

Three Leaders of Conservatism

Guizot, Metternich, Nicholas I

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THE so-called liberal tradition of the nineteenth century, inherited by the men of the early twentieth and kept alive by the moderate socialists of our own times, has led many a youth astray and has created generations of cynics, iconoclasts, and anarchists. This tradition has to its credit more distortion of history than all the semi-literate mediaeval scribes or the early annalists and recorders of the classic world. Ignorance can be pleaded as an attenuating circumstance in the case of the earlier periods. Liberalism deliberately proceeded on its chosen and dangerous path, moved by a single consideration—that of defending its thesis. It felt itself excused *a priori* because of the moral value of the thesis, because of its “humanitarian” outlook, even claiming that it followed ostensibly the precepts of the greatest of teachers—Christ. And yet its results were and are disastrous, mainly because it has dealt with theories and neglected to observe life or to understand human nature. It proclaimed the sanctity of revolution, ignoring the fact that revolutions bring misery in their wake and often surpass in their blind injustice the state of injustice which preceded them. It announced as its superior aim the seeking of truth, not a metaphysical truth, but a very earthly one, manifested by a state of happiness. In pursuance of this aim it unchained human passions and plunged the world into political and social

conflicts, piling up the greatest hecatomb the world has known. And finally, misunderstanding and misinterpreting Christianity, it originated a formidable wave of atheism and agnosticism.

In itself the radical outlook which lies at the basis of the liberal tradition is not negative. It springs from a fine instinct, common to all men—the desire for betterment. It is generous in its perception that the world is full of cruelty and injustice, but that it may and can be bettered. When a radical sees anything which appears to him wrong or imperfect, he wishes to destroy it, though often without a thought of how it came to be or of what he can substitute in its place. But once this radical instinct has been given free play in its work of destruction, the world is subjected to a never-ending cataclysm, for no sooner has it replaced one structure by another than it comes to realize the imperfections of the latter and seeks to destroy that also. Thus it becomes the most dangerous force in humanity. Beginning with a generous purpose, it ends with destruction of good and evil institutions alike, often creating a new state of things more evil than that which was destroyed; whereupon it has to set forth once more on its quest for a non-existent earthly truth and to destroy the social and political peace of the world in the name of social justice. “I will not”, wrote Burke, “enter into the question how much truth is preferable to peace. Perhaps truth may be far better. But as we have scarcely ever the same certainty in the one that we have in the other, I would, unless the truth were evident indeed, hold fast to peace.”

Opposing and conflicting with the radical instinct is the spirit of conservatism. In the changing world of

today, with its constant revaluation of values, its "bloodless" revolutions and terroristic despotisms, it seems timely to examine the old term, "conservatism", and to consider its true meaning. Too often has conservatism been identified with reaction, whereas in the light of history undistorted by the liberal tradition we perceive more reactionary excesses on the part of radicals and liberals than on the part of conservatives. It all comes down to the question: How many human lives were sacrificed for the attainment of the aim, and did the sacrifice prove to be worth it?

The common definition of conservatism is "the disposition and tendency to preserve what is established; opposition to change" (Webster). Lord Hugh Cecil, in his book entitled *Conservatism*, writes:

Conservatism is a tendency of the human mind. It is a disposition averse from change; and it springs partly from a distrust of the unknown and a corresponding reliance on experience rather than on theoretic reasoning; partly from a faculty in men to adapt themselves to their surroundings so that what is familiar merely because of its familiarity becomes more acceptable or more tolerable than what is unfamiliar. Distrust of the unknown, and preference for experience over theory, are deeply seated in almost all minds. . . . Novelties, at the first sight, are regarded as new-fangled and either futile or dangerous by the great majority of men. They frighten and irritate, they fatigue and perplex those who for the first time seek to understand them.

