

Lord Palmerston's terrorist menagerie

by Joseph Brewda

The British policy of harboring terrorists, and using these terrorists to destabilize its enemies, is centuries-old. The most famous champion of this policy was Lord Palmerston, the British prime minister and foreign minister, who oversaw the 1848 revolutions run against Britain's rival French, Austrian, Ottoman, and Russian empires. "There wasn't a revolt started in Europe, nor a conspiracy hatched," French diplomat Charles de Bussy declared at the time, "without the audacious and criminal complicity of British agents."¹

Queen Victoria's uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, explained Palmerston's asylum policy this way: "In England, a sort of menagerie of Kossuths, Mazzinis, Legranges, Ledru-Rollins, etc. is kept to let loose occasionally on the Continent, to render its quiet and prosperity impossible." The Kossuths, Mazzinis, et al., deployed by Palmerston back then, are the forerunners of the terrorists Britain deploys today.

And just as they do today, the British claimed that the terrorist incidents they themselves directed, were caused by the totalitarian misrule and abuse of human rights of their targets.

As Lord Palmerston put it in a speech to Parliament: "A single spark will explode a powder magazine, and a blazing torch will burn out harmless on a turnpike road. If a country be in a state of suppressed internal discontent, a very slight indication may augment that discontent, and produce an explosion; but if the country be well governed, and the people be contented, then letters and proclamations from unhappy refugees will be as harmless as a torch upon the turnpike road."

The *Times* of London, which continues to support British terrorism today, had the same line. Why would its European rivals be "so afraid of such frothy declamations as Kossuth's and such visionary schemes as Mazzini's, were it nor for the unsoundness and unpopularity of their own position at home? It must be a very explosive state of things which can be kindled by so mere a spark as a letter from some unfortunate gentleman in his lodgings at Camden-town."

1. For further background, see Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Letting the animals loose

That Palmerston was using his menagerie to launch revolutions throughout the continent was well known.

"Is it necessary to prove evidence?" asked a French pamphlet inspired by Emperor Napoleon III. The revolutionary conspiracies on the continent did not originate there, it said, but were "born in the bosom of those revolutionary associations" in England, "which send forth assassins with their way-bill, and which then wait, under the tolerance of English hospitality, for the result." Napoleon III knew what he was talking about. He had been put in power by such a British conspiracy.

By the 1850s, Austria was "knocking at every door in Europe in order to get up a league against us," because of this policy, reported Foreign Secretary Clarendon. The British ambassador to Vienna in 1853 reported that "England is looked upon as the focus from which, not only every revolutionary movement in other countries is propagated, but murder and mutiny fomented and encouraged."

It was not simply the bloody revolutions of 1848. In March 1853, there was an abortive uprising in Milan, and an attempt on the life of the Austrian emperor, both organized out of London. In 1854, the Duke of Parma was stabbed to death, in another British plot. In 1855, there were two attempts on the life of Emperor Napoleon, and in 1857, another London emigré attempt, overseen by Mazzini, was discovered. The funding for these efforts was traced to Palmerston's Lord of the Admiralty, Sir James Stansfeld, who was also the banker for Mazzini and his revolutionary band.

Asylum for all terrorists

Lord Palmerston et al. claimed that they were powerless to deport the Mazzinians, because of London's policy of granting asylum—the same argument used today.

But it was precisely to safehouse such terrorists that Lord Palmerston's set launched a successful campaign in 1826 to repeal the Alien Act, which had provided for restricting or blocking aliens from entering the country, and possible expulsions of those living there. In motivating the repeal of the Act, Palmerston's crony, John Cam Hobhouse (who had just returned from participating in the British-run Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire), called the Act a "part of that system which is making Great Britain an accomplice in the conspiracy against the liberties of mankind."

Then, after successfully having repealed the Act, the British government informed the Austrian, Russian, French, Prussian, and other empires that it was impossible to stop London being the capital of world revolution. They were legally bound, they said, to accept all requests for asylum, and had no ability to expel those granted asylum. From 1826 through 1906, Britain granted official residence to every refugee who requested it, no matter how murderous, and did not expel one refugee from its shores!