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Research Article

The "State Interest" and Humanitarian Diplomacy of Oliver Cromwell

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Abstract. The 16th–first half of the 17th century was a vital period for the emergence of international law, sovereignty, and the modern international system. European sovereigns also started considering at that time what today would be termed humanitarian issues in foreign policy. They relied in this mostly on the contemporary theological thought and the nascent "Law of Nations," which fostered a discourse opposing the extremes of government (tyranny). The article analyzes one of the most vivid examples of such humanitarian foreign policy – foreign intervention by the Lord Protector of the English Republic, Oliver Cromwell, in the Duchy of Savoy in 1655 to protect the Waldensian Protestants, who suffered persecution there. Contrary to the modern historiography, the article argues that Cromwell did not abandon all other state considerations in questioning the conclusion of the Anglo-French alliance against Spain to stop the repression against the Waldensians. Cromwell's humanitarian policy was carried out in line with Realpolitik. Aware of the complicated domestic political situation in France and of the goals of French foreign policy, he was sure that Prime Minister Cardinal Mazarin was unlikely to give up the alliance with London in response to the London's support of the Protestant subjects of the Duke of Savoy. Cromwellian Foreign Policy in Savoy-Piedmont demonstrates one of the most significant cases of implementing the humanitarian principles in international relations. At the same time, Oliver Cromwell did not infringe upon the interests of his own country. On the contrary, despite the financial costs of maintaining special embassies and a fleet in the Mediterranean and creating the Waldensian Relief Fund, the support of the persecuted in Piedmont demonstrated the strength and authority of the English state.

Keywords: humanitarian diplomacy; Westphalian system; Cromwellian Foreign Policy; Savoyard Waldensians; Anglo-French alliance; the reason of state

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Ivonina L. I. «Gosudarstvennyy interes» i gumanitarnaya diplomatiya Olivera Kromvelya. *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta* [MGIMO Review of International Relations]. 16(1). P. 7–28. https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2023-1-88-7-28

While the first humanitarian interventions date back to the 19th century, and the concept of humanitarian diplomacy only started to take shape in the early 2000s (Close 2015: 1–28; Heraclides, Dialla 2017), the provision of humanitarian assistance during conflicts and complex emergency situations has always been a very significant policy issue. The 16th and early 17th centuries were a key period in the development of international law, the concepts of sovereignty and the formation of the system of states, which were later formalized by the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. At that time European monarchs and governments started to take what are now known as humanitarian principles into account when devising their foreign policies, threatening intervention, or using force against political regimes that mistreated members of religious or ethnic minorities. They were guided in this by the prevailing political thought of the time, as well as by the "law of nations" that was being developed and within which the discourse of cruel government (tyranny) emerged. Philosophers, theologians and lawyers, reflecting on how the Christian world should respond to "blatantly tyrannical rule," decided that excessive cruelty on the part of the sovereign towards his or her subjects is illegal, and actions to stop it are justified from the point of view of international law (Chesterman 2001: 9–10).

As early as the second half of the 16th century, the idea emerged that it was the duty of Christian sovereigns to oppose tyranny. This imperative was declared specifically in the treatise *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants), first published in Calvinist Basel under the pseudonym Stephen Junius Brutus.[2] The names of two political figures and Calvinist scientists are typically seen as the most likely authors of the work – Philippe de Mornay and Hubert Languet. *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* is one of the most well-known treatises of the Monarchomachs, which include the works of Calvinists (Huguenots) in France and the Netherlands, who attempted to justify the wars against the Catholic monarchs from the House of Valois and Habsburg Spain, as well as the Scottish Calvinist theorists of resistance to tyranny – John Ponet, Christopher Goodman, and John Knox (Gelderen 1992: 269–270; Yardeni 1985: 317; Daussy 2002: 239; Beer 1990: 373–383; Skinner 2018: 333–338). These works essentially put forward an ideology of resistance to unjust monarchs and were close to substantiating the doctrine of popular sovereignty.