And Arthur Bryant, in a more recent book entitled *The Spirit of Conservatism*, says:

The instincts which underlie conservatism are very simple. Men love the familiar: they distrust and fear

change. Yet they live in a world where change is inevitable. There is therefore in their hearts a constant protest against an existence in which all they hold dear is for ever being hurried from them down the stream of time. This protest finds an echo in their actions. From the beginning of recorded history, men have endeavoured to reconcile change with the dictates of their nature and to make a permanent habitation for themselves in a transitory world. The enduring home, of which mortality robs them, they leave to their children and their children's children. This home is the State and the ordered civilization, whose benefits we in our generation inherit.

Thus conservatism, generally speaking, has been identified primarily with aversion to change. Indeed, at the beginning of Western civilization, at the beginning of the history of any early state or nation, everyone was a conservative, because the perils of anarchy, out of which the state or nation had emerged, were never far enough away to be forgotten. But the modern concentration of population in towns, and the ease with which ideas can be spread, have made men readier to accept new theories of government than to rely on the accumulated experience of the past. The daily dissemination of a mass of unreliable information through the press helps to give modern man a false sense of omniscience. He is told of so many events that he is inclined to think he must know everything and to despise the teaching of the past. He lets life pass by him without noticing it. He forgets that life is continuous. He is ready to perform the most dangerous operations on the body of life, with the same *insouciance* as a child opening the belly of a doll to see what is in it. But where the operation performed by the child can only

deprive him of a toy and make him suffer a correctional spanking, the operations of modern man have far-reaching results: almost inevitably they cripple not only him but a whole generation to come.

Since the revolutionary thunder of the late eighteenth century shook two continents, we see modern man performing these dangerous operations over and over again, neglecting to study the past, oblivious of the present, only attempting to realize a theoretically beautiful future. In his false certitude of omniscience he challenges all authority and all wisdom, thus transforming our supposedly enlightened era into an age of utter unintelligence. The predominant factor in the process of bringing about this calamity is modern man's lack of responsibility, a direct consequence of modern democracy. Modern man must be educated, even past his opposition, to be a useful and responsible link in the endless chain of life, to insure that the best of our civilization shall endure.

Thus the conservative is called upon to perform a double rôle: to preserve and to adapt: to preserve the institutions which have proved to be stable through experience, and to adapt those institutions through a gradual process of reform to the fundamental changes in life brought about by modern progress. The motto of the radical is "revolution", motivated by an insatiable and mostly unreasonable desire for change; that of the conservative is and must be "evolution", based on precepts of stability and security.

Disregarding entirely this constructive element in conservatism, the liberal tradition has branded as reactionaries a number of historical figures whose main "fault" was a relentless resistance to revolutionary

demagoguery and mob rule. Among these perhaps the most maligned of the entire nineteenth century are Guizot, Metternich, and Nicholas I of Russia. For their ideas and their actions are a marked proof to the contrary.

Although contemporaries, the Frenchman Guizot, the German Metternich, and the Russian Nicholas I belonged, historically speaking, to different ages; their respective countries were in vastly different stages of development and the characters of their people thoroughly divergent. Moreover, their religious affiliations created still further differences: Guizot was a Protestant, Metternich a Roman Catholic, and Nicholas I a Greek Orthodox. Yet much of their ideology was built on common ground, motivated by similar considerations: they were all three essentially and naturally conservative.

II

François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787-1874) was born in Normandy of Huguenot parents, proud of their minority religion in an overwhelmingly Catholic France. By birth he belonged to the intellectuals of the middle class, but at the end of his life he expressed regret that he had not belonged or had not been elevated to the peerage. As a boy of seven he migrated with his mother to Geneva, that Protestant intellectual haven, permeated with Rousseau's earthly idealism, after his father had been guillotined. His early upbringing was entirely the work of his mother and of Swiss matter-of-factness. In 1805, he returned to France to study law in Paris and to try out his luck as a publicist and writer on current events. Seven years later, he obtained an appointment to the chair of modern history at the Sor-

