[27] Ibidem, p. 235.

legitimacy not to be obliged to go on adventures. During the discussions on the Italian problem, Alexander brought the King of Prussia to his side for the Polish matter. Hardenberg declared to Castlereagh that for the Polish project the Tsar was now adamant, given the support of the King Frederick William III. At that time, both Alexander and Metternich wanted to get closer to Talleyrand. The 11th of November, Metternich called Talleyrand, Castlereagh, and Nesselrode to deal with the future of Genoa. After that, Metternich remained alone with Talleyrand and showed him the letter dated 22nd October where he was promising Hardenberg all of Saxony in exchange for the support of Prussia against the Russian occupation of Poland. This meant that now Austria would have not abandoned Saxony. While Talleyrand really appreciated this last part, he appreciated less the part about the fate of Poland. He became increasingly shy with the tsar; the latter was nevertheless able to catch him and invited him on the 14th in tailcoat (so not in ceremonial costume, but as a friend). The 13th of November, it was decided to assign to the King of Sardinia a largening of territory with the State of Genoa but leaving free the port of Genoa. The 14th, it was decided about Switzerland: there would have been a veiled protectorate, that would impose it the suppression of feudalism, the liberation of Vaud and of Aargau, the democratization of a certain number of cantons beginning from the most powerful, Bern. The government of Bern wanted however to maintain Aargau; indeed, claiming that force can never create sovereignty, they wanted to get back Aargau and some indemnities from the Canton of Vaud. The new order in Switzerland was not however just imposed with force: the sovereign was resurrected, and the government was legitimized also by necessity and consent. Wessenberg was proposing to offer Bern a part of the Bishopric of Basel, while the Prussian plenipotentiary, Humboldt, was explaining why it was not possible to give back Aargau to Bern. The same day, Talleyrand, instead of taking part to the meeting to decide about Switzerland, went to Alexander as promised, after having informed Metternich and Castlereagh about it. During that talk with the tsar, Talleyrand understood that Alexander wanted to get closer with France. Right after the meeting, Talleyrand was informed from the minister of Saxony that the Prince Repuin, the general governor for the Russians in Saxony, announced with a circular letter to the Saxon authorities that he had to refer the administration of the Kingdom of Saxony to the representatives of the King of Prussia because of an agreement reached between Russia and Prussia, to which England and Austria had also adhered. Metternich and Castlereagh

promptly protested that their consent had been abused, lending it as absolute while it was purely conditional. The following day, the plenipotentiary Stewart brought his written opinion on the Bern complaint, essentially agreeing with Humboldt. Then, the Helvetic legation, represented by Reinhard, explained how, according to him, it would have been impossible to avoid civil war unless the great powers intervened. But on this point the legation was not in agreement: Montenach replied that Switzerland had to solve its internal issues independently from foreign interventions. After the Swiss delegation, the Commission did not take a deliberation, and limited itself to invite the deputy from Bern to the meeting of the 17th. The 16th, the Baron Stein, and Count Kapodistrias, plenipotentiaries of the Russian Empire, were redacting and signing their note on the lamentations of Bern. The same day, the Count Wintzingerode and the Baron Linden warned the Committee on the Germanic affairs that the King of Württemberg withdrew from the Committee and refused to continue the discussion. In addition, the plenipotentiaries of twenty-nine German sovereign princes and free cities sent a note to Metternich and Hardenberg declaring that the future constitution of Germany was to be discussed and approved by all German states. This, given the action of the King of Württemberg, was tantamount to declaring the Commission illegitimate and its work null and void. This thunderbolt suspended the work of the Congress for a few days.

At the end of the XVIII century, the Holy Roman Empire was a decadent entity in ruins, but was still offering, as the *Ancién Régime* in France, protection against the abuses of power: laws, customs, tribunals, Imperial Constitution, Diets and more. The shock of 1806 demolished the last parts of this entity and left Germany in a confused status. Talleyrand immediately realised that this could be a problem for Europe and France. It was thought of a Germanic Confederation, that would substitute the Empire, and it was the role of the Congress to make this generic project a written and applicable constitution: the Commission of the five big Germanic Courts, Austria, Prussia, Hannover, Bavaria, and Württemberg, arbitrarily decided, the 14th of October, to fulfil such difficult task. Two days later, they reunited to begin the work, and much of the first session was spent to who should sign first between the king of Württemberg and the king of Hanover. Then, the project for the Germanic Confederation consisted in a universe of big and small states under the direction of a federal Diet with two Chambers. Austria and Prussia would guide the Diet but would participate to the Confederation only with their Germanic territories.

The Germanic sovereigns would renounce to fight and would put themselves under a federal tribunal. Furthermore, all the states that did not have territories outside Germany were putting effort not to go to war against foreign powers, not to participate in wars of foreign powers and not to conclude alliance treaties without the acceptance of the Confederation. The new Germany was putting the bases to avoid an arbitrary absolutism, giving the peoples some guarantees. The right of the people to be an active part of the government was stemming from a proposal of Prussia and Austria: Bavaria and Württemberg opposed it. The representative of Bavaria was indeed declaring that he could not accept Article 2, and thus the imposition to the purely Germanic states not to conclude alliance treaties with foreign powers without the consent of the Confederation: given that Bavaria was the third most powerful state among the Germanic ones, such condition would have precluded an important role for it within Europe and Germany. Württemberg protested Article 2 too, but was also against Article 9, which was reducing the sovereign rights of the kings to decrease the rights that electors possessed. Since the meeting of the 16th, the session was divided between a majority of three, Austria, Prussia, and Hannover, and a minority of two, Bavaria and Württemberg. The Prince Regent of Great Britain and Hannover was pushing toward putting guarantees in favour of minimum required rights to be enforced and protected in the Confederation. Francis II Holy Roman Emperor, since 1806 Francis I Emperor of Austria, was a key player in this matter and represented, during the Napoleonic Era, the invisible abstraction of sovereignty against the physical incarnation of power represented by Napoleon. He became emperor at the age of twenty-four by chance of hereditary monarchy: if his uncle Joseph II would have had heirs, Francis could have become at most Duchy of Tuscany. Moreover, if his father had not died young, he would have ascended the imperial throne later. About him we have the testimony from Joseph II: "of a rather slow and sly character, but at the same time indifferent and of few decisive passions... even though he sometimes shows a certain energy and a certain system in his character [...] his notebooks are machinelike, he has a knowledge of copying, of sub dictation. There is no thought, there is nothing of his own. He has not made himself a style in writing, nor in thinking, which is essential"[28]. After eight months of intensive education of the boy, Joseph II continues: "at the slightest opportunity, he falls back, stands there like a peg, absent, with his arms and legs dangling,

[28] Ibidem, p. 265.

and would not move until the next day unless told to leave"[29]. However, in stark contrast with the judgements of Joseph II, Francis II had been tireless, not lazy but refractory to passions, distrustful of imagination because he deemed it as too powerful. On his side, like the Revolution, the imperial government lost its head in the opposite direction. Indeed, Francis considered the Revolution a monster, and moved by hate: he ferociously persecuted Jacobinism. Aged twenty-nine, in 1797 he clashed with a twenty-eight-year-old man from Ajaccio: Francis was scared of seeing Napoleon at the gates of Vienna, while Napoleon was scared to have arrived up to Leoben. Both thought to save themselves by throwing themselves into an adventure from which the mature courage of a statesman would have shunned: dividing Northern Italy between France and Austria, i.e., between the Revolution and the *Ancién Régime*. In 1809, after having had ministers older than him that often treated him like a bad student, aged forty-one, Francis I wanted to rule with his ideas: with the help of Metternich, thirty-six, it was now possible. The new politics began with the marriage of Maria Luisa with Napoleon and the alliance of Austria with revolutionary France against Russia: two betrayals of the monarchic tradition. However, these two actions were successful. Austria became able to abandon Napoleon and become the head of the anti-Napoleonic coalition when this manoeuvre could be done with the highest probability of success. Francis I was able to preserve the *Ancién Régime* from the Revolution, and despite the alliance with it he was one of the greatest contributors to the French defeat. Aware of the nature of the totalitarian regime, Francis I did not want to use it, like modern dictators, to rekindle the fire of warrior and revolutionary passions in the masses, but rather to extinguish it. With him, Austria abandoned the imperial traditions of the Habsburg of the XVII and XVIII centuries: it will be on the defensive, like a state with final dimensions. To gain peace, Francis I was asking for a fair price, i.e., after the territories that the treaty of 1796 attributed to Austria, he wanted nothing more than Lombardy, that already belonged to Austria before 1796. After twenty-three years of conflict, he wanted to put the spirit of adventure, revolution, and war in Germany to sleep with totalitarianism, tightening it into an iron confederation that would make war impossible. Prussia accepted without strong resistance this conservative plan ideated by the Austrian Emperor. On the other side Bavaria and Württemberg were opposing, two hybrids generated by the union of Revolution and the *Ancién Régime*. Bavaria declared

[29] Ibidem, p. 266.

that the Confederation should have not gotten involved in the political constitutions of the various states, because each state should have been free to choose its own constitution. Furthermore, Bavaria was asking to have the same voting power as Austria and Prussia in the Directory of the Confederation.

And now we arrive to the shocking note presented on the 16th of November, in which the plenipotentiaries of twenty-nine sovereign princes and free cities addressed their note to Metternich and Hardenberg in which they claimed for the whole Germany the right to decide its own fate, attacking the plan presented by Austria and Prussia; this note was equally vigorous against Bavaria and Württemberg. In the Congress, the right of opposition, a founding feature of the modern state, became a solid reality.

The 23rd of November was a date that Vienna, the Congress, and Europe was attending for weeks, but not because it would have been the final date for the general peace: it was the most lavish amidst Congress festivities. A manifestation of power, it was full of princes, dukes, marquises, counts, and barons. The feast began with a trumpet fanfare announcing a procession of the twenty-four most beautiful ladies of Congress with their respective knights, who took their places in four quadrilles of different colours magnificently decorated. Then, a second fanfare announced the arrival of the sovereigns. The Emperor of Austria took place at the centre of the tribune erected in front of the beautiful ladies, next to the empresses; behind them there were the other sovereigns and princes, according to the order of the protocol. Half the sovereigns of Europe were assisting to this feast. Another military fanfare introduced the twenty-four paladins representing the flower of the empire's nobility. All the fancy and luxurious costumes that were worn that night, except for scarves that were knotted on swords, had been paid for by the Austrian Court. After having greeted the sovereigns, the paladins began to perform their exercises. After the spectacle, a gargantuan banquet was prepared in the principal hall, with an arrangement that divided the participants in three: firstly, there was a space for the royal guests; secondly, on the left there was a table for princes, archdukes, and head of reigning houses; finally on the right there were the paladins and their ladies. Around the hall there were guests without distinction of rank. Such a

6Luxury cerimonies in Vienna

demonstration of wealth through rare flowers, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, precious fabrics, and gold-plated tableware was never seen before in Vienna. At the end of the feast there was a grand ball to which more than three thousand people had been invited. These feasts were breaking with the traditional depictions of the *Ancién Régime*, transforming the Congress in a series of receptions, shows, ladies chasing kings and kings chasing ladies. Alexander and Metternich were the undiscussed champions of these parties. Police reports were keeping count of the "meetings" the tsar had with Lady Bagration and with numerous other ladies. However, amid all the fun, Alexander continued to negotiate while pursuing Metternich, keeping his eyes open for friends, enemies, and offices. The same was valid for Metternich. Meanwhile, Talleyrand was reporting his considerations to Louis XVIII. He explained how Russia and Prussia were expecting just opposition from France, Austria appeared equivocal, and Russia, Prussia, Great Britain, and Austria (all the four Courts) were fearing to get closer to France, because that would imply making concessions that they were not willing to make. Finally, according to Talleyrand, there was also an element of jealousy: despite everything, France still had the best army and the best finance in Europe. This element, added to increased mistrust among the four Courts, was shaking the foundations of the Congress. Everyone understood the importance of making concessions, but no one wanted to say it fearing to advantage the others. Fear and distrust were paralyzing the constructive spirit of those that meticulously saved themselves from the past adventure. When dealing with the Italian matter, the Emperor of Austria declared to Cardinal Consalvi that he would not touch the Legations, but also that he would not fight to ensure the Legations under the Pope. Talleyrand sent a letter of his wife to the Cardinal. The Cardinal could not answer to the Princess of Talleyrand because that would have meant to recognize as legitimate the wedding of a bishop. But not to answer would have been an insult to the lady and his husband, and the Holy See needed to maintain good relations with France. Cardinal Pacca, a friend of Consalvi, gave him a good suggestion: to answer with a polite letter with the simple header 'Madame' on it, sealing the letter with a seal that was not his and having it delivered directly to Talleyrand. The festivities continued until the 1st of December, with some more intense and serious moments: the 29th of November a Beethoven concert was performed that had provoked much discussion.

