

Evans & Godin, France: 1815-2003.

Chapter 2: "The Bourbon Restoration, 1814-1830"

Translations of primary source documents

Translations are by Stephen Walton

The Constitutional Charter of June 4, 1814: Preamble drafted by Louis XVIII

Divine providence, in recalling us to our States after a long absence, has imposed significant obligations on us. [...] We have considered that, although complete authority resided in France in the king, his predecessors had never hesitated to modify the exercise of that authority, according to the changes in the times [...].

Following the example of the kings who preceded us, we have been obliged to weigh the effects of the continuing progress of the Enlightenment, the new relationships which these advances have introduced into society, the impulses given to human minds for the last half-century, the serious changes which have resulted therefrom; we have recognized that the desire of our subjects for a constitutional Charter was the expression of a real need; however, in yielding to this desire, we have taken all precautions such that this Charter might be worthy of us and of the people whom we are proud to command. [...] At the same time as we recognize that a free and monarchical Constitution ought to satisfy the expectations of enlightened Europe, we have also had to remember that our first duty toward our peoples was to conserve, for their own interest, the rights and prerogatives of our crown. We have hoped that, instructed by experience, they would be convinced that the supreme authority alone can give to the institutions that it establishes, the force, the permanence and the majesty which is vested in that authority.

In thus searching to join together again the links of time, which grievous lapses had broken, we have wiped from our memory, as we would hope one could wipe them from history, all the evils which have afflicted the Fatherland during our absence. [...] Sure of our intentions, strong in our conscience, we commit ourselves, before the Assembly which listens to us here, to be faithful to this constitutional Charter, reserving to ourselves to judge its preservation, with a new solemnity before the altars of the one who weighs in the same balance both kings and nations. To these causes, we have, voluntarily and by the free exercise of our royal authority, granted and do grant to our subjects, both for us and for our successors, and for ever, the constitutional Charter which follows. [...]

Gabriel Bourbon-Leblanc: *The ultra-royalists, the independents and the "ministériels" before the tribunal of public opinion* (Paris, 1817)

The Ultra-Royalists are composed of that mass of faithful knights who, seeing in royalty a divine institution, in the nobility its sole support, and in religion an effective obstacle to the introduction of tyranny, in the dogma of legitimacy and heredity of the sovereign power the sole guarantee of the happiness of the people, and in the monarchy thus constituted the only government which assures public tranquility, have sacrificed and are always ready to sacrifice their fortune, their existence and their dearest affections to the triumph of a cause which to them is sacred. The fatherland, for them, is only to be found in the same place as the king. That a democracy might be established in the country which saw their birth, or that a single leader command it, they fail to acknowledge both that democracy and that leader, because they consider the institution of the one and the arrival of the other as a challenge to the fundamental laws,

which can neither be changed nor abrogated. Their slogan is "God and the King" [*Dieu et le Roi*]. [...]

The Independents, for the most part born in and shaped by the storms of the revolution, are characterized by an activity, a perseverance and an energy which are to some degree allied to the heroic temper of thought of the happy times of the Roman Republic. Their slogan is "Liberté et égalité." According to them, no-one may exercise the sovereign power except by a formal delegation of the people; according to them, the true character of law is achieved and its goodness assured only insofar as it is the expression of the freely-expressed will of the majority of individuals whom it affects; the kings, the princes, the emperors, [...], the prefects, the ministers [...] must not under any pretext remove themselves from the duties imposed by the common law. [...] The right to command men can only be justified by the superiority of talents; [...] the public function is a domain to be ruled by the best and the ablest, just as the laurel wreath is the rightful property of those who are bravest. [...] It is to the one who renders the greatest service that the greatest recompense is given. [...] They want the citizen, free in his person and in his thought, to have the right to subject the decisions of authority to their own individual scrutiny, and to be able to hold any judge, no matter his rank, accountable for falseness in conduct, abuse of power and lack of talent if this magistrate is unqualified, if he forgets his duties, and if by his behavior he is unable to command respect.

The "ministériels" are steadfast admirers of the deeds of authority and of those who hold power; and since authority is the source from which flows all grace and all favor, they have as their slogan: "passive obedience" [*obéissance passive*]. They have thought that by bringing together in their turn the Ultra-Royalists and the Independents, and especially by misleading each in the same measure, that they would achieve complete mastery [...]. The *ministériels* want positions and office, and above all they want to be compensated. [...] Since God has not yet brought a final end to the French Revolution, she is ever walking with these three, main actors.