bonne, mainly in recognition of his brilliant translation of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. For some years thereafter he busied himself almost entirely with his lectures and writing, having only twice occupied minor governmental posts during the reign of Louis XVIII. It was not until the advent of Charles X that he took a stand in the opposition. Having become the leader of the *Doctrinaires*, a moderate royalist group, he sought election to the Chamber of Deputies. He obtained his seat in January 1830, from Lisieux, a seat he was to keep during his entire political career. He opposed the July ordinances with such vigour that he was asked to participate in the Government of the July Monarchy on account of his liberalism. However, he kept his ministerial post but a few months, because of his rapidly growing conservatism. During the following ten years he remained merely a deputy, continuing to write on public affairs with ever growing sharpness and bitterness. Finally, on October 29, 1840, after a brief sojourn as French ambassador to the Court of St. James's, he was asked by Louis Philippe to form his first ministry, in which he took the portfolio of foreign affairs, to keep it until the fall of the July monarchy. All through his life, before 1848 as well as after, Guizot continued to use his pen as his main weapon and principal medium of expression. His oratory was far from brilliant. His speeches in the Chamber of Deputies were always terse, matter-of-fact; and this, added to his haughty attitude, made him a much better defender of a policy than leader of a bellicose opposition. But in his writings he was different. The elegance of his style and his forcefulness of expression were unequalled by any other political writer of his

time. It is in the writings which he has left us that we find the greatest wealth of information about the man.*

Guizot's basic political ideas rested upon a conception of duty rather than right. Duty to God, to the state, to the King. He advocated that "society should rest on the idea of duty and tend constantly to rest on that idea alone". He claimed that

political rights are not personal; he who exercises them takes decisions which do not concern only himself, but which concern society or a portion of society. . . . Hence political rights are not equal for all. . . . In every time and place conditions and guarantees have been attached to political rights as proof or presumption of the capacity necessary for their exercise in the interests of society; which is the sphere of their operation. To speak of equality in connection with political rights is . . . to confuse individual and social existence, the civil and the political order, liberty and government.

Guizot firmly believed that government, like theology, must be left to the experts. He was thoroughly opposed to the principle of universal suffrage, reasoning that although it was a right, which some claimed to be a basic political right of all members of modern society, the exercise of this or any other right without the basic conception of duty would result in a total sense of irresponsibility, dangerous to organized society, leading directly to political anarchy. He knew that reasons of morality and practical sense could do little enough towards keeping the passions of men within the limits of right. He knew (and pointed to the utopian socialists as an example) how easily men of

* The most important of Guizot's works are: *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps*, 8 vols., Paris, 1858-1861; *Histoire parlementaire de la France*, 5 vols., Paris, 1863-1864.

high intelligence could be deluded by the slightest element of truth into accepting the most monstrous errors. He knew that there might seem to the casual observer to be no improvement in political life or in the relations between states; he relied not on the brilliant, quick-satisfying, and perishable measures put through under the impulse of momentary passion, but on the permanent, the durable, projecting into the future, the bridge of continuity from today into tomorrow. Guizot certainly had that sense of the future which is a sure sign of political greatness: "I abhor what is easily forgotten, what passes quickly: I like nothing but what has an air of permanence and long memory."

Guizot's delight in long-sighted views led him to connect the details of his foreign policy with general principles. He was not satisfied unless he could feel that the tide of the time was with him; that he was acting in accordance with the needs of modern civilization as well as serving the particular needs of France. "We are set", he wrote, "in the midst of two conflicting currents; one of them is deep and regular, and draws us toward the rightful end of our social organization; the other is troubled and superficial, and drives us hither and thither in a search for new adventures and uncharted lands." Guizot was determined to follow the former and to combat the latter.