The Secret Treaty of Vienna and the Reconstruction of Europe

After having collaborated for the triumph of the *Ancién Régime*, Alexander, with his rebellious spirit, became the Polar Star for the Revolution. In Switzerland, he was the most strenuous defender of the Revolution and then he declared to be ready to renounce to Krakow and Torún (both in Poland) to the condition that Austria would cede all of Saxony to Prussia and that Mainz would be declared fortress of the Germanic Confederation. Hardenberg, on his side, was convinced of this proposal: the dismemberment of Saxony would have been a wrong choice, so at this point it was better for Prussia to englobe Saxony as a whole, respecting somehow the will of the people. The Emperor Francis I did not agree; he was stating: "I do not understand this doctrine. Mine is that a prince can, if he wishes, cede part of his territory and all his people: if he abdicates, his right passes to his legitimate heirs, but he cannot deprive himself of them, and neither can the whole of Europe"[30]. This traditional view was clearly irreconcilable to the new one presented by Alexander and supported by Hardenberg. The 10th of December Metternich sent to Prussia a note communicating that Austria would renounce to its opposition to Russia in the Polish question, apart from minor military points; it just wanted to demand Russia some assurances for the future constitution of Poland. In exchange, Austria was offering just a part of Saxony, instead of the whole of it: the Low Lusatia, one half of the Upper Lusatia, and the territories close to the Elbe River. With this proposal Austria was willing to be in harmony with Prussia, because the incorporation of Saxony would go against all the precepts of kinship, the principles of the emperor, and would worsen the border relations. Francis I was showing a masterpiece of the constructive spirit that guided him, recalling that force cannot be used to build states, if it is not contained within certain limits. However, ten days later Hardenberg sent a note to Alexander, that manifested the Prussian refusal the Austrian offer. The tsar, fearing a rapprochement between Austria and France, sent prince Czartoyski to Talleyrand saying that he no longer wanted the destruction of Saxony, and that he was asking whether Talleyrand had made commitments to Austria.

After this, Alexander met with Metternich, and a diplomatic accident occurred: the tsar told the Emperor of Austria that was offended by Metternich and for this he wanted to have a duel with the Austrian minister. France, Bavaria, and the small Germanic

[30] Ibidem, p. 304-305.

principalities sided with Austria, while Prussia was wondering about becoming the head of a Germanic Revolution. Due to the complications and disagreements on Poland and Saxony, the opinion of Congress was very pessimistic; the states were beginning to rearm. But Talleyrand was more optimistic, thanks to something that happened in London. Indeed, the English government sent instructions to Castlereagh to oppose the dismemberment of Saxony and thus to side with France and Austria. This meant that the coalition was *de facto* breaking: if Austria, was going to communicate officially the note on Poland and Saxony to France, knowing that France was on its side, that would imply that Austria was looking for support from France against Russia and Prussia. Eventually Metternich sent the official note to Talleyrand, with a card attached saying: "I am delighted to be on the same page as your Cabinet, in a matter so beautiful to define!"[31]. Talleyrand exploited the situation and the 19th of December sent to Metternich a long letter where he described the French attitude on the matter, bringing the topic on higher level, no longer just Germanic or Austrian-Prussian, but rather European and philosophical. Talleyrand explained how the interest of France was to restore the legitimate right, and that any unjust ambition should be condemned. Furthermore, he added that any legitimate dynasty should have been conserved and re-established, the vacant territory needed to be distributed according to the principle of political equilibrium, i.e., the conservative principles of the rights and tranquillity of everyone. The martyrdom of Saxony and the Russian influence over Poland would scare Austria and put it in a situation of danger on the security level. France was not willing to be the spectator of an imbalance between Prussia and Austria at the expenses of the King of Saxony. Indeed, the question was not how much Prussia was going to leave to the King of Saxony; it was quite the opposite. Gentz commented stating that this letter was "an extremely remarkable document, written with a warmth equal to vigour and nobility; expressing great truths and very acute views"[32]. The first great truth regarded the fact that a system of states like Europe, if not based on principles respected by the most powerful, was doomed to war. The second is that these principles are sacred: they represent the rational crystallization of a profound sense of justice and humanity. When he confronted with Castlereagh, Talleyrand highlighted the relevance of recognizing the right of the

[31] Ibidem, p. 312.
[32] Ibidem, p. 318.

King of Saxony by making a convention among himself, Castlereagh, and Metternich. But Alexander, understanding the manoeuvres of Talleyrand, made possible for the representatives of the four Courts (Razumovsky for Russia, Metternich for Austria, Hardenberg for Prussia, Castlereagh for England) to meet without France to find the final solution to the problems of Saxony and Poland. The following day, Razumovsky showed his cards by demanding for Russia the Duchy of Warsaw except for the platinates of Gniezno and Posen but allowing the former districts of West Prussia to be returned to Prussia, and giving Austria a strip of territory on the right bank of the Vistula; finally, Krakow and Thorn would be declared free and independent cities. For Saxony, Alexander proposed imperishably to incorporate it totally into Prussia; in return, the King of Saxony would be compensated with the Duchy of Luxembourg and fragments of various archbishoprics. The Prussians were happy of that proposal; Austria accepted the Polish settlement, but not the Saxon one; Castlereagh got furious. The latter went straight to Talleyrand to talk more about the idea of an agreement among England, France, and Austria, and the 3rd of January 1815 himself, Talleyrand, and Metternich signed a secret convention where they committed to act in *bona fide* to complete and execute decisions in conformity to the constructive spirit that began with the Treaty of Paris the 30th of May of the previous year. The convention was examining the scenario of a war conducted by the three powers together to defend the Treaty of Paris, i.e., the cornerstone of the new European system they wanted to build in Vienna.

The 3rd of January, Metternich declared to the session of the four powers that it was ready to discuss the proposals of the tsar. Nine days later, Castlereagh asked to put into the protocol a note in which England was declaring not to oppose to the Polish plans of Alexander, given that they were accepted by Berlin and Vienna, to the condition that there would have been an effort to institute a benevolent administration suited to the will of the people. Just after having closed the alliance, instead of resisting to the Russian ambitions, Austria and England fell to the game of Alexander. The reason lies behind the fact that both Francis I and the English government favoured the worst of the peace to war. So, it seems difficult to understand the treaty of the 3rd of January. The key point was that Austria and England were feeling safer: if Russia had been willing to use force, it would not have been alone. In the meantime, it was then possible to please the tsar and take the Congress out of the problem. But as Pozzo di Borgo foresaw, and the Prussian government

had the same opinion, the Kingdom of Warsaw would have been an absurdity: it was impossible for the same sovereign to be an autocrat in Russia and constitutional in Poland. Indeed, the Kingdom of Poland will survive just a few years, before being decapitated by Austria and Germany. In conclusion, Europe spent about four months in Vienna for this hallucination of both the English and the Austrian governments concerning the fate of Poland, but this can be said only *a posteriori*: life would be easier if humanity had to fight only against real dangers. For Talleyrand, the treaty of the 3rd of January was translated as the end of the ostracism against France from the four powers. But he wanted more: France as the leader of a coalition of small and big states, European champion of legitimacy and public law, against revolutionary attitudes (of Russia and Prussia, for instance). On the 12th of January, the Prussians persevered with asking for all of Saxony; but this time Alexander was defending that cause less strenuously, given that he received what he demanded for. The 29th of the same month, a counter-project crafted by Austrians and English was sent to the Prussians: 800,000 subjects in Saxony, 1,400,000 on the Rhine, which, when added to the remaining population, would have resulted in 10 million inhabitants[33]. The Prussians, not satisfied, reclaimed Leipzig. The negotiations continued. The Swiss matter was proceeding, the Italian one was limping: the Congress did not recognize Murat, nor did it intend to kick him out; no decision about Parma nor Tuscany yet. Among the Committees there was one newly formed, that was dealing with the diplomatic ceremonial. It ideated a system that divided the sovereigns into three classes: first there were the emperors and the kings, regardless of the dimension of the respective states; second, there were princes, the Switzerland and the American Republics representatives; finally, there were the grand dukes. In each class the priority was depending on age, and each representative would get his place based on the date of presentation of the credentials. The commission proposed to put the Pope in the first class, but also to apply the age priority to the pontifical legates, who in the past had absolute right of priority. Talleyrand tried to help Consalvi in getting back the old privilege above described, and it was easy to get to the cause Spain, Portugal, and Austria; more difficult to convince instead Prussia and Russia, with an unexpected strong opposition of England.

The 21st of January, Talleyrand invited all the nobility of Europe present in Vienna for a funeral mass for the 22nd anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI. All the

[33] Ibidem, p. 328.

sovereigns went to the St. Stephen's Cathedral, praying God for having been spared; only Alexander did not appreciate Talleyrand's idea. During the second half of January, Castlereagh was being called back to London to be substituted by Wellington: the government was not completely satisfied with its work. To avoid going back to London empty-handed, Castlereagh made a titanic effort to settle the Saxony issue before leaving Vienna. By working day and night with the tsar, the King of Prussia, Hardenberg, Metternich, and Talleyrand, he made a final agreement with Hardenberg the 6th of February: Saxony would have been divided in two almost identical parts, where the most populous one would have remained under the king. The other part was given to Poland, while Krakow was a free city. To make this agreement possible, it was necessary the consent of the King of Saxony; indeed, to safeguard the principle that an act of force, though made by all of Europe, could not create sovereignty, Metternich, Wellington, and Talleyrand would have gone to Pressburg to ask the King of Saxony to accept the treaty for the general peace. Overall, in the second half of February, the five great powers were agreeing on Saxony and on Poland. While for Poland the governments of London and of Vienna had been victims of hallucinations, for Saxony, a small state of two million inhabitants, the length of the negotiations seemed too much. However, there was not only the destiny of Saxony at stake: there was also the principle that established that sovereignty does not result from conquest, but from cession. The man that best realized the importance of this factor was Talleyrand. After the resolution of the Saxon issue, the main obstacle of the Germanic reorganization was now eliminated. For Naples, Talleyrand would have been satisfied with the simple recognition by the Congress of Ferdinand IV as legitimate sovereign. However, Metternich, given the past alliance between the Court of Austria and Murat, maintained his cautious position, and Wellington declared that England ratified the treaty concluded between Austria and Naples and for this it could not recant. The only news about the Italian affairs arrived from the considerations of the Court of Vienna about annexing Valtellina to Lombardy. But a piece of news was ready to shock the diplomatic world situated in Vienna: the 5th of March a courier of the King of Sardinia arrived and declared that Napoleon had landed in the Gulf Juan. Talleyrand might have found the new collaborator needed after the abjuration of Alexander.

How was it possible that without a gunshot Napoleon was back on the throne of France for a few months? As soon as he got into the throne, Louis XVIII destroyed the revolutionary sentiment; however, freed from the oppression under which they had been held by the Revolution, their hatreds, fears, and illusions had exploded into an infinity of ravings. The Hundred Days represents the fiery diadem of these delusions. After having signed the treaty that put an end to the Napoleonic regime, a deep sense of concern was spreading among the French people, that felt to have suffered a loss and were increasingly disliking Louis XVIII and Talleyrand. Napoleon came back to France promising France to make the monarchy constitutional and promising Europe to respect the treaties and to become the biggest advocate for peace. The Congress did not hesitate to answer to the pacific offers of Napoleon with cannons. The 13th of March the eight powers that signed the Treaty of Paris, France included, declared Napoleon as "enemy and disturber of world peace"[34]. The European sovereigns also committed to help the King of France if the situation got out of hand. This major event helped the Congress to wake up stronger than before. The 20th of March the plenipotentiaries concluded the Swiss issue, with several proposals, and not impositions, brought to the Diet. Two days later, the plenipotentiaries of the sovereign princes and of the free cities of Germany were presenting to the plenipotentiaries of Austria and Prussia a note consisting in a declared effort to re-establish peace and order in Europe and to preserve the Germanic independence. Furthermore, they were asking for a liberal constitution in exchange of a help to win against Napoleon. The following day Wellington reported that the Prince of Orange took the title of King of the Netherlands on the 14th of March and asked to support and to recognize him in the Congress. While this was an anticipation of the final treaty, and thus the Prince of Orange had no right to self-proclaim sovereign of Belgium, it would have been dangerous for the Allies, given the war, to keep Belgium just military: it was safer to shorten the timeframe and put the sceptre in the hands of the ultimate ruler. Meanwhile, Murat, despite having written to the Courts of London and Vienna that he would have remained loyal to the alliance, the 19th of March invaded the Papal States. Napoleon was not losing time: the 20th he was already in Paris (the Court left the city the day before). Under the imminent danger, Alexander returned to be serious, got away from the Bonaparte family and reconciled with Metternich. Austria and Prussia went on with the

[34] Ibidem, p. 344.

aim of creating a Germanic Confederation. In Italy, Murat arrived at the Legations that were occupied by the Austrian army; two days later, the Neapolitan army entered in Bologna: the Pope and the Grand Duke of Tuscany fled. Despite this, the 8th of April Murat sent his plenipotentiaries to Vienna explaining that the king was remaining faithful to the alliance, it was occupying the line of the Po River just to guarantee order in all central and Southern Italy. But it was too late: Francis I already decided to annex all the provinces of Lombardy and of Veneto arriving until Mantua, with Valtellina, Cleve, and Bormio, giving to the newly taken territories regal titles. The 10th of April, Metternich answered Murat by declaring war; the Austrian army was going into action, and the 28th the Court of Vienna signed a treaty of alliance with Ferdinand IV, King of the Two Sicilies. Defeated, the 20th of May Murat deposed the crown: the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was reinstated under the ancient dynasty. Maria Luisa gained the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla; the Archduke Ferdinand went back to Tuscany; the Queen of Etruria received the Principate of Lucca, while the Archduke Francis of Etruria gained the Duchy of Modena, Reggio, and Mirandola.