During the Reformation and the European wars of religion, monarchomachs interpreted tyranny in denominational terms: Papal Rome and Catholic governments were seen as tyrannical because they persecuted Protestants. For example, the English historian of the Protestant Church and martyrologist John Foxe, author of *Actes and Monuments* (otherwise known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*), considered the persecution of Protestants to be tyrannical not because of the cruelty of the papacy and Catholic

[2] Brutus S. J. 1994. *Vindicae, contra tyrannos Or, Concerning the Legimitate Power of a Prince over the People, and of the People Over a Prince.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 1–6.

rulers, but because its victims were followers of the true religion ("the poor flock and the Church of Christ").[3] It is telling that, during the Dutch War of Independence, Habsburg rule in the Netherlands was portrayed as cruel for a variety of reasons, although Dutch pamphleteers pointed specifically to Madrid's desire to end religious diversity (Simms, Trim 2011: 37–40). We should note here that the monarchomachs also rallied support among Catholic publicists, since the Protestants were not the only ones to suffer at the increasingly powerful hands of the European monarchs in the early modern era, having their freedom of conscience suppressed, as the Catholics too saw the very institution of the monarchy undermine the idea of the authority of the Pope. Plus, the doctrine of tyrannicide is considered purely Catholic (Kondratenko 2015: 56–67).

Researchers note that, by the middle of the 17th century, the religious debate had shifted from martyrology to humanism. Associating the brutality of the state against religious minorities with tyranny constituted an important precedent in international politics. Justifying action against tyranny in "human" terms served to expand the conceptual range of what was "tyrannical" [Simms, Trim 2011: 40). In this regard, the views expressed by Hugo Grotius in his 1625 treatise *De iure belli ac pacis* (On the Law of War and Peace) are particularly significant. Exalting the rights of sovereigns, Grotius nevertheless notes that while rulers have a legal basis for regulating the lives of their subjects, some abuses of power are so egregious that they may constitute grounds for forceful intervention by neighbouring sovereigns. Subjects cannot rightly take up arms against their sovereign, but Grotius, like his predecessors, accepted that another sovereign or sovereign government could take up arms on their behalf, "the defense of innocent subjects." For "kings, besides the care of their particular state, have incumbent upon them a general care for human society."[4] Following Grotius, the German international lawyer and scholar Samuel von Pufendorf would write that anyone "could justly help any victim of oppression who asks for help." Coming to the aid of the oppressed is not only a right, but an obligation, albeit an "imperfect" one, as in the case of a contract [Nardin 2003: 16–17].

Many of the principles proposed by thinkers and theorists on international law would form the basis of the policies of a number of early modern governments. The practice of intervention to protect the persecuted in another country was clearly demonstrated by the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, Oliver Cromwell, in defence of Waldensian Protestants in the Duchy of Savoy.

Excerpts of larger works on the history of English foreign policy in the 17th century and the history of the Savoy Protestants, as well as in a small number of more specialized studies, treat Cromwell's diplomacy towards the Waldensians from the

[3] Foxe J. 1741. Actes and monuments. London. URL: https://lollardsociety.org/pdfs/Acts_and_Monuments_vol1.pdf (accessed: 21.02.2023).

[4] Grotius H. 1853, 2009. Grotius on the rights of war and peace, an abridged translation. Whewell W., ed. and trans. Cambridge: John W. Parker. Reprint edition: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd. P. 288.

standpoint of Protestant interests and the concept of international Calvinism (Firth 1953; Korr 1975; Venning 1995; Fraser 1997; Hainsworth 1997). The first work of note in this regard William Willis' lecture on the subject, given in the spirit of martyrology of the 16th–17th centuries, which was published back in 1895 (Willis 1895). The scarcity of modern studies may be explained by the fact that historians have difficulty interpreting the causes and results of England's support for the persecuted Waldensians, which is generally regarded as a misstep on Cromwell's part (Pincus 1996; Battick 2014). Studies published in the 21st century attempt to go beyond this, explaining English diplomacy in Savoy not only from the point of view of Protestant interests, but also in the context of the initial precedents of humanitarian diplomacy. However, as we can see from such impressive works as Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim's *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Simms, Trim 2011), the policy essentially boiled down to the compassion of the Lord Protector and his supporters for the persecuted Waldensians, and it was generally disadvantageous for English foreign policy.