His fundamental adherence to things permanent naturally made of him a convinced monarchist. Far from shutting his eyes to the danger that the monarchistic principle may represent in the case of an unworthy or weak sovereign, Guizot saw in royalty the only political institution which could assure the achievement of permanence. "The particular business of royalty is to

represent in the government the principle of action and the principle of stability; the crown is the executive power, the power that is always in being." But Guizot's monarchism was not theoretical. He believed firmly that France needed a king. That is why he was a monarchist. Yet he understood very well that other nations may have political institutions which, corresponding more closely to their national temperament, would be to them more beneficial than a constitutional monarchy of the French type. By reversing the argument he was naturally led to oppose revolutionary propaganda. Much as he admired the achievements of the revolution of 1789, he did not believe that these achievements were a matter for exportation. He exclaimed: "This preposterous idea to submit Europe to the principle of unity, to place her under one and the same system, to make her be governed by the laws of a single idea!" But he believed firmly and proudly in the ultimate, the cosmic rightness of his first principles. He relied on experience to justify them, "experience, which is the suffrage of centuries".

In concluding this sketch of Guizot's political ideology, it is relevant to take some account of Guizot's Protestantism. Like Bismarck, he failed to see that the close and continual co-operation of every element in society can alone lead to the attainment of the good life. He lacked the feeling for a commonwealth wherein inequality of condition was no barrier to the positive contribution of all citizens to a common cause. Although he spoke always of the French nation, he thought, like Metternich, in terms of the French state. He never attained to the Catholic conception of the Church. As a Christian he knew the value of a high

standard of personal conduct and charity; his association with Protestant organizations had been one of the most important elements of his inner life. Yet he was not free from that spiritual pride which saw liberty only in individual action, and religion only in the right development of personal holiness. He would not understand the solidarity of human life, the common responsibility of men for the common weaknesses of men; the greater corporate responsibility of the strong for the failures of the weak. There is no doubt that Guizot was strong himself; that his strength was in his own will, in his idea of an ordered, civilized liberty, in his personal uprightness and charity, his indomitable pride and his courage. His greatness as a statesman reposes entirely on these qualities; but he did not realize that they had to be matched in his contemporaries before his ideas could materialize, or his labours be rewarded with the rich harvest so well deserved, yet unobtained.

When the fall of the July Monarchy sent Guizot into exile, and he saw the destruction of all that he had patiently built during eight years, the deposed minister was not embittered. His personal strength and his pride helped him to drain the bitter cup. Only once did he indicate into what state of internal suffering these events had plunged him. When writing, in a study on George Washington, of the First President's retirement from politics, Guizot employed terms which evidently referred to his own experience:

Power is heavy to bear and humanity hard to serve against its passions and errors. Not even success effaces the sad impressions which the struggle engendered, and the fatigue contracted in this arena continues to be felt amidst conditions of rest.

III

Quite different was Metternich's reaction after that flight from Vienna in the middle of a night in 1848, but he cannot be judged by the expressions of rage and contempt which he loosed once the shores of hospitable England were reached. Nor can he be judged by the circumstances of his fall. He foresaw this fall as few men have foreseen their own destruction. He knew the weakness of the Austrian government and of the civil service, the reigning house and the army. He understood the dangers of a situation which he judged beyond his power of control. Stronger men would not have been content, perhaps, with this fatalism. Yet it is difficult to refute his claim that if he had not been willing to take most things as he found them, the catastrophe would have come sooner. Europe has since judged Metternich's actions, and judged also the historians, like Treitschke, who condemned him out of hand.*

Clemens Wenzel Lothar Prince Metternich-Winneburg (1773-1859) was born in Coblenz, in the territories of the Archbishop-Elector of Trier. At the time of his birth, his father, Count Metternich, scion of an old Rhenish Catholic noble family, was Austrian Ambassador to the courts of the three Rhenish electors. Before passing into the service of the Hapsburg-Lorraines, Count Metternich had long been in the diplomatic service of the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz. Thus Prince Metternich was Austrian only by adoption. In 1788, he began his studies at the University of Strassburg, but was driven out after two years by the

* The principal source for the study of Metternich's ideas is his *Mémoires, documents et écrits*, published by his son Richard in 8 vols., Paris, 1881-1886.