The matter with the Pope was more tense. Indeed, while it was decided that the pontifical representatives were keeping the priority over the others, despite the age, the problem of the Legations and Avignon remained. Cardinal Consalvi wanted to put on paper that the Legations would have been returned, since they were not donated. But this was too much: it implied to make null the former Treaty of Tolentino. Eventually the peace treaty would return to the Pope the Legations, Pontecorvo, and Benevento, without Avignon. By separating the temporal and the spiritual powers, the Revolution weakened both.

After 1815, Italy began to slowly respect less and less the political powers of the *Ancién Régime*: they run away from the small French army during the Revolution, leaving the citizens to the horrors of the invasion. Italy, trampled and dismembered, was beginning to feel capable of founding a powerful state by example and in opposition to the other great European states: a national feeling was emerging.

In April, Prussia and Austria prepared a project of a federal constitution, that was examined by a commission bigger than before, which comprehended also the representatives of Baden, Saxony, Hesse, Darmstadt, five deputies from the free cities, the plenipotentiaries of the King of Denmark (he was also Duke of Holstein), and of the

King of Netherlands (he was also Grand Duke of Luxembourg). The negotiations were long because each state wanted to gain, and Bavaria was willing to give back the territories conquered from Austria, but in exchange for equivalent indemnities. The 25th of May the princes and the free cities were demanding for representation of each of them; the same day Alexander announced the creation of the Kingdom of Poland.

The 29th, during the third session, the commission charged with the discussion of the project of the federal constitution was made up of twenty-four representatives rather than five; together with the representatives present in the previous sessions, the Commission was made up of thirty-two members. The first article of the constitutions stated: "The sovereign princes and free Germanic cities including their majesties the Emperor of Austria, the Kings of Prussia, Denmark and the Netherlands, and in addition: the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia for all their possessions formerly belonging to the Germanic Empire; the King of Denmark for the Duchy of Holstein, the King of the Netherlands for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; establish among themselves a perpetual confederation under the name of the Germanic Confederation"[35]. The Germanic Confederation did not have a common army: the strength laid in the grouping of particular armies, each dependent on its government. The Confederation was administered by a Diet, located in Frankfurt, chaired by Austria, with seventeen members: eleven were representing the most important states, while six belonged to the multitude of the small states and free cities divided into six groups. When it was necessary to vote or modify certain fundamental laws of the constitution, or to take measures that were the interest of the whole Confederation, the Diet would meet in a general assembly. All the thirty-eight states of the Confederation had to be represented by a plenipotentiary, but they had different numbers of representatives depending on the importance of the state. Austria, Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Hannover had four votes each; Baden, electoral Hesse, the grand duchy of Hesse, Holstein, and Luxembourg had three votes each; Brunswick, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and Nassau had two votes each; the others one each. Francis I refused to become the first Emperor of Germany, deeming it an excessively revolutionary idea. One of the most important articles was Article 13, which ruled: "state assemblies will be called in all countries of the Confederation"[36]. The

[35] Ibidem, p. 368.
[36] Ibidem, p. 371.

Congress of Vienna promised Germany the end of absolutism, be it revolutionary or ancient; nevertheless, this article was not applied with sincerity and intelligence. While it seemed that Germany was opening its gates to freedom, it was closing them to equality: there were no dispositions that would ensure the civil equality of all the classes and the access of all Germans to the civil service. Article 14 was instead delineating an intermediate aristocracy equipped of large rights, privileges, and honours. Germany was thus representing the fortress of aristocracy in the middle of a Europe that gets more and more democratic during the XIX century. Thanks to the Congress of Vienna, Italy and Germany would arrive to 1848 with pacific governments, without heavy administration expenses, committed to the reconstruction of the state budget.

The 8th of June, the sovereign princes, the free cities of Germany, the Emperor of Austria, and the Kings of Prussia, Denmark, Netherlands, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Saxony were finally signing the federal Constitution of Germany. The day after, France, Portugal, England, Sweden, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, i.e., seven out of the eight powers that already signed the Treaty of Paris the 30th of May 1814, were signing in the name of the most holy and indivisible Trinity the great treatise that will be the cornerstone of the 19th century. Only Spain was missing, because it was protesting the attribution of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla to Maria Luisa; the King of Spain would adhere to the treaty only on the 7th of May 1817. The 18th of June, the last adventure of the Revolution was concluding in Waterloo.

The monarchy fell in France in the year 1789 (Louis XVI remaining on the throne up to 1792 was more of a formality); since the storming of the Bastille of the 14th of July, Louis XVI was a king without army, police, judges, nor money. The deep reason of the fall of the monarchy was that the secular legitimacy was not able to renovate in time and abused of its power at the beginning of the XVIII century, imposing the absolutism in France. After the fall of the monarchy, France entered straight into the terror of the Revolution, dragging the whole of Europe with it. The French Empire and Europe were constantly at war because they were scared of each other: the first feared a coalition in Europe against it, while the second feared to become a slave of the empire.

Three men were able to finish a war that seemed endless: Alexander, Louis XVIII, and finally, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. The tsar took the initiative in 1812, when the generalissimo Kutuzov implored him to have mercy of the exhausted army. At

the end of that year, Alexander was alone, two thirds of Europe were subjected to Napoleon. That year, after having invaded Germany to re-establish the European system, detached Prussia and Austria from the French alliance, defeated Napoleon and understood the necessity to destroy the French Empire. After the battle of Leipzig, Alexander was desperately looking for peace, when Talleyrand appeared to him.

The great serve of the Revolution, the married bishop, showed the path for restoring peace: the legitimacy that Louis XVIII held was needed. And the king was up to the task. The Revolution profoundly secularised and simplified society and the state throughout the western world, reclaiming stagnant waters. Having freed themselves from the tutelage of the Church, states became freer in their movements and more active. Even the monarchical system became simpler, more serious, more effective, as many small dynasties were incorporated into medium and large monarchies. Moreover, the Revolution propagated the ideas of intellectual freedom, and the political freedom, with the right of opposition as its manifestation. The Revolution also diffused the idea of political and social equality: indeed, Europe arrived in the XVIII century with an ultra-aristocratic organization, contrary to the principles of Christianity and the development of new creative forces. The Revolution humanized the costumes, the law, and power in the western world. But there have also been negative factors that the Revolution brought with it: the total war without rules and conscription.

The Congress of Vienna, contrarily to the common interpretation was not the council of the European absolutism. In fact, France and Poland obtained representative institutions and the right of opposition; Switzerland got freed from the protectorate of mediation and began to democratize; in Germany there were guarantees on representative institutions (despite this point will not be fully understood, but this was not a fault of the Congress). Italy remained until 1922 the country who most strenuously opposed the principles of the Revolution. The true victim of the Congress was Poland: it was brutally slaughtered, for although Austria and Prussia could allow the resurrection of Poland, Russia could not.

During the XIX century, due to the new orientations and national ferments, three important events will take place: the fall of the legitimate monarchy in France in 1830, the revolution of the peoples in 1848, and from 1860 to 1870 the creation of the Kingdom of Italy and the destruction of the Germanic Confederation. These events will change

deeply the system of Vienna, though without destroying it. The constitution of a European system was not guaranteeing a Kantian perpetual peace but was rather establishing a serious and capable system that would limit the wars. The real end of the Congress of Vienna can instead be dated to 1914, with the First World War.

Self-regulation is the child of the constructive spirit: a great civilisation is based on a system of increasingly complex and refined self-regulation procedures. However, self-regulation is necessary and contradictory at the same time: the constructive spirit is limited and mobile. Insofar as it is limited, it always creates rules that only apply to certain cases, which can become unjust when applied in the wrong context. Being it mobile, the constructive spirit creates mobile rules, but rules are created to stabilise the mobility of human nature and are therefore only effective to the extent that they are permanent and stable. Therein lies the paradox. If the world changes, and new needs and ambitions arise, the spirit of adventure awakens. Therefore, the order of the world is a continuously evolving and never-ending task. The Congress of Vienna is an example of that. The three architects of the Congress have bizarre fates awaiting them after the Congress. Alexander went back to Russia and obsessed with the idea of a new war after the Hundred Days of Napoleon, created the Holy Alliance. Louis XVIII, a king that believed in his divine right to rule and that was patient enough, died on the throne. Talleyrand remained in power for just one year and a half: the order he created was banishing him. In the letter he sent to the Pope on his last day of life, he wrote: "The respect I owe to those who fathered me does not, however, prevent me from saying that my entire youth was driven towards a profession for which I was not born"[37]. No one could have imagined that when the world was in fear, a revolutionary tsar, a married bishop, and a king in exile would have changed the destiny of Europe.

[37] Ibidem, p. 401-402.

CHAPTER 3: THE PATH OF POWER

Fear and Power

The evening of the 18th of Brumaire (9th of November) 1799 Bonaparte was discussing the text of the Constitution of 1799, without hesitating to put several limits to the freedom of the people, while at the same time declaring the people as sovereign. He also attributed to himself numerous personal powers: the supreme direction of war and peace, the initiative for the laws, the nomination of the administrative, military, judiciary, and diplomatic staff outside the Court of Cassation and the ordinary tribunals. Bonaparte, now First Consul, and the Senate, a self-recruiting cooptative body of 80 members, were the real sovereigns through their creatures: the legislative body, the Tribunate, and the Council of State. With the Senate made only by friends, with the legislative body depending by the Senate, and with the executive and administrative powers in his hands, Bonaparte was the master of the state. He was absolute Power. He immediately realized the influence wielded by newspapers, and for this reason he decided to reduce the freedom of the press. During ancient Rome, on the Ides of March of 44 B.C., Julius Caesar was killed by the members of the Senate: the latter was sovereignty itself, and as such, feeling threatened, attacked (*Senatus mala bestia*). This time, the Senate was a creature of Bonaparte; the Tribunal was not an assembly of sovereigns capable of stabbing an excessively ambitious colleague. The 2nd of January 1800 the First Consul was sending to the legislative body a project of law that would give the government the right to establish the time for the Tribunate to revision the laws presented by the government and to direct the discussions on such laws. The Consul was demolishing the powers of the Tribunate. However, in doing so he was moving cautiously and gradually: the First Consul was hesitating, despite his power. The reason behind this was that Power reached through a *coup d'état* frightens the beholder even before those who suffer it.

Any long-lasting system of government works for the posterity, and the contemporaries only feel the daily step. Monarchy unified France, the papacy crystallized Italy cutting it in multiple cultural, industrial, and artistic centres: the French and Italian subjects knew nothing about such processes. To compare two regimes, it would be crucial to experience the past as actual, hypothetically; a tax on wine, that is always more

important for the contemporaries, could finally reach a higher status than that of the mission of a regime whose effects would be studied a century later. But there would still two problems: firstly, the Duke of La Rochefoucauld or the archbishop of Florence, coming from the past, would judge the events as well as a man taken from the street, and thus privileging the relevance of the wine tax; secondly, which opinion needs to be considered among the duke, the archbishop, and the man from the street? A major answer to the questions lies in the fact that these judgments cannot be made, in most cases. Indeed, if we consider the third republic of France and the German Empire, it would be difficult to rule out the best one. In Germany there were more organization and order, while in France there were more freedom and equality. To give a judgment and to choose among the two entities would mean to decide the best factors among organization, order, freedom, and equality. Moreover, if, by hypothesis, the totalitarian state becomes a regime universally accepted and recognized, it would be difficult to state if the generation who accepted the regime was happier rather than the previous one, that had more freedom. Then what is the reason that animates men to discuss and write about the improvement of political regimes? There are innate forces that do not allow humanity to crystallize into a final form. These forces live and wander around men. They are rooted into the changes caused by the shifts of the concept of the principle of legitimacy.