Was that really the case? Did the Lord Protector take active political steps in the Duchy of Savoy that were not beneficial to the state? What motives guided him? And how did his diplomacy differ from interventions in the affairs of other states carried out by England before then? The present article attempts, through the use of systemic and normative approaches, as well as the method of event analysis, to analyze and illustrate the nature of Oliver Cromwell's diplomacy towards the Waldensians in the Duchy of Savoy in the mid-1650s. The systemic approach will allow us to determine England's role and place in the transformation of the system of international relations of the period we are investigating, and identify the determinants that influenced the policies of Cromwell and other European states. Through the normative approach, we are able to clarify the significance of the ideological struggle of the era and the events in Savoy for European society, and for Cromwell personally. The event analysis method helps us trace their dynamics in Europe in order to determine their significance in English foreign policy and identify the main trends in the development of the political situation.

The Waldensians of Savoy and the "Bloody Easter"

Waldensian ideology traces its roots to a medieval heretical movement whose followers settled in remote valleys in the Alps in what is now southeastern France and northwestern Italy. By the 16th century, most of them were living in a small regional principality ruled by the Dukes of Savoy. This duchy, which covered parts of modern-day Italy, France and Switzerland, included the region of Piedmont, after which it was sometimes called. Over time, the Waldensians adopted the doctrine of the Calvinist branch of the Reformation and maintained close ties with the reformed Swiss, Huguenot, Dutch and Scottish churches, as well as with the Puritan community in England. The Waldensians were subjected to harsh persecution. In 1545, for example, several thousand followers of the Waldensian teachings were massacred in the French province

of the Dauphiné (Cameron 1984: 201). The Dukes of Savoy were devout Catholics, but, as rulers of a small state that maneuvered between its warring neighbours in order to maintain its independence, they rarely carried out internal campaigns against dissidents.

In 1649 and 1653, Duke Charles Emmanuel II confirmed the 1561 Covenant of Podio, which granted freedom of religion to the Waldensian living in strictly defined mountain valleys.[5] However, in the century that had passed since the Covenant, the population distribution pattern in Piedmont changed significantly. The Waldensians had prospered, building churches and schools, and moving to the lower plains. On January 25, 1655, Protestants living outside the valleys designated in 1561 were ordered, on pain of death and the confiscation of property, to move back to the valleys or else convert to Catholicism. In the spring of 1655, a large army of French soldiers was deployed in the Susa Valley, preparing to attack the Spanish in Lombardy. Turin had decided to borrow several regiments from the French to supplement its modest forces and put an end to the Waldensians. The days-long massacre began on Castelluzzo Hill on April 14, 1655, and, when all was said and done, depending on various estimates, anywhere between 1700 and 3000 Waldensians had been killed. The event came to be called "Bloody Easter." Thousands of people were evicted from their homes, and many were burned at the stake. A further 1400 died while fleeing the Alps in harsh weather to the Swiss Confederation. The total number of dead was approximately 4000 (Barbro 1994: 30–31; Stephens 1998: 175).[6]

The events in Piedmont reverberated far and wide. The spiritual head of the Waldensians, Pastor Jean (Giovanni) Leger, fled to Paris, from where he sent written appeals to the monarchs and political and religious leaders of Europe imploring them for support. News of the "bloudy massacre" and the "horrid and barbarous Cruelties" became "so publicly known and evident […] that it could not possibly be concealed or denied," wrote the prominent English publicist, diplomat, spy and inventor Samuel Morland in his detailed and impassioned account of the atrocities.[7]