outbreak of the French Revolution. The revolutionary excesses which threw the peaceful old town into turmoil made a lasting impression on young Metternich. He was never to forget them. In the following years he continued his studies intermittently at the University of Mainz, but never with much diligence. In 1795 he married, in Vienna, Countess Eleanore von Kaunitz, daughter of the famous Austrian statesman. This alliance assured him success and a brilliant career. In 1801, he was sent as Austrian envoy to the court of the Elector of Saxony. In 1803, he was Ambassador at Berlin. In 1806, his appointment as Ambassador to Russia was changed to that of Ambassador to France upon a special request communicated by Napoleon to the Viennese Government. On October 8, 1809, Metternich was appointed Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post he was to hold for forty years. After the battle of Leipzig, on October 20, 1813, he was created hereditary prince of the Austrian Empire. Thereafter Prince Metternich was to be identified not only with a policy, with a system, but with Europe at large.

Like Guizot, Metternich had a sense of the future, although his reactions to the present were tinted as Guizot's never were, with a great deal of cynicism. He wrote to Guizot in 1827:

I belong to the class of men who live more in the future than in the present. My mind has an historical tendency which makes me pass over a multitude of temporary difficulties. . . . I do not despise the present. . . . I value it at what it is worth, though it is not worth much.

And in his *Mémoires* he comments further on his attitude:

I have had the misfortune to belong to the revolutionary epoch. This age will pass like all other human follies. Happy those who will have learned to keep themselves upright amid the ruin of several generations. . . . Fate has laid in part upon me the duty of restraining, as far as my powers will allow, a generation whose destiny seems to be that of losing itself upon the slope which will surely lead it to its ruin. Our society is on the downward slope. Nothing in the moral or physical world comes to a stand-still. Society had reached its zenith; under these conditions a further *advance* was bound to mean a *decline*. Disease also reaches its climax, and then declines. Evolution of this kind seems exceedingly slow to contemporaries; but what are two or three centuries in the annals of history?

Like Guizot, Metternich sought permanence and stability, although he never had Guizot's faith in the possibility of achieving them in those troubled times. He believed firmly in the institution of monarchy and he advocated that the principle of stability should be announced to the world as the device of monarchy. He explained, however, that stability does not imply immobility; but improvement must come from above, and from constituted authority; wise reform can be defined as the "progressive development of institutions accomplished by legal methods". Yet in defending the monarchical principle, he was far from approving despotism, which he disliked as the sign of incapacity.

Like his French colleague, Metternich also believed in a limited acceptance of the term "equality": "Men are equal only before God and the law; there is no equality apart from this." The revolutionary claim for universal absolute equality he dismissed with one word: presumption. He agreed with the Aristotelian view that

the universal and chief cause of revolutionary feeling is the desire of equality, when men think they are equal to others who have more than themselves; or, again, the desire of inequality and superiority, when conceiving themselves to be superior they think that they have not more but the same or less than their inferiors.

Metternich fought against revolution and revolutionary principles, never forgetting how in the streets of Strassburg a peaceful population had been led to violence and bloodshed by a few determined demagogues. He believed that the ordinary man wanted above all things to be sure of the morrow, wanted security for the fruits of his work, for his family, for his property. And Metternich was determined to give the ordinary man all the protection that an organized state could give. He believed that "the duty of statesmen is to *govern*", and set himself to do his duty. Again and again he was accused of using the old-fashioned means of coercion and punishment for revolutionary activity, whereas he should have set an example or used means of persuasion. Also he was accused of retaining in a changing world the same unchanging principles. He then argued that if the principles of the revolution remained the same, why should the principles of the counter-revolution alter? One cannot deny the logic of his argument.