The principle of legitimacy can assume different shapes. There are: the elective principle, the democratic principle, the aristo-monarchic principle, and the hereditary principle. In the monarchies, a family has the right to exercise sovereign power from father to son, both personally and combined with other foreign organs. In the aristocratic republics, sovereignty belonged by hereditary right to a group of families which would exercise it both directly, i.e., through assemblies, and indirectly, i.e., through a magistrate elected by the families themselves. The aristo-monarchic principle presupposed the superiority of a family or of a group of families; once this authority is justified, power itself becomes in turn the demonstration of the superiority of the family. The elective and the democratic principles are instead represented by an election where the sovereign people delegate its powers to representatives through free and fair elections. The four principles have often intermingled: the aristo-monarchic principle has always been inseparable from the hereditary one. The democratic principle is not conciliable with the hereditary one instead. The elective principle, fundamental for democracy, was used by

monarchies, aristocracies, and the Catholic Church, for instance. The Doge of Venice, the Holy Roman Emperor, and still the Pope were elected from specially constituted colleges subject to majority rule, be it more or less big. The principles of legitimacy are in essence the justification for power intended as the right to rule. Indeed, among the human inequalities no one has ever been so impactful and thus has needed so much justification as the inequality deriving from power.

The principles are under certain conditions rational and just; they become preposterous once the former characteristics begin to lack. To the question: "why do some have the right to command and others the duty to obey?"[38] the answer is that the right to rule can be justified only by superiority. Even a vote by majority proves nothing: a single man can be right against the whole universe. However, the majority will probably reach better conclusions and thus take better decisions than a single individual could do, exception made for an extraordinary intelligence. The principle of the majority is therefore rational when organized, prepared, and channelled. While all the principles of legitimacy are originally partially rational, they can easily become absurd in their application. In the democracy, the majority must be right even in cases when it is not; in aristo-monarchic regimes, that were presupposing infallibility of power and negated the right of opposition, when the heir was not worth the job the critics had to remain silent. The revolutionary spirit supported the fact that principles of legitimacy are limited, conventional, tilting, and often vulnerable to reason. However, the assumption made by the revolutionary spirit that those principles seem fair only because men never go over a certain point when discussing them is, as explained above, simply not true. The dictator that gets power through force fears its own power because he knows that he gained it through the violation of a principle of legitimacy.

The concepts of progress and civilization are united by the idea of the best, of a previously unknown good that has been acquired, of an ailment one suffered from that has been suppressed or softened. The primordial ailment is fear. Animals are continuously in a state of alarm, they fear and are feared. The domestication of animals is a victory over fear; however, animals can generally be domesticated when they are very young, when the reflexes of fear have not yet become intractable. The Man is the being who has and is most frightening, because he is the only living being who has the idea, the

[38] Potere, G. Ferrero, p. 41.

obsession, and the terror of the dark chasm towards which the torrent of life rushes: death. Knowing that he can die at any moment and that one day or another he will have to die, he sees dangers of death everywhere. The Man is the most frightening being because he is the only one capable of making weapons, but it is precisely because of this that he suffers most from fear. Power is the supreme manifestation of the fear the Man causes to himself, despite the efforts made to be free from it. Even in the poorest and ignorant human societies there is a rudiment of authority: there are leaders who command and judge, soldiers and policemen who impose by force the will and verdicts of the leaders, masses who spontaneously or forcibly obey. Any man knows that, isolated in a complete anarchy, he would be the terror of the weaker men and the victim of the stronger ones. From the same reasoning there is the birth of the idea of war: when two groups of humans come into contact, they begin to be suspicious for the weapons which each group possess. The other group does not have bad intentions, but if it had? It does not have them today, but what about tomorrow?[39] It is necessary to safeguard and prepare the defence, but these very defensive precautions are seen from the other group as a threat. Power, like weapons, is originally a defence against anarchy and war. All the Powers know that revolt is latent and that they are precarious, proportionately to the force with which they are constrained to self-impose. To make the reciprocal fear between the Man and Power disappear, it would be necessary for Power to be recognized and obeyed with full freedom. Once the threats and the rigour arrive, fear comes with them: men are scared from the Power that subjugates them, while Power fears the rebellion of men. Power fears also its collaborators; as long as they serve it faithfully, they are its irresistible instruments; if they rebel against it, Power becomes Powerlessness. To ensure the faith of its men, Power offers money, honour, privileges, gratitude, admiration, and fear. Power live always in the permanent fear because in order to rule it uses physical force and violence. This concept is also present in the Bible, with the figures of Cain and Abel: the violence of Cain on Abel is the coercion exercised from Power on the docile humanity.

The Man is a fearful being who wants to overcome his real and imaginary fears. Civilisation is a school of courage, and its measure is the result of man's efforts to conquer his chimerical fears and to recognise the real dangers that threaten him. Progress is everything that serves man or helps him to conquer imaginary fears and to discover and

[39] Ibidem, p. 50.

eliminate the real dangers[40]. Science and religion both serve the objective of helping the Man to overcome his fears. The great semitic religions, i.e., Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, swept away a crowd of malignant deities from the Mediterranean to place there a single God who is not, like the polytheistic deities, the crystallisation of fear: He is a benign entity who rescues and helps. When one thinks that peoples no longer barbaric came to sacrifice their children to the gods, one is almost ashamed to belong to the human species. The God of the Bible freed a part of humanity from numerous imaginary terrors and reinvigorated the courage of the Man: he began to understand the secrets of nature once having stopped to fear it. Like the divinity, the Power gets humanized too throughout history. The principles of legitimacy humanize Power, because it's in their intrinsic nature to be accepted sincerely as reasonable and just. Their acceptance is not always active or wanted; it generally is a custom, an inevitable legacy from the past. Since their birth citizens find an established, strong and recognized power, and from the beginning they get used to consider it necessary and not substitutable. Even this passive faith allows Power to be largely recognized and accepted, and thus it fears less its subjects and has less need to terrorize them. If a people is convinced that a family is consecrated from God to rule, and that this family knows better than the people itself what is its good, and that thus it is, that people shall accept with respect and trust the will and the acts of the above mentioned family, an absolute monarchy can be then called legitimate. The principles of legitimacy are different formulas of the social contract, among which the governments of different country and epochs can make their choice. Each principle of legitimacy, once undertook, implies an obligation to comply, conditioned from the observance of certain rules, like in a real contract. When one of the two parties no longer respects the contract, the principle of legitimacy loses its strength and does not ensure safety for Power nor for the subjects. Fear of rebellion from the subjects begins once Power violates the principle of legitimacy that was up to that moment its very justification. The coup of the 18th of Brumaire was based on the large discontent of the majority of the population toward the Directorate. Thanks to Luciano Bonaparte, the legitimate President of the Five Hundreds, the coup succeeded. Bonaparte however had fear: the constitution he prepared was ingenious but it did not have a tradition, nor a recognized principle, nor past experience that were backing it. The Senate, the Tribunate, and the legislative body were neither

[40] Ibidem, p. 56.

elective nor hereditary, and the authority of the First Consul, in charge for ten years, was coming out of nowhere. The Italian campaigns could have been the reason for a supreme title of the army, not for an almost unlimited sovereignty as the one conferred to Bonaparte with the Constitution of the VIII year. With the necessity to continuously show strength, also due to the brand new Constitution, Bonaparte was fearing any form of opposition: "if I leave the reins on the neck of the press, I don't even stay in power for three months"[41].

The principles of legitimacy develop and change during their life. Since the Revolution, the aristo-monarchic principle had been fought by people truly convinced to fight for freedom and for the world progress, but at the same time was supported by men that believed to defend order, family, religion, and civilization. A principle of legitimacy harmonizes with the customs, culture, science, religion, economic interests of an era. When they change, the principle of legitimacy changes too. The concentration of power for hereditary right in a small number of dynasties and noble families was leaning on a parallel concentration of richness: most of the wealth belonged to the Court, the nobles, and the Church; these entities were the part of society that was ruling. The masses had liberal professions, industrial and agricultural work, small and large-scale trade. The interest on money was prohibited, because time belongs to God, not man. There were few needs, no comfortable ease, but several luxury items. Aristocracy and monarchy grew, despite Christianity was an egalitarian religion. The ruling class was governing Europe for centuries among churches, convents, cathedrals, and baptisteries; Christianity exalted the love for God and for men until the annihilation of egoism. Aristocracy and monarchy were able to frame, support, and accommodate the elite that understood this metaphysical message into the hierarchies: a solidarity was born between the *Ancien Régime* and the Christian churches that proved strong, deep, and tenacious over the centuries. Based on the hereditary principle, on landed wealth, on the Bible, on the Church, on the most fascinating splendours of ancient qualitative civilisations, the monarchies and aristocracies of the *Ancien Régime* succeeded in having their hierarchies accepted as legitimate by the masses. Unlike modern states, they demanded few sacrifices from the masses: conscription did not exist, taxes were light, government was cheap because many public functions were exercised free of charge by the nobility; in return, these hierarchies demanded total, absolute, and unconditional respect. *Ancien Régime* did not recognize the

[41] Ibidem, p. 65.

right of opposition but recognized to organized social groups the right to present and submit grievances; the social groups were Diets, Parliaments, Councils, and Estates. In exchange for respect, Power had to defend the weak, enforce the law, keep order, and ensure the prosperity of the people and of the middle class. As long as this orientation was universal and self-confident in Europe, the hereditary, aristocratic and monarchical principle of legitimacy was as firm as the mountains. But the orientation and the system began to tremble with the geographical explorations of the XV century and by the Reform. During the Council of Trento, the legates of the Pope were telling the Protestant princes: "You support the people against the Pope. But take heed: the people, having rebelled against the Pope, will rebel against princes, kings, and emperors!"[42]. form the XVI century, gold and silver coming from America were provoking in Europe the first inflations: Calvin introduced the interest of money. Meanwhile, the Renaissance secularised culture. The discovery of print, Galileo's astronomy, the colonization of America, the development of the armies increased the faith of men in their own force of will and intelligence. The critical spirit awakens at the expense of the existing Power: the idea that power needs the sanction of the people in order to be legitimate begins to peep out. England demonstrates how Power, to some extent, has to be controlled by those who submit themselves to it; during the XVII century, while there was monarchic absolutism in all of Europe, in England such regime was not present. The power of the Parliament was justified by a Chart and tradition; the Commons were a new ruling class, not hereditary, but elective, independent from aristocracy and from the crown: they thus transformed opposition in a fundamental right. In France the new generations were looking at the English model with fascination, while the prestige and cohesion of the nobility were significantly decreasing. The Third Estate was advancing thanks to increased wealth and culture, and new ideas were born such as *The Social Contract* in 1762, in the midst of aristocratic and monarchical Europe. For Rousseau the sovereign is the people that, once reunited, decides the law; this law is an authentic act of the general will over a subject of common interest. The general will is the unique, indivisible will who aspires to order, justice, and security. When the particular wills impede the general will to manifest in a unanimous impulse, a plurality of votes may be used; but the convention will have no value except insofar as it is unanimously accepted, since a

[42] Ibidem, p. 73-74.

majority will not give any guarantee as to the authenticity of the general will it purports to express. The majority can err and is therefore only legitimate when it expresses the true general will. Rousseau does not ask himself how to recognise this general will because it is an absolute entity, which can be revealed by the political state of grace. The latter consists in freeing oneself from the particular interests that individuals possess in order to preserve the general will of the citizens. Hence the legislative power is sovereign and is identified with the people, who formulate and apply the laws.

But we come to a fence: while laws are in themselves general prescriptions, their application concerns particular cases. The sovereign (the people) could not apply them without confusing the general with the particular. A new body is needed to apply them: the government, i.e. the executive power, subordinate to the legislative power. An interesting fact is how originally Rousseau, in expounding his ideas, was thinking not of France, but of his homeland: Geneva and the struggles between the districts of Saint Gervais and Saint Pierre. The conflict was between the councils dominated by the large families and the general council. The sovereign people were the privileged aristocracy of 1,500 members of Geneve, that was ruling the republic as an absolute king, without considering its subjects and only defending itself from the particular wills of its members. According to such a concept of sovereign people, modelled around the general council of Geneve, the sovereign people cannot be represented: if one applied the doctrine to the full, democracy would be the only legitimate government and even the representative government would be a form of tyranny. The general will of the sovereign people, a religious axiom, was not tuning neither with the monarchical absolutism then dominant, nor with future regimes based on the right of opposition. But the effects of this text were tangible very soon: in the United States Declaration of Independence of the 4th of July 1776, the influence of *The Social Contract* is evident: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and

Happiness"[43]. In this declaration, the consent of those governed is assumed to be possible for all regimes; all regimes can therefore be legitimate, if they respect the inalienable rights of men: the American colonies revolt not because the principles of legitimacy of the *Ancien Régime* are contrary to reason and justice, but because the power has misgoverned. Here, the social contract is interpreted as a defensive bastion that protects the people against the abuses of power.