The House of Savoy went on the ideological and diplomatic defensive, but to no avail. To a large extent, the massacre of the Protestants of Piedmont became one of the most significant events of the 17th century thanks to the avalanche of newspaper articles, treatises, pamphlets and special reports that were widely distributed across Europe. Many of these publications were based on secular arguments in defence of the Waldensians. For example, two pamphlets were published (in French) in the Netherlands shortly after the incident: "Récit véritable de ce qui est arrivé depuis peu aux valées de Piémont" ("A true Relation of the Late Commotions in the Valleys of Piedmont") and "Relation véritable de ce qui s'est passé dans les persécutions et massacres

[5] Stoppa G. 1655. A collection of the several papers… concerning *The Bloody and Barbarous Massacres, Murthers, and other Cruelties, committed… in the Vallies of Piedmont.* London. P. 12–13

[6] Ibid. P. 5, 34; 1655. *The barbarous & inhumane proceedings against the professors of the reformed religion.* London. P. 3, 5.

[7] Morland S. 1658. *The History of The Evangelical Churches Of the Valleys of Piemont.* London. P. 386, 548.

faits cette année aux Eglises réformées de Piémont" ("A True Account of the Persecutions and Massacres Committed This Year against the Reformed Churches in Piedmont" (de Boer 2021: 96). Both treatises proceeded from a detailed description of the historical rights and privileges that the Duke of Savoy had violated before going on to argue that the Waldensians had not broken the law and were therefore persecuted rather than punished. Second, several pages in the pamphlets were devoted to descriptions of the inhuman acts of violence committed against the Waldensians (de Boer 2021: 97). Even pamphleteers in the Duchy of Savoy admitted that the "some cruelties" had been committed by the Duke's army.[8]

The accounts of the atrocities contained many exaggerations – some fictional examples of brutal massacres in the past were added for comparison (Tourn 1980: 125) – but in most cases they were accurate. Eyewitnesses spoke of sexual violence, infanticide, suicide, and cannibalism, of mothers and babies fleeing through the mountains and freezing to death, of many Waldensians being thrown into ravines or burned alive at the stake.[9] Cromwell's "Latin Secretary" and foreign affairs advisor John Milton, who was better known as a poet, immortalized his disdain for the massacre and his appeal to divine justice in a sonnet that is still incredibly moving today:

> Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
> Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
> When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones;
> Forget not: in thy book record their groans
> Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
> Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
> Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
> The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
> To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
> O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway
> The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
> A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way
> Early may fly the Babylonian woe.
> (Svendsen 1965: 70–72)

"Bloody Easter" is considered by some researchers as one of the first examples of ethnic cleansing. Given the death toll, the claims that Piedmont was the site of a genocide are greatly exaggerated. That said, while the number of dead was small in absolute terms, it was significant proportionally (slightly more than 23,000 Waldensians called the Duchy of Savoy home) (Tourn 1980: 124; Hainsworth 1997: 204).

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[8] 1655. *A short and faithfull Account of the late Commotions in the Valleys of Piedmont*. London. P. 4.
[9] Ibid. P. 333.

Be that as it may, it seemed to people at the time that the Waldensians were broken beyond repair and would soon be wiped off the face of the Earth. European protestants were outraged. The Swiss Calvinist cantons immediately protested against the massacres and sent an emergency mission to Duke Charles Emmanuel II. The Swiss appeals were met with silence, and Geneva was not prepared to take more serious steps on the matter. "This Affair had thus in all probability fallen asleep, and come to nothing, had it not been awakened, and that in a most lively and vigorous manner, by his Highness the Lord Protector of England," Morland summed up, recounting the details of the negotiations of the Swiss side with the Duke: "Neither indeed were the effects of his charity and Christian compassion at all inferior to those his zealous, earnest, and pathetic expressions."[10]

The Dialectics of Cruelty and Tolerance

At first glance, the image of Oliver Cromwell is not readily associated with that of a humanitarian diplomat. The cruelty he exhibited in Ireland during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms in 1649–1653 in response to the Irish Rebellion of 1641, the increased activity of the Royalists and the founding of the Catholic Confederate Ireland, is widely known. Ruthless repressions were carried out in Ireland up until the end of 1649, earning Cromwell a reputation among the country's people as a bloody executioner. According to the memoires of one Catholic bishop, "Cromwell came over, and like a lightning passed through the land" (Brady, Ohlmeyer 2005: 1). For example, after storming Drogheda, a city north of Dublin, English soldiers put Catholic priests to death: some were torn to pieces right there in their churches, others, having rounded up dozens of people in one church, were burned alive. The head of the Drogheda garrison, Arthur Aston, was bludgeoned to death with his own wooden leg (Fraser 1997: 326).