Metternich's famous "principles" were essentially conservative: that is, his view of society took into account the unchanging nature of man. ("The French Revolution did not make men nobler.") It was based upon history and could be tested by history. Metternich successfully contrasted these principles with the merely emotional or doctrinaire generalizations of his

adversaries. Maintaining that the character of the age was and would long remain one of transition, Metternich felt that humanity could be guided and preserved from further turmoil only by conservative principles. "The principles of conservatism", he wrote, "apply to the most diverse situations; their application is not confined within narrow limits; these principles are the enemies of anarchy, moral and material." And then he made a startling announcement: "I call myself a socialist-conservative."

Indeed, he was a socialist of a sort if we take into consideration his unflinching belief in the supremacy of the state and his constant sacrifice of individual interests to those of the state. But he was also a conservative, and in this double capacity he was most vehement in his accusation of those who were standing between rulers and their subjects, "breaking the sceptres of kings, usurping the voices of the peoples", anxious to justify their covetousness by attacking "all the work of the centuries which has achieved a title to the respect and allegiance of human beings". These were the liberals, the "go-betweens". In 1832, Metternich wrote to Wittgenstein: "No one with eyes, ears, and sense today can doubt any longer what liberalism is aiming at, what it is, and whither it is bound to lead states which surrender to it. Before such proofs doctrine must be silent." And in a letter to Wrede of the same year he continued: "Liberalism is but the accomplice of demagoguery, and serves, very often unconsciously, to drive a road for it and often to level it most conveniently. Liberalism shares the fate of all forerunners. Once the true lord appears it is almost impossible to find any traces of the forerunner." And what is dema-

gogy? "It is categorical, tyrannical, in its ends as in its choice of means. All means are good enough; *ôte-toi que je m'y mette* is its true symbol, and it knows how to keep true to this end. For thousands of years its motto has been that the end justifies the means; the end is no other than this saying I have quoted."

Throughout his long political career Metternich never shut his eyes to reality. He had an uncanny way of discerning, among the multiplicity of things and events, those that were lasting. When the first railway-engine was built, Thiers, the much praised French statesman, thought that the locomotive would be a new toy for the Parisians; Wellington feared that railways would be a danger to the security of England; the King of Prussia believed that no gentleman would ever travel in a steam-drawn train. Yet Metternich saw at once that railways were "one of those innovations which arise suddenly in the course of years and modify profoundly the existence of society".

Such were the ideas, reactions, and philosophical outlook of this remarkable statesman, who cannot be denied greatness even by the most biased of critics. He realized the tremendous responsibility which rested on his shoulders and the far-reaching ramifications of his every act. "Every mistake which I make affects nearly thirty million human beings", he wrote in one of his letters and added: "I am afraid only of mistakes, because I can be sure of my intentions." From the mouth of anyone but Metternich such words would have sounded presumptuous, yet they make one ponder the attitude of many who call themselves statesmen, but who are not sure of anything, least of all their own intentions. Therefore it is a great satisfaction to find

this sureness of intention in the third figure to be discussed in this essay—Emperor Nicholas I of Russia.

IV

Born five months before the death of the great Catherine, the third son of Paul I and Marie, Princess of Württemberg, Nicholas (1796-1855) did not at first seem destined to ascend the Romanov throne. Consequently his education was far from adequate to prepare him for the position to which he was actually called in later years. Notwithstanding all the brave attempts of his mother to direct his studies into more humanistic channels, Nicholas developed an early taste for all things military and persisted in that interest alone. This inclination was the principal factor in moulding his political philosophy. His education actually ended in 1815, when he was betrothed to Princess Charlotte of Prussia, whom he married two years later. From 1817, Nicholas led the typical life of a Grand Duke, commanding a brigade and later a division of the Guards. Although in 1819 his brother, Emperor Alexander I, had revealed to him in a casual conversation that Constantine, the heir apparent (as Alexander was childless), had renounced his rights to the throne, thus making Nicholas the legitimate successor, nothing was changed in the latter's life (he was not even appointed a member of the Imperial Council) and no further indications were made either by Emperor Alexander or anybody else as to the heavy task which was to fall to Nicholas upon the death of his brother, the Emperor, in 1825. He ascended the throne of Russia in December of that year after quelling a revolt organized by Russian noblemen, mostly officers in the Guards or the army

and navy. Thereafter for thirty years Emperor Nicholas protected Russia from revolution and turmoil, assuring her internal peace, although he was unable to keep her out of foreign wars.*