The French Court was not summoning the Estates General since 1614. The absolutism of the monarchy was strong and weak at the same time: on one side, the Court, eluding the Estates General, freed itself from the control that the nobility, the clergy, and the Third Estate could exercise on its policy; but it did not increase the taxes on the higher order of society, the clergy, and the nobility without asking for their consent. Given that wars were frequent, and the expenses were increasing, the monarchy was obliged to squeeze the less wealthy part of the population more and more, and abusing the most ruinous expedients: debts, selling titles of nobility, offices, and exemptions. These abuses were easy to do because the state budgets were secret. The public debt had greatly increased during a century and a half, while the tax base had decreased or resisted more: under these circumstances, bankruptcy was imminent. In 1789 Charles Alexandre de Calonne, the Comptroller General of Finance of France, decided to subject all lands, including noble and ecclesiastical ones, to a tax audit. For this action, he needed to convene the Estates General. The Court refused to take this step, so Calonne only summoned 144 notables. They protested, arguing that it was necessary to convene the states-general. At this point, Calonne tendered his resignation. Finally, after several clashes between the Court and public opinion, the Court decided to convene the Estates General after 164 years. Since 1750, the democratic principle of legitimacy was contrasting the pre-existing aristo-monarchic principle of legitimacy: France was beginning to doubt the ancient social order.

In the Court of Versailles just five or six people, king included, were to decide on laws, administration, finances, internal policies, foreign policy, and interests of a kingdom counting 25 million citizens. In the second half of the XVIII century France was not tied enough to the aristo-monarchic principle to accept this state of affairs: it was aiming at a much broader expansion of the unification of society, with an organization of power that

[43] United States Declaration of Independence, Preamble.

would allow the wealthy and literate classes to be part of the administration. To prepare such reform of society, discussions on the nature, origin, and justifications of power were numerous in the 1750s France. Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, abbot and French politician, in an anonymous pamphlet was able to define the French nation: "The Nation exists before everything else, and is the origin of everything. Its will is always legitimate, because it is the same thing. Before and above it there is only *natural* law. If we want to form an exact idea of all the *positive* laws that are exclusive emanations of its will, we find in the first line the *constitutional* laws that are divided into two groups: one that regulates the organisation and functions of body *x*, and the other that determines the organisation and functions of the various *active* bodies. These laws are called *fundamental*, not in the sense that they can become independent of the national will, but because the bodies that exist and act through them cannot change them. In every point, the Constitution is not the work of the constituted power, but of the constituent power. No delegated power can change anything under the conditions of its delegation. This is in what sense constitutional laws are *fundamental*. The first, those that establish the legislature, are *established* by the national will before any constitution and are its first step. The second are to be established by a *special* representative will. Thus all parts of the government correspond to and ultimately depend on the Nation. We offer here only a fleeting but exact idea of this"[44]. For Sieyès the sovereign right of the monarchy is put apart to leave space to the sovereign right of the nation and of its collective will. While for Rousseau the majority had no intrinsic value, and its value was to be found in the expression of the collective will, for Sieyès plurality is itself the legitimate expression of the collective will: the right to rule of the majority is a pillar of the representative government. He did not, however, took the English Parliament as a model. Once re-established, the Estates General did almost nothing; the issue was that they were an old

7Portrait of Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès

[44] *Qu'est ce que le Tiers-Etat?*, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, p. 4.

medieval institution, whose legitimacy was depending on the will of the king and on the laws that regulated their competences. They could only report the king's abuses and demand explanations, give or refuse their consent to some taxes. The Third Estate was continuously hesitating. The 15th of June 1789 Sieyès proposed for the Third Estate to self-proclaim as representative of the French nation. After several of discussions, and thanks to a discourse of the Count of Mirabeau, the 17th of June the Assembly of the Third Estate decided to call itself "National Assembly", letting others know that it would be formed with or without their presence. The legislative power finally moved from the king to the assembly. But the assembly was not supported, as in modern parliamentary states, by old laws and tradition, that would have established without possibility of discussion its competences and procedure; it was not even supported by a large public opinion. Louis XVIII attempted to transform France into a constitutional monarchy, but a bit more than two weeks later, an extraordinary and unpredictable event happened, throwing a burning embers into a powder keg called *France*.

Power always coincides with an organised minority that only has contact with isolated individuals or small groups: that is why it can impose itself without too much difficulty; even the strongest of powers would collapse within hours, its police and justice would be instantly and entirely paralysed, if all subjects agreed to refuse obedience at the same time[45]. Every state succeeds in getting itself obeyed because universal rejection of obedience is almost impossible: almost because that is what happened following the storming of the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789. In the weeks following the storming of the Bastille, the king was without completely deprived of his powers. The sudden collapse in a few weeks in the middle of Europe and in a state of peace of one of the most ancient and refined civilization was an unprecedented event. The initial and decisive moment of the French Revolution was the ruin of the aristocratic and monarchic legality after the Bastille. After it, the Revolution focused on the edification of an acceptable legality for France and conciliable for Europe. The first reaction of the beginning of the Revolution was panic, with rumours spreading and arriving in the countryside. There were narrations about brigands who burnt forests, took away crops, plundered towns; about that the king's troops, led by princes of the royal family, were approaching; that foreign armies were about to invade France to punish and exterminate the people. With the great fear felt by

[45] Potere, G. Ferrero, p. 101.

the masses, the great fear of society began, scared in turn by the masses. While the masses were scared about conspiracy theories, the nobles were fleeing from a danger that did not yet exist, and which instead will be caused precisely by their escape. The great fear, invisible protagonist of the Revolution, had the greatest role in the drama that lasted until 1814. Anarchy spread throughout the nation, while the Assembly was formulating laws, thus destroying the ancient organization of the aristo-monarchic France, and building in its place a new organization with metaphysical foundations devoid of experience. The 27th of August the Assembly finished the discussion and approved the last articles of the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen. From the first to the fifth article, some of the most important innovative points are described and presented: "Article I: Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good. Article II: The goal of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, safety and resistance against oppression. Article III: The principle of any sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation. No body, no individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation. Article IV: Liberty consists of doing anything which does not harm others: thus, the exercise of the natural rights of each man has only those borders which assure other members of the society the fruition of these same rights. These borders can be determined only by the law. Article V: The law has the right to forbid only actions harmful to society. Anything which is not forbidden by the law cannot be impeded, and no one can be constrained to do what it does not order"[46]. But it is with the sixth article that the general will, Rousseau's triumph, is introduced: "Article VI: The law is the expression of the general will. All the citizens have the right to contribute personally or through their representatives to its formation. It must be the same for all, either that it protects, or that it punishes. All the citizens, being equal in their eyes, are equally admissible to all public dignities, places, and employments, according to their capacity and without distinction other than that of their virtues and of their talents"[47]. The Assembly was laying the foundations of the future constitution of the kingdom, approving the nineteen articles, which it sent to the king requesting their sanction. These articles, by creating a permanent Assembly, gave France the new

[46] Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, Articles 1-5.
[47] Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, Article 6.

legislative power it needed: they recognized the king as head of the executive power with the right to appoint and dismiss ministers, and gave him the right of suspensive veto on the resolutions of the Assembly. Two weeks later, the king answered that the new constitutive laws could be judged only in their entirety. The national Assembly persevered in the destruction of the ancient France, abolishing the last vestiges of the feudal regime, the distinction of orders, the sale of offices, all tax exemptions and inequalities, the ecclesiastical titles, the privileges of corporations, villages and provinces, and parliaments. The 10th of October Talleyrand proposed to devolve all ecclesiastical assets to the state; on November 2nd Mirabeau proposed to make all Church assets available to the country: in twenty days the oldest institution in history was demolished. The Assembly was defining the details regarding the citizens, dividing them in active and passive. The former were allowed to participate in the elaboration of the law and in the exercise of power, and were the ones who possessed a certain wealth; they were divided in three categories based on their wealth. The latter were not allowed to participate to the formation of the public powers: they were women, children, and men below the minimum wealth required. The constitution was bourgeoisie in its nature: the three categories of wealth were crucial: in the poorest category, the members could only unite into primary assemblies to choose the electors who would in turn elect the members of the various assemblies; the second category was giving to the first one the electors of second level and the members of the departmental assemblies and of the municipal districts; the third, i.e., the richest class, could aspire to all positions, including the national assembly. After having defined the new sovereign, i.e., the nation, the Assembly voted in December in favour of a law destined to reorganize the executive power according to the elective principle. The essential part of the executive power was attributed to the members of the departmental and municipal assemblies elected by the people. The king was preserving just the command of the (disorganized) army, without the authority to declare war without the acceptance of the Assembly. Given that all the oppositions were paralyzed, all it took was a small group of resolute deputies, the vociferations and shouts staged by any ranting, any popular demonstration, for the Assembly to allow the most extravagant proposals. This Assembly did not rely on any authority: the authority of the Estates General was stemming from the ancient laws of the kingdom and from the momentum of France. The Estates General renounced to the prestige and the support of the traditional authority and

after the Bastille the momentum slowed down. The enthusiastic unanimity present in the Assembly in the month of May was finishing, with the division of the members in two parties at the end of 1789: one wanted to stop the Revolution, the other would like to make it develop. The middle and low classes became increasingly suspicious about the nobility, the high clergy, and the wealthy. The masses started to believe that bread was missing as a result of conspiracies of the crown, high clergy, and nobility, not considering that the true reason behind it was due to bad harvests and transport difficulties caused by anarchy. The emigration of the nobility began after the storming of the Bastille, and enlarged once the conspiracies spread more and more. France needed a vigorous executive power that would reapply the law demolished after the 14th of July. The Assembly tried to help the new executive through the committees, that were in direct contact with the authorities, giving it orders to follow. But the powers weakened each other in a catastrophic competition, in a moment when a strong and solid state was needed. The court, the nobility, and the clergy were fearing the Assembly, which in turn feared them: suspicions were interpreted as reality, making the situation worse. In this widespread and general fear, *The Social Contract* became the holy text of the Revolution.

No principle of legitimacy can impose immediately and irresistibly; most of the French people in 1789 had not heard about general will, and about sovereignty of the nation. Moreover, once the Revolution gave to the people the tools of sovereignty, the people used them to demolish the very revolutionary institutions. After the fall of Robespierre, the Revolution, through the Directorate, tried to faithfully apply the formula of democratic legitimacy bestowing the liberties that follow from it: freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of association, respecting the right of opposition. But it soon realised that the right of opposition and the freedoms mainly benefited the royalists and the Catholics, because they had the majority of the country on their side. If the majority mechanism had been applied fairly, the aristo-monarchic principle would have triumphed. It was then not possible to apply the principle of the popular sovereignty, but Sieyès, who can be identified as the ideologue of the Revolution, found a solution. After having disappeared during the Reign of Terror, he came back in 1799 as the organizer of a second revolution, that would end up being the antithesis of the first of the first one: the 18th of Brumaire and the Constitution of the Year VIII. Eventually Sieyès came up with the formula that would save the revolutionary movement: trust must rise from below and

authority descend from above[48]. Such formula had to be applied from a power superior to the people and independent from it. To apply such unique constitution, a man familiar with reality was needed, a man of action: the name of the chosen one was Napoleon Bonaparte. Gripped by the fear stemming from immense but unrestrained power, Napoleon had had himself consecrated by the Pope, married a princess, and at the same time had himself elected emperor through a plebiscite by universal suffrage: he claimed to justify his rule by two (conflicting) principles of legitimacy at the same time. The assemblies that should have brought the regime the expression of the popular consent were completely controlled by the Emperor. Once elected First Consul, Napoleon suppressed all the liberties that Sieyès had hoped to safeguard, because the slightest opposition terrified him. He sought to seize Switzerland and Piedmont not out of boundless ambition, but to dispose of the communication routes from France through Piedmont to Northern Italy: he was afraid of Austria. After Austerlitz, with the Treaty of Pressburg, he transformed Italy into a French protectorate, and then his fears moved toward a possible revenge of Austria. He therefore destroyed the Empire and created the Confederation of the Rhine, arming and unifying Germany with the illusion of using it against Austria and Prussia. Once defeated Prussia, he concluded an alliance with Russia, and continued his efforts to disarm Austria, seeing dangers everywhere, from his ally Russia to the tormented Spain. The almighty Emperor, the master of Europe, the Übermensch trembled because he lacked monarchic legitimacy and democratic legitimacy. At the head of an immense army, of a great administration, of the most powerful state in the world, Napoleon had felt lonely at the Tuileries, and from the beginning he had been afraid of his loneliness. In 1814 Louis XVIII returned as King of France, with the consequent reinstallation of the legitimacy. The king understood and recognized the parliament as a serious institution, capable to ensure the state the security belonging to the democratic principle, i.e., the exercise of the right of opposition. The king and the parliament were in France two different and equally sovereign powers, and the doctrine of Montesquieu, moved into the monarchy, created a permanent conflict between the executive and the legislative powers. The apex of the tension was reached in 1830 with the infamous ordinances of Charles X against the press, concluding with the abdication of the defeated king. Louis Philippe I had been able to manage the division for