At the same time, the question of how much of a hand Cromwell actually had in these inhumane actions remains up for debate, as he only led the conquest during its first year. Those who doubt his influence point to the fact that ruthlessness was common in the wars of the 17th century (Reilly 1999; McKeiver 2007; Akroyd 2021). Just look at the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), for example, which is burned into the collective memory of Europeans as a tragedy (Ivonin, Ivonina 2015). Whatever the case may be, Cromwell's cruelty in Ireland was a direct response to those who had come out in opposition to the state he had created.

Even so, the head of the English Republic tolerated such movements as the Quakers, anti-Trinitarians, and even Catholics in other regions of the British Isles. During the years of Cromwell's republic (1649–1653), the Lord Protector abolished repressions against English Catholics as a way to restore political stability to the country. On

[10] *Morland S. Evangelical Churches.* P. 540–552.

February 18, 1649, the Spanish Ambassador Alonso de Cárdenas noted in a letter to Madrid that "it is hoped that, among the laws destined to be thus abrogated, will be included the penal laws concerning the Catholics […] Even now, thanks to the Independents, the Catholics can appear freely in this capital and throughout the country […] although it may be feared that this is only a ruse of the Independents, in order to conciliate the Catholic party, by modifying the severities with which they have been treated by the Presbyterians" (Guizot 1996: 482).

In addition, Cromwell supported the readmission of Jews to England. While the Jewish question was a controversial one among the English public, the Lord Protector, according to Tuscan Ambassador Francesco Salvetti, "would postpone action while conniving in the meantime at religious exercise in their private houses, as they do at present" [Katz 1994: 132–134; Ivonina 2020: 132–139]. His position was in keeping with the spirit of a number of provisions of the December 1653 Instrument of Government, which extended religious tolerance to peaceful Protestant sects. Cromwell's main goal was not coercion (in religion), but light and reason, the establishment of a free structure of church government in which everyone could find God for themselves.[11] During the rule of the Protectorate, both theological considerations and economic advantages overcame the widespread public hostility to the readmission of Jews.

It is thus clear that Cromwell's attitude towards dissidents and people of the same faith fits logically into a multi-vector scheme of foreign and domestic policy that was determined by state interests. London's position on the events in Piedmont expanded perceptions of how to implement foreign policy.

London's Reaction to the Piedmont Massacre

The people who knew Cromwell at the time said that no event affected him as much as the "Bloody Easter" massacre. On May 17, the English Council of State discussed the events of Piedmont and, at the suggestion of the Lord Protector, proclaimed May 30 a day of national fasting as a sign of solidarity with the "poor inhabitants of the valleys." Cromwell publicly called for financial assistance to be given to the devastated Waldensian communities, and led by example, donating 2000 pounds sterling of his own money. By early July, the total amount raised had reached 15,000 pounds sterling, which was to be delivered to Piedmont by the diplomat and head of the intelligence network. This was a most generous act considering the unstable political situation in England at the time (a major Royalist uprising had been suppressed in the spring of 1655) and the restoration of property from the destruction of the Civil War. Through his agents, Downing was able to intercept and successfully squash rumours that were being spread across Europe by Royalists that the funds collected were

[11] Abbott W. C., ed. 1937. *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell.* Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. P. 416.

actually intended to pay for Swiss mercenaries who had arrived in England to serve as personal bodyguards for Cromwell, who could not trust his army (Firth 1953: 371; Bresse 2012: 217–218).