Like Guizot and Metternich, Emperor Nicholas I had a profound sense of duty—the most marked quality which the three men possessed in common. As a child, writing a composition for his French professor, Nicholas stated:

King Louis XVI did not do his duty and was punished thereby. To be weak does not mean to be clement; a sovereign has no right to pardon enemies of the state. Louis XVI faced a real conspiracy, disguised by the false name of liberty; he would have spared much misery to his people by not sparing the conspirators.

This sense of duty, inculcated in him from childhood and vivified by his military inclinations, led Nicholas to form his own conception of a useful life:

I conceive all human life as a form of service in the sense of fulfilling unflinchingly one's duty; it is necessary to learn stern obedience, before one is called to command; and if everyone in the world would conscientiously perform the service which falls to him, order and peace would reign everywhere.

And many years later, when admonishing a young nobleman, he repeated:

We must all serve; I serve myself and not for myself, but for all of you, and it is my duty to return the lost sheep to the safe road. . . . I must do it in virtue of my oath, to which I remain faithful.

*Most of the material on Nicholas I comes from my study: *L'Empereur Nicolas I et l'esprit national russe*, Louvain, 1928.

This idea of service, in fulfillment of duty to God and the state, was the Alpha and Omega of Nicholas's philosophy. He never forgot the December rebellion and his "friends of December". He was profoundly convinced, like Metternich, like Guizot, that the average man desired first of all peace and security, peace as a means to pursue his happiness, security for his family, for the fruits of his labour, for his property. To this end he applied all the years of his long reign. To this end he fought revolution and revolutionary ideas relentlessly, attempting at the same time to create a state of affairs in which there should not be any temptations of a revolutionary character. As early as 1826, he wrote to his minister of the interior, Count Lanskoj: "In all cases I seek and always will seek *rather to forestall evil, than to pursue it by punishment when it has already materialized.*" Like Metternich, he believed in the necessity of reform, but also that reform must come from above, from constituted authority, and that wise reform was the "progressive development of institutions accomplished by legal methods". Like Guizot, whom he disliked personally, Nicholas believed firmly and profoundly in the ultimate, the cosmic rightness of his first principles. As an absolute monarch, Nicholas would not have permitted encroachment upon his rights and prerogatives by anyone, yet he had limited these rights and prerogatives himself by subjecting them to the ultimate good of the state. Believing steadfastly in the divine right of kings, in the mystical essence of divine rule obtained through the anointment at his coronation, Nicholas was not led by these beliefs to forget reality and the demands of times. In a letter to Queen Victoria,

he wrote: "At present members of royal houses must strive to be worthy of their high position in order to reconcile public opinion with it." Yet he had maintained a hostile attitude towards Louis Philippe throughout the latter's reign, because he believed that the "bourgeois-king" neglected to fulfill his duty towards Charles X, the legitimate sovereign; and this notwithstanding the fact that he had strongly advised King Charles against issuing the July ordinances. To Baron Bourgoing, the French chargé d'affaires, he said after the revolution of 1830:

"If during the riots which have just shaken Paris, the mob had sacked the Russian embassy and made public my dispatches, one would have been much surprised to find that I advised against the *coup d'état*; one would have been much astonished to find that the autocrat of all the Russias prescribed to his representative to recommend to the constitutional King the strict observation of the Constitution established and sworn to".

This attitude of Emperor Nicholas I is characteristic: although opposed to constitutional forms of government, he considered it a sacred duty of the King of France to observe the Constitution, once he had sworn to it. There can be no doubt that had Nicholas I been in the place of Charles X, he would not have attempted to destroy the Constitution, once he had accepted it; it was like breaking military regulations.