[48] Potere, G. Ferrero, p. 125.

some time: during the first ten years of his kingdom, he, together with his right arm Guizot, restored a balance between the monarchy and the parliament. The idea of Sieyès about a representative regime with the right of opposition and the liberties deriving from it, subjected to the control of a superior and independent body that, without binding the will of the people, would prevent its too violent deviations to the right and left, was the basis of Louis Philippe's system. The king was no longer the sacred regulator, the divine emanation that was personally directing the state: it was now the regulator of the ancient and new forces, the coordinating element of the state. Monarchy became a mediating force by hiding behind the democratic principle. However, the incomplete and not sincere representative government of Louis Philippe was a false solution: around 300,000 electors were identified the sovereign people. But how could 300,000 electors be deemed as the sovereign power, for the only reason that they possessed a certain wealth, given that to be elector and sovereign it was necessary to pay a tax of 300 francs? The census privilege was a blatant weakness of the Restoration. After 1840, when the power was solidly in the hands of Guizot, the opposition began to raise the issue of electoral reform, facing the opposition of Guizot and of the king. Eventually, the king was defeated and, with no successors, it was proclaimed the French Republic (again): no other solution was possible. The people became the totality of male citizens who had reached the age of reason. The 17th of April 1848, the French people performed its first act as sovereign, appointing the assembly that was to organise the republic. An assembly of half declared monarchists and half republicans converted after the February Days was elected. The genuine republicans, i.e. the champions of the sovereign rights of the people before the revolution, were a small minority. The revolutionary parties had almost no representatives in the Assembly. Then the armed revolt of the extreme left-wing parties broke out against the national Assembly, accused of being too conservative and too bound to the *Ancien Régime*. Yet the National Assembly was the sincere and free expression of the sovereign will of the French people. In June, therefore, the extreme left-wing parties took up arms against the sovereignty of the people because it had proven to be too conservative. They were therefore champions of the people, provided that the sovereign people voted for them. To get out of this complex situation, France elected Louis Napoleon President of the Republic. Such vote was the second proof of the conservative tendency of the universal suffrage and of the repulsion that the popular masses had toward the Revolution and its sovereignty: the

empire was just the revolutionary substitute for the monarchy. Louis Napoleon tried to resurrect monarchy by reconstituting the empire. While it was too much revolutionary for the monarchists, the empire was still valued as a hereditary monarchy from the republicans. The nephew of Napoleon re-established the universal suffrage, mutilated by the conservative majority of the Assembly; suppressed the right of opposition that the Restoration recognized in order to avoid falsifying the democratic principle; made the government a machine of corruption and intimidation, that had the role of transforming the universal suffrage into a servant of Power. To weaken Austria, he favoured the national sentiment in Italy and Germany, to the advantage of Piedmont and Prussia. The latter and most of Germany, after 1848, began to separate the executive and the legislative powers; Austria would do the same after 1866. The Charter of Louis XVIII was extremely occult and powerful at the same time: with the separation of powers monarchy had been able to maintain its sovereign rights in Germany and Austria until 1914. England was the only state where the two principles of legitimacy had contrasts but without dramatic consequences; the representative institutions finished to friendly share power with aristocracy and monarchy. Seventy years after the Revolutions of 1848, only two monarchies were surviving in the European continent: the Italian and the Spanish ones, though wavering and helpless. Despite it seemed that the democratic principle was to become firmly established, new revolts happened everywhere: Russia, Italy, Germany, and Spain are some examples.

Legitimacy

"The legitimate government, the good government, is the one which does well what it must, that pursues the public good. Its legitimacy is attested by its utility. It will be useful when its means of action, like force and structure, appear adequate and proportionate to the aim. The just government shall give the men united in a community what they need: its presence is revealed when it, completing this duty, provides for a necessary good. The absence of this good reveals the absence of Power, be it abolished, misguided, or perverted. If a government demonstrates to be dangerous it means that its nature or its structure are bad, and that it is inadequate to accomplish what it was constituted for at the very beginning"[49]. The legitimate government, according to the

[49] *Enquête sur la monarchie,* Charles Murras, p. 127.

common view present in the XIX and XX centuries, is the useful, good government, whose legitimacy is justified by its utility (this theory was also supported by Hans Kelsen, Austrian jurist and philosopher, exponent of Normativism). However, the efficacy of Power is not a constant; it is instead continuously subject to variations. Greatness and decadence represent the cycle to which all human powers are subordinate. The right to rule, like all rights, is by its own nature a constant, and it lasts immutable for a period during which the efficacy of a government can increase or not. Legitimacy can be identified and understood only through a fix and clear measurement unit: the principles of legitimacy. They are the justifications of Power, capable of immunize it against the fear of its own citizens. They are the elective, hereditary, aristo-monarchic, and democratic principles. Power is legitimate when the procedures used to create it and to exercise it are conformed to the principles and rules that derive from it. This conformity establishes the right to rule. A government is legitimate if Power is attributed and exercised according to rules and principles accepted without discussion from those who must obey. The justification of the right to rule, although being limited, is clear and precise. Utility or usefulness are apparent justifications that presuppose possible the establishment of a ranking among principles. Legitimacy does not represent a natural, spontaneous, simple, or immediate state, but rather an artificial state: the conclusion of a long effort that can also not work. No government is legitimate at birth: it becomes so because it is able of being accepted, and to succeed in that, it needs time. It is crucial to give time to the people to get used to its principle of legitimacy. A supporter of the republic could protest against the unreasonableness of sovereign rights given to a certain accident like hereditariness, while a monarchic may denounce the encyclopaedic incompetence of the universal suffrage. The government becomes legitimate the day when it finally succeeds in disarming the oppositions provoked by its advent. In the legitimate state, both the government and the citizens respect the principles of legitimacy; from this agreement derives an equilibrium, that makes the role of the government relatively easy and safe. In the period of pre-legitimacy, the government shall respect the principle of legitimacy, because no government can hope to educate its citizens to the respect of something that itself *in primis* does not respect, while a part or even the majority of the population does not accept it. So in the pre-legitimacy period, the principle of legitimacy, instead of sustaining the government, needs to be sustained. The government needs to win its fear

and not fight opposition with force and violence, that would make impossible the final crystallization of the universal consent. This is the most difficult situation in which a government aspiring to legitimacy can find. To move from pre-legitimacy to legitimacy the first thing needed is time. Then, it is of key relevance that at least a minority believes in its principle, and that in an active way supports it. Legitimacy can be filled through painting, sculpture, architecture, parades, processions, triumphs, religious and civil solemnities, etc. Even literature gave its decisive contribution. Religion was (and still is in some parts of the world) a strong element of propaganda: in Egypt and in Asian monarchies the rulers were divinities; Julius Caesar pretended that his family descended from the goddess Venus. The great semitic religions took away these beliefs, but in Europe the aristo-monarchic principle always looked for the sustain of Christianity. When the people accept a government as legitimate, it means that the former is satisfied with the latter as a whole. The services through which a legitimate government proves its utility are several: order, prosperity, security, victory in wars, prestige. When the people doubt about the utility of the government, problems may arise as legitimacy trembles. To conclude, in the eternal drama of legitimacy utility has its part, but just it.

For a hereditary monarchy to be legitimate it is necessary to have a clear and precise rule regulating succession to respect. Like the sovereign, even its successor shall be universally known and recognized without hesitation or divergence, otherwise legitimacy would always be under menace. This is not easy: numerous dynasties, when there would be divorces, would result in more wives, concubines, with sons that had not clear rights about hereditariness. Alexander the Great, for instance, was the son of the second wife of King Philip II. The king had a son from the first wife, and more sons from his third wife. The rights of succession of Alexander were thus not incontestable; to avoid any discussion, Alexander inaugurated his reign with a family massacre by killing the males of the first and third wife of his father. Among ancient monarchs, this practice was quite common. In ancient times, hereditary monarchy was able to establish itself and to go over the phase of pre-legitimacy only exceptionally, due to the difficulties with the creation of a clear succession rule. In ancient history, the attempts to found a hereditary monarchy, like Constantine tried to do, often ended up in civil wars, invasions, and conflicts. Hereditary monarchy became a legitimate power, regulated and without fear thanks to Christianity: marriage, now a sacrament, sanctifying the right of an exclusive and

legitimate wife, gave stability to the family, allowing the rule of succession to crystallize through the dynasties. Thanks to such stability, succession was ultimately accepted by several peoples as a principle of legitimacy, though numerous problems: succession is the principle of legitimacy which offers a wider field to chance than intelligence, and it is the least rational among the principles. Despite these difficulties, since the Middle Ages, this principle imposed itself in the western world. In the countries where the semitic religion did not spread, king and nobles presented themselves to the masses as divinities or as their descendants. In the western world, the monarchic legitimacy was favoured by richness and force. The dynasty had to possess the largest part of the State's wealth, exception made for the Church, and to be richer than the other wealthy families; it had to spend for wars, armaments, public works, charity and protection of all classes, public luxury, court luxury, luxury of the members of the dynasty, gigantic palaces and castles, festivals and parades, to dazzle the masses with the vision of a superior life, providing work for artists and craftsmen, and making trade flourish. People indeed do not have an innate and invincible passion for equality; they can console themselves from the obscurity to which the majority is condemned in two opposite ways: by making it the state of perfection in which all must participate, or by admiring the luxuries, the splendours, the enjoyments, the superiorities of a privileged few that are forbidden to them. Prodigality was therefore a necessary sin; to fill the coffers of the treasury, however, avarice was necessary. Moreover, the ruler had to be omnipresent to the masses, but at the same time he could not under any circumstances be a mere man among men: his every act and that of his family was regulated and fixed by a pre-established etiquette. A major difficulty was love: only marriages among sovereign families had the virtue to transmit right to power, without considering the bride and groom's liking. One of the biggest complications of the hereditary monarchy was that it needs to convince the subjects that the king has all the virtues, that what he does is perfect and that he is infallible. Any criticisable power can be revoked, and thus any irrevocable power shall be saved from criticism and recognized as infallible: the more the sovereign is inept and weak, the more the admiration has to be total, absolute. A sovereign like Frederick II or Louis XIV is still protected by the murmur of the crowd; an inept ruler can admit no blame: he would be too disqualified if his works were appreciated at their proper value. *Parum de Deo, nihil de principe* (medieval expression that urged to remain aloof and not to get into trouble; if God can forgive, the

prince is unlikely to do so: better to speak little of the divine, and none at all of the king) is a vital necessity for all hereditary, absolute, or constitutional monarchies. While the hereditary power is a challenge to reason, the incontestable hereditary power with no opposition nor critic is an absurdity. On one side, since the Middle Ages, in Europe, there had been a tendency to use public bodies such Diets, Estates General, Parliaments, to manifest desires and grievances to the ruling power. On the other, the monarchic infallibility became an absolute reality, like in XVII century France. Since Armand Jean du Plessis, Duke of Richelieu, the French monarchy claimed infallibility as a divine attribute that provides efficiency; other countries got infected by this Asian practice. Strengthened of the veneration from the masses, confident in its almost sacred legitimacy, monarchy increasingly abused of its powers, without realizing that the instrument it was handling was getting consumed: the king and its council were no longer able of equilibrating the balance, and could not even give orders to a good half of their functionaries, because they had bought their offices and exploited them as private possessions. The *Ancien Régime* was not demolished from the outside, but rather sank on its own, because the people realised that the king no longer had a gendarmerie, a police force or a judiciary capable of enforcing elementary laws. At that point, the kingship, fragile and worn out by the centuries, had ended up taking on a task too great for the means at its disposal, falling into the gigantic abyss of failure. After 1848, in France, Louis XVIII divided sovereignty between crown and parliament; then, Louis Philippe I maintained the authority of the king shadowing the one of the parliament. In Germany, Louis XVIII's solution was adopted, through a chancellor responsible to the people and nominated by the emperor. During the XIX century, monarchies isolated from the mass, and the mass began to ignore them, thus weakening the aristo-monarchic principle. When the quantitative civilisation began to accustom generations to prefer their own well-being, their own personal pleasures to the

8Portrait of King Louis XVIII

magnificence of public luxury and the collective feasts of yesteryear, it turned one of the monarchy's most powerful attractions into a reason for hostility. Moreover, the expansion of the egalitarian spirit reigned and with it the gradual dissolution of all the hierarchical and ceremonial crystallisations of the *Ancien Régime*.

