**Prince Klemens von Metternich:   
Political Confession of Faith, 1820, Conservative Reaction**

*Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859) was the leading figure in European government up until 1848. As political master of the Austrian Empire, he was the architect of an alliance system among the European powers after Napoleon's defeat - a system which tried to undo the damage to traditional dynastic politics wrought by the French revolution.*

**The Source of the Evil**

France had the misfortune to produce the greatest number of these men [revolutionaries]. It is in her midst that religion and all that she holds sacred, that morality and authority, and all connected with them, have been attacked with a steady and systematic hatred. *Drag through the mud the name of God and the powers instituted by His divine decrees, and the revolution will be prepared! Speak of a social contract, and the revolution is accomplished!* The revolution was already completed in the palaces of Kings, in the drawing-rooms and bedrooms of certain cities, while among the great mass of the people it was still only in a state of preparation. *The scenes of horror which accompanied the first phases of the French Revolution prevented the rapid spread of its subversive [rebellious] principles beyond the frontiers of France,* and the wars of conquest which succeeded them gave to the public mind a direction little favorable to revolutionary principles.

Nevertheless the revolutionary seed had penetrated into every country and spread more or less. It was greatly developed under the *régime* of the military despotism of Napoleon Bonaparte. His conquests displaced a number of laws, institutions, and customs; broke through bonds sacred among all nations... *From this unrest, it followed that the revolutionary spirit could in Germany, Italy, and later on in Spain, easily hide itself under the veil of patriotism*…

*We are convinced that society can no longer be saved without strong and vigorous resolutions on the part of the Governments still free in their opinions and actions*.

Monarchs are called to show themselves as they are, fathers invested with the authority belonging by right to the heads of families, to prove that, in days of mourning, they know how to be just, wise, and therefore strong, and that they will not abandon the people whom they ought to govern... The moment in which we are putting our thoughts on paper is one of these critical moments. The crisis is great; it will be decisive according to the part we take or do not take....

Union between the monarchs is the basis of the policy which must now be followed to save society from total ruin....

The first principle to be followed by the monarchs should be that of maintaining the stability of political institutions against the disorganized excitement which has taken possession of men's minds- the immutability of principles against the madness of their interpretation; and respect for laws in force against a desire for their destruction....

Let them give great attention to the financial state of their kingdoms, so that their people may enjoy, by the reduction of public burdens, the real, not imaginary, benefits of a state of peace.

Let them be just, but strong; beneficent, but strict.

Let them maintain religious principles in all their purity, and not allow the faith to be attacked and morality interpreted according to the *social contract*or the visions of foolish sectarians.

Let them suppress Secret Societies, that gangrene of society.

In short, let the great monarchs strengthen their union, and prove to the world that if it exists, it is beneficent, and ensures the political peace of Europe: that it is powerful only for the maintenance of tranquility at a time when so many attacks are directed against it; that the principles which they profess are paternfal and protective, menacing only the disturbers of public tranquility....

To every great State determined to survive the storm there still remain many chances of salvation, and a strong union between the States on the principles we have announced will overcome the storm itself.

From Prince Klemens von Metternich, *Memoirs of Prince Metternich, 1815-1829,*ed. Prince Richard Metternich (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970; photoreprint of a Scribner and Sons 1881 edition), Vol. 3, pp. 456-463, 469-471, 473-476.

QUESTIONS

1) What is Metternich's general view of the French Revolution?

2) In your opinion, what are three of the most important principles he recommends for leaders? Why?

3) What "crisis" do the nations of Europe now face after Napoleon?

4) What is the nature of these principles Metternich recommends? (Describe them and provide evidence)