At the same time, London was stepping up its activities on the diplomatic scene, calling on the Protestant governments of Denmark, Sweden and the United Provinces of the Netherlands to speak out against the lawlessness that had taken place. On May 23, Morland was sent to Turin as Commissioner Extraordinary to present an official letter of protest to the Duke of Savoy and personally implore him to withdraw his merciless decrees. On the way to Turin, Morland was authorized to deliver letters from Cromwell to the French King Louis XIV and his first minister, Jules Cardinal Mazarin, since France had significant influence over its smaller neighbour and traditional ally. What is more, the Lord Protector and his advisers were aware that Charles Emmanuel II had recruited several French regiments into his army in the attack on the Waldensians (Venning 1995: 97).

The letter to Louis XIV read: "Now we do not doubt but that your Majesty hath such an Interest and Authority with the Duke of Savoy, that by your Intercession and signification of your good will, a Peace may very easily be procured for those poor people, with a return into their native country, and to their former liberty. The performance whereof will be an action worthy of your Majesty, and answerable to the prudence and example of your most serene Predecessors; and will not only very much confirm the minds of your Subjects, that they need not fear the like mischief any time hereafter, but also engage your Confederates and Allies, which profess the same Religion, in a far greater respect and good affection to your Majesty. As to what concerns us, what favour soever in this kind shall be granted, either to your own Subjects, or shall, by your means, be obtained for the Subjects of others, it shall be no less acceptable to us, yea truly it will be more acceptable, and valuable, than any other profit and advantage, among those many which we promise unto our self from the friendship of your Majesty."[12]

In his letter to Mazarin, Cromwell expressed the hope that the first minister would use his influence to intercede on behalf of the Waldensians and thus "lay the foundations of a stricter Alliance between this Republic and the Kingdom of France."[13] In his personal audiences with the cardinal, Morland made it clear that a treaty with France would not be signed until the persecution of the Waldensians ceased. He also hinted that if England's demands were not satisfied, then the British fleet, which was stationed in the Mediterranean at the time, would interfere with French maritime trade. During internal discussions, French ministers did not rule out the possibility that the Protectorate might hire mercenaries in the Protestant cantons of Switzerland or even stir up a Huguenot rebellion in the south of France (Gardiner 1965: 189–190). Meanwhile,

[12] Abbott W. C., ed. 1945. *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell.* Vol. 3. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. P. 727.
[13] Ibid. P. 728.

Secretary of State to the Protectorate's Council of State John Thurloe informed the French Ambassador in London that the treaty on an Anglo–French alliance "would not be signed until the Duke of Savoy had come to a satisfactory arrangement with his subjects" (Venning 1995: 97).

Upon his arrival in Turin, Morland immediately submitted Cromwell's protest to Duke Charles Emmanuel II regarding his cruel policies towards the Waldensians. While the document did not contain any explicit threats, its wording was likely harsher than in the letters delivered in Paris (Tourn 1980: 125; Hainsworth 1997: 204–205). The Duke was concerned about what the British Mediterranean Fleet under the command of Robert Blake might do. Cromwell had already given orders to this formidable "sea dog" to use its ships to suppress Savoyard trade and to be on the ready to launch an attack on Nice or Villefranche-sur-Mer if London' diplomacy in Turin did not bring about a positive outcome (Ashley 1958: 320–321). It is important to note here that the surviving Waldensians fled to Val Chisone on French territory, where they organized a resistance movement and a people's militia of 2000 men led by Joshua Janavel. Partisan warfare broke up. An "international" detachment of 500 volunteers, mostly Huguenots, was established in the south of France. Faced with all this, the Duke of Savoy approached the French government for consultations.