Democracy is the principle of delegation of power through elections, applied in a society to solve the government's problems. In democracies, young people learn how to exercise their particles of sovereignty just like in monarchies they learnt to serve the king. After the First World War, when the great monarchies fell, the idea that peoples would have self-governed spread rapidly; the initiative arose from a minority, with the mass following. Since 1920, European states, great or small, attempted to find in delegation the source of power. In the European monarchies like Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, and Russia, there had not been aristocracies, intellectual classes, or even bourgeoisies able to govern the state. Those classes preferred to fell subjected under a supreme power that would ensure them order and advantages of their social prominence, without the responsibilities and the efforts of active participation of ruling the state. After 1848, the contradictions and the absurdity of the monarchic infallibility caused a principle of discontent. In the democratic structure, the majority has the right to rule, while the minority to do opposition and to criticize the majority before becoming the majority itself. In democracies, opposition is an organ of the sovereignty of the people as vital as the government: to suppress the opposition means to supress the sovereignty of the people: majority and minority, right to rule and right to oppose are the two pillars of the democratic legitimacy. Government and opposition represent a dualism; to conciliate unity with this dualism is a crucial challenge for democracy to reach complete legitimacy. First, the majority shall be a real majority, and not a fraudulent or violent minority; then, the minority must do a serious and constructive opposition. Another condition is that majority needs to understand its transitory role, renouncing to power at the due time; minority has instead to oppose while respecting the right to rule of the majority. With regard of these conditions, power and opposition are two organs of a unitary will that conciliate dualism: the result is the affection of the masses to the democratic institutions. The people thus realize the moral superiority of the free man compared the subject; when democracy reaches full legitimacy, it has no need of spreading fear, and has therefore less fear: less than the most legitimate among the monarchies. Democracy, aiming at

respecting the political liberties, is obliged to discuss about anything, including the principles on which the very legitimacy of democracy is founded. In a democracy no one could state that the minority has the right to rule instead of the majority, or that the majority can suppress the minority and its opposition. For popular sovereignty to be a reality, the sovereign people has to be a living entity, with a true will. The universal suffrage was reached thanks to a minority of people belonging to the upper classes with the support of small popular groups: it came from above, like monarchical power, because power, when it had admitted that the will of the people was the sole or partial source of legitimate authority, could no longer stop halfway in arbitrary distinctions, which limited sovereign rights to one part of the nation. The people means everyone, a simple and unequivocal solution. Rousseau often wrote about the sovereign people, but without defining it. The Revolution took advantage of this by following Sieyès, replacing the word *people* with the word *nation*. Indeed, Article 3 of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" states: "The principle of any sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body, no individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation"[50]. The *nation* replaced the *people*, because while the latter is the sum of all the citizens without any distinction, the former is the organized and hierarchised people into classes and professions. Among the constitutions of the Revolution, only the one of 1793 recognized into universal suffrage the organ of popular sovereignty; but it was never applied. While monarchies adapted well for poor peoples, democracy calls for culture and well-being. To become legitimate, monarchy was cultivating in the admiration of the privileges enjoyed by aristo-monarchic power: wealth luxury, culture; democracy, on the contrary, becomes legitimate by developing a sense of equality in the masses. The disorders provoked during 1914-1918 made Europe suspended between a monarchy that was no longer possible and a democracy that was not yet ready: thus it plunged into revolutionary governments.

An illegitimate government is a regime where power is attributed and exercised according to principles imposed with force, established not so long ago, and that the majority does not accept. But up to this point it is the same as the pre-legitimate government. The difference consists in the fact that the latter is willing to respect the principle of legitimacy to which the majority still resists by leading by example; the

[50] Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Article 3.

illegitimate government instead does not aim at the respect of the principle of legitimacy with which it pretends to justify its power. In a pre-legitimate regime, power is attributed and exercised according to rules and principles that the people do not accept yet but that the government respects; in an illegitimate regime, the government is attributed according to rules that the people does not accept, and the government itself does not respect them. A new dynasty generally represents the case of a pre-legitimate government: the Napoleonic Empire is an example. The revolutionary governments have instead a different path. The Constitution of 1791 was too big a novelty to be understood and accepted immediately by the majority. With a great rate of abstentionism, the legislative Assembly was elected by a minority, through not clear elections; it was made up by elements taken from a minority without prestige, and thus not capable to feel as the expression of the national will. Furthermore, the new representative state had no police, magistrature, and administration to ensure order. Once established, the Assembly had been dominated by a violent minority. But democracy represents the government of the majority; so once the legislative Assembly was controlled by a minority, it was no longer a democracy, nor legitimate, nor pre-legitimate: it became a revolutionary government. Since its very birth, the government could not have been legitimate nor pre-legitimate: it violated the rule of the majority and the freedom of the vote. The National Convention, i.e., the constituent assembly of the French First Republic, was elected by a suffrage in conditions of severe limitations of liberties. The 9th of Thermidor and the Constitution of the Year III re-established the right of opposition and its relative freedoms, but with no success. In 1799 a man believed to have found a new constitution that, in spite of not being inspired by any existent model, would have been capable of applying the principle of sovereignty of the nation. This man was the Abbot Sieyès, the greatest political architect of the time. Starting from the principle that authority must come from above and trust from below, Sieyès imagined a great assembly, independent of popular suffrage and invested with an authority to choose the members of the legislative and administrative assemblies from a body chosen and elected by popular suffrage on a broad basis. By crafting such supreme assembly with men profoundly attached to the principle of legitimacy proclaimed by the Revolution and surrounding it with the necessary measures to avoid corruption, Sieyès hoped to give France a representative regime that could rule respecting its principles: the right of opposition and the relationship between majority and

minority, with the relative liberties. The sovereignty of the nation would thus have become a reality, in an equilibrate balance that would have granted order and prosperity while respecting human rights. Bu the group in charge of implementing the constitution was immediately seized with fear: in less than three months, Bonaparte suppressed freedom of the press, parliamentary freedom, the right of opposition, and every decentralisation created by the revolution. The Senate did not oppose Bonaparte for the same reason Bonaparte suppressed the freedoms: fear. The Senate of the Constitution of the Year VIII was not elective: representing nothing, it could only rely on the organised power of the state, which in turn had no other support than the Constitution of the Year VIII; this constitution did not satisfy anyone: the masses did not understand it, the republicans distrusted it, the realists detested it. The latter, with the support of London, launched a relentless guerrilla war against the Consulate from 1800 to 1804, with attacks and plots of all kinds. One can understand how, under these conditions, the Senate had no more courage than the First Consul, and why the Senate and the First Consul agreed in the twinkling of an eye to suppress the opposition. But by suppressing the opposition they were distorting the Constitution, creating a government contrary to its very nature. In the system of Sieyès, six million French people chose six hundred thousand, which in turn would choose sixty thousand, which would choose six thousand: among these, all belonging to the upper class, the Senate would pick the members of the legislative Assemblies, that were sovereign organs. Once the opposition was suppressed, the will of the nation turned into a comedy: the legislative Assemblies were nominated by the Senate, i.e., the government, and were not the organs of the general will, but rather the will of the government. the formula of sovereignty was completely subverted: instead of creating the government, sovereignty was created by the latter; the government that pretended to be legitimated by sovereignty was instead legitimating itself, by modelling to its pleasure the will of the nation. The revolutionary regime is the regime of fear, obsessed by the people. It finds signs of hostility everywhere and believes it to be larger than how it really is. The government thus multiplies the spies, censorships, and surveillance, he trusts nothing and no one. To defend himself, he sees only one way out: to increase his own power; he begins to monopolise power in all its branches: he must control industry, agriculture, commerce, the family, customs, social life, hygiene. In other words, it becomes totalitarian: it sinks into the last and final expression of fear that plagues the

revolutionary government. The revolutionary governments, the more they extend their power toward totalitarian absolutism, the more they are concerned about the opposition hidden in the public opinion. Since the Revolution, newspapers became a political force during war and in peacetime, and Napoleon had been a master in exploiting them. A legitimate regime does not need propaganda: legitimacy implies in the people the reasonable persuasion that the government is able to deal with the public affairs in a satisfactory way. This persuasion is sufficient to a legitimate power not to worry too much about popular criticism and murmurings, more or less justified; on the other hand, the revolutionary government is not allowed to live off this tranquillity. The proof of this was, for example, the attack on rue Saint-Nicaise, a royalist assassination attempt on Napoleon Bonaparte. After having escaped death, Napoleon learnt that a failed assassination attempt would provoke a temporary emptiness in the public opinion, during which the most execrable laws could pass furtively without being noticed. Joseph Fouché, considered as the founder of modern political police, was the first to use domesticated assassination attempts that would fail at the right moment with the aim of scaring the public opinion. But instead of convincing the people, these efforts stun them. The revolutionary government, pretending to be the expression of the free and sincere will of the people, has to mask its tyranny with a parody of freedom, that makes tyranny always more intolerable: principle of legitimacy has to be coherent with itself, and cannot be a continuous contradiction. The revolutionary regimes will fear the stronger states and will attack the weaker ones out of aggressive fear. The mistrust inherent in all relations between states is exacerbated into a delirium of persecution when a revolutionary state succeeds in crushing all its rivals: it knows it is feared and detested, and therefore sees enemies everywhere, but the fear can never be dispelled, because fear is inherent it him, not in other things. A revolutionary state can and actually does war quite well but has more difficulties in making peace: Talleyrand was the first who realized this fact. Napoleon emerges in history as the father of the first revolutionary regime, trying to fill the gap between the disappeared monarchy and the still unworkable republic.

The night between the 29th and the 30th of July 1830, Charles X annulled all the ordinances that provoked the insurrection. There was a man in Paris that was ready to make a government his way: he was Monsieur Jacques Laffitte, governor of the Bank of France, that persuaded the deputies to summon the parliament; but Charles X could not,

after all the atrocities he committed, So Laffitte was proposing to invite the Duke of Orléans to take the place of the king. At the beginning, the duke refused, but he was eventually convinced. The morning of the 31st it was announced that the Duke of Orléans accepted the general lieutenancy of the Kingdom of France. The same day, the duke tried to have the usurpation that had just occurred legitimized by Charles X himself. The latter, reassured by the initiative of the duke and increasingly intimidated by his unpopularity, the 1st f August 1830 nominated the Duke of Orléans general lieutenant of the kingdom, and abdicated in favour of the Duke of Bordeaux, son of the Duke of Berry: the king named the Duke of Orléans regent of his nephew. Henri V would have become one day the legitimate successor of Charles X; but M. Laffitte had another idea in mind. By sending revolutionary gangs to frighten Charles X and at the same time bringing together the deputies, he managed to proclaim the Duke of Orléans King of the French, with the name of Louis Philippe: therefore an usurpation was committed once again, though this time was minor. Indeed, on the throne of the Bourbons, a Bourbon of the cadet branch offended much less the aristo-monarchical legitimacy than the son of a lawyer from Ajaccio. This monarchy represented a power built rapidly due to necessity: it was between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Another example of such situation can be found in the arrival of the Roman Empire from the ashes of the Roman Republic: the imperial power contained certain elements of legitimacy from the republican tradition, but it was not accepted as a definitive modification officially proclaimed. The Romans intended the empire as a transitory expedient, certain that the Republic would free itself from it one day: this power, which had no name in Rome and acted outside of any constitutional system, imposed itself on all the provinces, where the constitutional subtleties of Rome were little known. The imperial power was therefore neither legitimate nor illegitimate, just like the kingship of Louis Philippe.

Louis Philippe gave France democratized monarchy, freedom, peace, and prosperity; nevertheless, its government fell soon. According to Metternich, such monarchy was sick at its genesis: it lacked the authority of the universal suffrage on one side and the support of the historical right on the other; it did not have the popular strength of the republic, nor the military *grandeur* of the empire, nor the legitimacy of the Bourbons. It was a hybrid. “A throne of opportunity does not give the power: the Chart gives the king just a conditional power. It induces him to procure the authority he needs

by illicit means. The only real power at the disposal of the King of France is the general feeling of the need for law and order, i.e. the need for a government to counter the invasion of anarchy. In short, this is a power of a negative character and one that divides the fate of all negation. The mere appearance of one force, which exists for its own sake, is enough to destroy the other. A barrier against disorder loses all value when order is re-established: its importance vanishes as security returns. If this happens in all circumstances, it happens more so in a country where public spirit is lacking, where for a long time, even in the least prejudiced men, the need for order no longer finds support in the voice of conscience, which indicates the true means of establishing it. Since Louis-Philippe's government has only the value of a fact, one cannot know whether its existence will be one government or an indefinite one. It is impossible to base a calculation on such an existence, because it depends on fortuitous circumstances. It is only from custom that the July monarchy will be able, with the passage of time, to draw its strength. But for peoples, custom is linked to prosperity. Will the monarchy surrounded by republican institutions be able to achieve this end? It seems to us that a doubt is permitted"[51]. In this fragment, Metternich shows a perfect understanding of the situation of Louis Philippe; the new King of the French attempted to justify his legitimacy with two principles of legitimacy, but without success, because he did not apply neither of them with the required sincerity and coherence for a principle of legitimacy to be effective. The consequence, as Metternich explained: "Condemned to sway between two realities, Monarchy and Republic, Louis-Philippe finds himself in a vacuum, because the lie is a vacuum"[52]. The quasi-legitimate governments are not dominated by fear like the revolutionary ones, but cannot use force as the latter do, due to their second-order legitimacy.