Like Guizot, Nicholas was profoundly influenced by his religious convictions; but his Russian Orthodox religion, in contrast to Guizot's Protestantism, was fatalistic and so strong that Nicholas saw in almost everything the direct intervention of Divine Providence. In a letter to King Frederick-William IV of

Prussia, written in 1850, Nicholas sums up as follows the twenty-five years of his reign:

If during this period some real good has been achieved for my fatherland and if posterity should judge it so, I will be highly rewarded for the many hard hours of my laborious life. From the very beginning of my reign, having been called upon against my will to perform duties for which I had never been prepared, and facing an absolutely abnormal situation, how would I have been able to carry on if it had not been for an obvious direct intervention of Our Lord, on Whom alone I have always completely relied?

V

Thus we find in Nicholas I, as in Metternich and Guizot, the same fundamental principles based on the conception of duty and service, rather than on rights and prerogatives. All three had a profound attachment to the interests of the state, for all three the state was supreme, for all three the monarchical principle, because of its quality of permanence, alone offered a means of governing under conditions of political and social peace. It is in the conservative ideas of Guizot, Metternich, and Nicholas I that we must seek the source of the ideology and principles of modern Fascism and Hitlerism, rather than in the amorphous teachings of the socialists. As for conservatism, it manifestly cannot be interpreted or defined as a belief in the eternity of traditional institutions, as a doctrine of rigidity, of immobility. Quite the contrary, conservatism represents faith in the greater realization of our aspirations. But this conception of conservatism presupposes also the fixed conviction that being part

of a material world we must take into account its laws.

Such a conception stops short at the danger line beyond which ideas are substituted for facts; it recognizes and rejects those reforms which bear the stamp of too bold aspirations. It is impossible to trace this danger line in general, but at each innovation, on the occasion of every reform, this line appears and becomes more precise as the reform takes shape. Thus true conservatism does not attack age-old institutions which have proved their adaptability to change; it rejects, however, projects which belong to the world of ideas and do not respond to the logic of facts. Furthermore, true conservatism does not proceed with a reform unless it is convinced that the reform in question is already virtually accomplished, that evolution has already prompted life to find a different and more appropriate setting. Thus it cannot be led into adopting reforms or institutions built by the mind entirely in abstraction.

Finally the mission of conservatism is to assure continuity. From the remotest past of civilization to the present day the long chain of human achievements has often been broken by violent outbursts. The task of conservatism is to reduce to a minimum such vandalism, which is too often masked by seductive slogans and abstract aspirations; to assure the harmonious development of the political and social faculties of man and the realization of the rightful aspirations of humanity within the framework of our institutions; to teach humanity respect and love, to lead it gradually to the accomplishment of its greatest ideal—peace, and to revive in it the long lost faculty, the greatest of God's gifts—faith in life.

Not That It Matters

F. KESTON CLARKE

THERE are, I observe, many excellent institutions willing, for a fee, to give earnest young people postal instruction in a magnificent variety of subjects from picture-framing to Old Gothic. Most of these courses are designed to assist young workers in their work. But there are older persons, no less earnest, who have done their bit of mere work, and now wish to undertake *Work*. They would like to embark upon careers of Social Usefulness, and don't know how to push off.

I therefore give herewith my short course for intending tillers of the Uplift field. I charge no fee; and I guarantee that the ensuing half-dozen or so lessons will teach you all you want to know. Anyway after reading them I'm sure you won't want me to tell you any more, so what could be fairer than that?

Lesson 1. Introductory. What is Sociology? Now, that's a very intelligent question. Well, if you will pop upstairs and protrude yourself, after the manner of King Stephen, from an upper window, you will unfailingly observe that there is Something Wrong With the World. In fact there are many things; but we can sort them for convenience into (a) Social Scourges, (b) Social Menaces, and (c) Social Problems.

You need not concern yourself with Scourges. In former times the word connoted diseases that were unpleasant and incurable. Today (see advertisements)