Philosophy, religion, history, law, and western culture largely ignored the principles of legitimacy. In the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean and Asian regions only the Roman Republic had been a legitimate power; the authority of the Senate and of the Committees was admitted without discussion by all the citizens. The legitimacy of power probably was the secret of the strength of the Roman Republic. It is plausible that also China had been able to create and recognize some principles of legitimacy, but its case is less clear. The other powers that succeeded one another in the history of antiquity were

[51] *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laisse par le prince de Metternich*, Plon, Tome V, p. 84-85.
[52] Ibidem, p. 84.

either completely illegitimate, or barely pre-legitimate, or quasi-legitimate; for this reason, the philosophy, religion, history, and law of ancient times ignored legitimacy: it was impossible to know and theorise about what did not exist or existed in sketchy and confused prefiguration. Legitimacy of power became a historic reality in the western world and after Christianity. Since the XVI century monarchies and aristocracies arose in Europe that were truly legitimate powers, i.e., recognised actively or passively, but with full sincerity, by those they were meant to obey. The principles of legitimacy are a supreme effort of the spirit to free humanity from fear. Legitimacy is a tacit and implied agreement between Power and its subjects on certain rules and principles that fix the attribution and limits of Power itself; the latter will be freed from the fear of revolt that is always immanent in the forced obedience of its subjects and will no longer need to become cruel. The first principle of legitimacy that the West created and the only one it accepted until the American Revolution and the French Revolution was the hereditary, aristocratic, and monarchical principle. The hereditary principle, like all principles of legitimacy, has nothing transcendent about it; it is fragile, reason can demolish it, demonstrating that it is absurd and iniquitous. Yet it has had a long life: people preferred to believe completely and absolutely in the first principle of legitimacy that the West had created rather than analyse it to discover its nature. Once it was realized that hereditariness was just an empiric and conventional principle, the democratic principle arose; the clash between the two principles generated fear. The elite of society was reasoning on everything, legitimacy principles included; but to solve the issue of the dominating fear, it was imperative to further the investigation about them. Therefore, it was necessary not to be content with understanding how such principles are absurd and unjust, but instead discovering their nature and task, to draw from them the rules of a speculative morality of the authority that could substitute the ancient mystic veneration for Power with knowledge and feelings generated from the duties of Power toward its subjects, and vice versa. Revolution is a word with two meanings: on one side it means a new orientation of the spirit; on the other, the total or partial destruction of a pre-existing legality, the more or less complete subversion of the rules that establish the right to command and the duty to obey, starting from the principle of legitimacy that justifies Power[53]. Some examples of the first meaning are Christianity, the Renaissance, and the great industry, which

[53] Potere, G. Ferrero, p. 305.

mutated ideas, feelings, customs, institutions, artistic tastes of a part of humanity, thus giving the spirit a new orientation in religion, morality, philosophy, science, politics, and practical activity. Some examples of the second meaning are the rebellions of the subjects against Power such the ones after 1848 in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and more. With the first meaning, violence has a secondary part in its history: the most important role is played by suggestion which attracts the spirits, reason, and feelings. The destructions of legality are instead short and violent, capable of demolishing solid and ancient legalities within a few weeks; in such situations, violence has a primary role. The causes of the great orientations of the spirits are obscure and complex; for the destructions of legality, instead, the cause is the weakening and the aging of the powers that rule such legality. The consequences of the great orientations are innumerable, while for the other case, the result was an excess of fear. With the French Revolution, at the end the great fear caused by the destruction of legality of the *Ancien Régime* suffocated the new orientation, with the creation of a revolutionary state. The principle of legitimacy of our epoch is the delegation of Power made by the people. The conditions for an effective and operative functioning of such principle are two: the right of opposition and the freedom of suffrage; they represent the two central pillars of the western order. The first difficulty is to allow the right of opposition and the freedom of suffrage to coexist with universal suffrage. Indeed, the latter was opposed by the right who feared its revolutionary tendencies, but also by the left, who on the contrary considered it too conservative. In France, only with the Third Republic did universal suffrage recover freedom by concentrating on the right of opposition: it acquires the necessary conditions for legitimate democracy to exist. The problem of suffrage is passivity: for the mass to truly participate to the creation of Power it is necessary to find a way to make it interested in certain major problems that affect the direction and orientation of the state, something not easy nor free from dangers. While Power comes from above, legitimacy comes from below. The latter has been present throughout history, meanwhile the first has shifted in some sense. Indeed, at the beginning it was from divine origin, and lately became created by the people. God can help men to stop, when they criticise the principles of legitimacy, at that point beyond which no principle appears any longer either just or rational, but He cannot assuage their discontent of feeling badly governed, indeed He exacerbates it. It is much more painful to be offended by a divine power origin than by a power created by us. If universal suffrage

chooses an inept or dishonest deputy, it is a disgrace; however, the error of a majority can be easily explained and repaired. Much more difficult is to explain that the grace of God consecrates for life a bad, selfish, cruel king, who torments his subjects, whose father he should be. Religion can help power, but it must pre-exist it, and derive its *raison d'être* from itself. Legitimacies grow old for two reasons: either because they abuse the prestige they enjoy and become incapable of governing; or because spirits change their orientation and can no longer bear the absurdity and injustice that every principle of legitimacy contains within itself[54]. Then, one wants to replace the ruling principle of legitimacy with a more rational and just principle, at least with regard to that point for which the conscience has become sensitive, even if it is less so with regard to other points. The two causes can act together or separately. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution stand as heralds of double ageing and the dreadful calamities that can result from it. In France, the aspiration was first limited to a representative government, and then extended after the fall of the monarchy to create a society without nobles and without a king. The Russian Revolution devised an even more far-reaching reconstruction plan: to reconcile economic equality with the legal and political equality of its elder sister, to complete the sovereignty of the people by establishing the community as the master of all the riches of the earth: to create, in short, a new order, not only without nobles and without kings, but also without rich and without poor. But the Russian people were as little prepared for this change as the French people were in 1789 when it came to establishing a new state based on the sovereignty of the nation. However, there is also the new orientation that rejuvenates an aged legitimacy without demolishing legality, the *revolution without revolution*. One example is represented by the case of England: in 1688, it changed its orientation and dynasty without breaking the principle of aristo-monarchic legitimacy. Another example is Switzerland: by winning over the *Sonderbund*, i.e., a separatist Swiss alliance aimed at defending the interest of eight cantons against the centralization plans enforced by the Swiss Confederation and the radical and liberal cantons, general Guillaume Henri Dufour made a new orientation possible without fractures of legality: another situation of *revolution without revolution*. The danger arises when a people, dissatisfied with the legitimate power by which it is governed, overthrows it without having another principle to replace it with. Those people then fall fatally into a

[54] Ibidem, p. 323.

revolutionary government, with the risk of remaining there for a long time and without hope, unless they see their mistake and rebuild what they had destroyed: always a very difficult job. In general, only strength can impose some rules common to the multitude of individual wills, each of whom is dominated by the personal passion to live as if it were alone. But strength is fear in action; and fear is contagious. The mutual fear of Power and its subjects derives from the fact that it is impossible to make men afraid without Power ending up being afraid too. To fight against this issue, humanity found two remedies: the first were religions and philosophies; the second were the principles of legitimacy. The latter are limited and partial, and are only useful in given historical situations, determined by the orientation of the spirits; orientation that can change. If the human spirit could find the absolute, rational, and just principle of legitimacy, the matter of Power would be definitively resolved: Plato's republic, founded for all men and for eternity; revolutions ended forever. However the social order is a building in continuous construction and reconstruction, because the principles of legitimacy that govern it are all partial and limited; man only accepts them after having become accustomed to them and always only temporarily: but in the same way as he accepts them out of habit, in the end he tires of them and detaches himself from them; since they are partial and circumscribed, they exhaust themselves, and this explains the fact that they have a beginning and an end. The principles of legitimacy represent Power without fear, and as such they need to be defended. To do so, it is required that Power and its subjects are persuaded that the principles are human, and thus limited and conventional, but they need nevertheless to be applied with loyalty and good faith. The principles become a scourge if Power uses them as a pretext to increase the burdens and impositions on subjects, while if subjects take advantage of them, to replace the duty to better obey with the right to disobey. Therefore, a new education of the intelligence and the heart is needed: an immense work in which statesmen, men of letters, historians, artists, and philosophers must contribute. A civilization that wants to free man from all his fears must begin by recognizing the two supreme realities in Space and Time, because Space is the field of manoeuvre on which man fights against Time, which is the destroyer only of the lives of individuals, but of all the works of men, including the principles of legitimacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Bright and clever men had been able to climb the ladder of Power during the chaos generated by the French Revolution; ambition, ability, determination, unscrupulousness, intelligence, and sometimes even greed have been their Gospel with the intention to serve Power. Napoleon is the clearest example of this: the son of a lawyer from the petty Corsican nobility, of Tuscan descent, he rose to the pinnacle of Power at the age of thirty-five, becoming emperor of the most powerful nation in Europe. The military career was one of the biggest stepping stones to Power. The diadem representative of this is the Italian campaign, a masterpiece that demonstrated the effectiveness of coordinated action between army and politics. Propaganda made this system even more efficient, portraying negotiations as dominance against the enemy, defeats as victories, and victories as crushing victories. The generals became heroes, were represented as conquerors on a par with Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and became a symbol of the Revolution, kissed by the goddess Nike. The revolutionary government's need to prove itself as continually victorious stemmed from an absence of legitimacy, and thus a commitment to replace it with nationalism and grandeur. The concept of nationhood itself developed rapidly, swirling into a war with fewer and fewer scruples.

The congress of Vienna, with the reintroduction of the old legitimacies and the principles that governed them, brought calm after the storm. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and the conclusion of the Congress of Vienna, European states were more determined than ever to oppose liberal constitutions and national self-determination. Alexander I ruled until his death, gradually losing his liberal ideas and moving toward an increasingly autocratic direction of government. Francis I was increasingly supported by Metternich. Like Alexander, Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia lost his liberalism in favour of a reactionary sentiment that led to his failure to grant Prussia a constitution. Pope Pius VII railed against the Enlightenment, while King Ferdinand VII in Spain had to accept a liberal constitution. Finally, in France, Louis XVIII sought a middle way between conservatism and liberalism until his reactionary brother Charles X came to the throne. When he was overthrown in 1830 by a revolution, the much more moderate Louis Philippe came to power.

As for great non-king actors who made history in the early XIX century, the Duke of Wellington became prime minister for two years and received a state funeral. When he

learned of Napoleon's death, he said, “I can now say that I am the most victorious living general”[55]. Talleyrand continued to offer his services to any regime that asked him, first for the Bourbons and then for Louis Philippe. He died in 1838, having received last rites from the Cardinal of Paris and with the king at his bedside.

With the decapitation of Louis XVI, the French Revolution destroyed the old legitimacy of princes and kings, putting in their place instead the noble principle of citizen choice. Except that this freedom had been imposed; for instance, the Cisalpine people, freed from the old chains, had to endure new ones. When freedom is not won from below and democracy does not become consensus, democratic regimes easily turn into the opposite: this is the demonstration that trust and legitimacy come from below, while Power comes from above; Power becomes legitimate and free from fear once there is the subjects’ consent to it. This commandment, defined by Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, the mind behind the French Consulate, is an important lesson for the true understanding of the Revolution. The search for Truth was, is, and will always be a crucial element for the understanding of Power. The Truth present in events, speeches, debates, wars, treaties, peace, alliances, and conspiracies constitutes an enigma that, once all the elements are put together in the harmony of Knowledge, reveals itself in its magnificence and in its bewildering totality, capable of terrifying the strongest of men. In order not to be crushed by such disarming absoluteness, one must have the firmest of spines: an indestructible moral law. “Two things fill the mind with always new and ever-increasing admiration and awe, the more often and more intensely the thinking is occupied with it - the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me[56]”.

[55] Napoleone il Grande, A. Roberts, p. 967.
[56] Critique of Practical Reason, I. Kant.

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