In early June 1655, Louis XIV formally notified Cromwell that France would urge the Duke of Savoy to agree to England's demands (Korr 1975: 148–149). On June 25, French minister in the Netherlands, Chanut, wrote to his colleague Bordeaux in London: "In my opinion, there being once an end of all pretence to delay you any longer, they [the British – *L. I.*] will then resolve to sign your treaty, which we hope to hear by the next post […] The business of Savoy hath made such an impression against us, that notwithstanding the apparent truth, it is not able to break forth, to pacify the minds of the people."[14] In July 1655, the Dutch Ambassador in Paris reported to The Hague: "The treaty between France and England is not yet signed. The lord protector doth defer it till he hears from Savoy, in what manner that court will treat for the re-establishing of the Vaudois in Piedmont."[15] In September of that year, Mazarin wrote to the French Ambassador in London that "if the signing of the treaty did depend upon the accommodation of the Vaudois, it will be now performed, for the accommodation is now executed, to the great joy and satisfaction of the people there."[16]

Under pressure from England, supported by France, the Savoy Court was forced to abandon its repressive policy towards the Waldensians and open negotiations with them. On August 18, the Pinerolo Declaration of Mercy (the Letters of Pardon), concluded through the mediation of France and the Netherlands, put an end to the massacres and granted Waldensians the right to return to their valleys. The English

[14] Birch T., ed. 1742. *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.* Vol. III. London: Fletcher Gyles. P. 365.
[15] *State Papers of John Thurloe.* Vol. III. P. 619.
[16] Ibid. P. 743.

Republic and Swiss Federation acted as co-guarantors of the agreement. Cromwell was hailed as the saviour of the Waldensians in England, in Europe, and by the Waldensians themselves (Tourn 1980: 126–128; Gardiner 1965: 190–193).

That notwithstanding, as far as the Lord Protector was concerned, the treaty was imperfect and would not last long, as he realized that simply stopping the massacres was not enough: measures had to be introduced that would prevent a repeat of those events. In his opinion, the Savoyard government was obliged to restore the communities destroyed during the massacre, and compensate for the damage caused by war, robbery, arson, etc.[17] Cromwell turned out to be right, since the Waldensians were brutally persecuted more than once. The "Bloody Easter" of 1655 was only the beginning of a series of Savoyard–Waldensian wars (1655–1690), during which the Waldensians employed partisan war tactics against the military campaigns of the Savoyard dukes, who sought to convert the entire population to Catholicism. The Waldensians would have to wait until 1848 to be granted religious freedom and civil rights, following an edict by King Charles Albert of Sardinia. But what was important in 1655 was that, thanks to intercession from abroad, the massacre had been stopped, and the far-reaching diplomatic and economic support provided by England to the Waldensians can effectively be considered the first precedent for the humanitarian policies of future generations.

It is important to note here that Cromwell's diplomatic actions, and his willingness to send military assistance to the Waldensians, were not far removed from the traditional English policy of protecting European Protestants. For example, Elizabeth I of the House of Tudor provided diplomatic support to the rebellious Netherlands, and Charles I of the House of Stuart aided the French Huguenots during the Thirty Years' War (one of the most striking episodes in this regard was the siege of La Rochelle in 1627–1628). However, both Elizabeth and Charles, while proclaiming that they were helping their "brothers and sisters in faith,"[18] were primarily pursuing goals that were quite far from humanitarian. Elizabeth, having made the Earl of Leicester a Stadtholder in 1585, hoped to subjugate the Netherlands to England, while Charles, in addition to his intention to resolve a number of foreign policy, economic and even personal issues through the war with France, also wanted to calm Puritan opposition to the Crown, which intensified during the Thirty Years' War, with the support of the Huguenots. By and large, the monarchs were not against turning the regions in question (the Netherlands for Elizabeth, and the Huguenot region for Charles) into a permanent source of tension, which would prevent Spain, in the first case, and France, in the second, from

[17] Morland S. 1658. *A Distinct and Faithful Accompt of all the Receipts, Disbursements, and Remainder of the Moneys Collected in England, Wales & Ireland […] for the Relief of the Poor Distressed Protestants in the Valleys of Piemont*. London: for the Council of State. P. 97–111.

[18] For example, in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham dated August 13, 1627, Charles I noted that he wished the reason that had prompted England to take up arms was the defence of the faith. See: Petrie C., ed. 1968. *The Letters of King Charles I.* London. P. 54.

taking any serious actions against them. What is more, they did not set up special relief funds. In fact, the opposite is true, as in 1582, the English crown took out a loan of 1 million pounds sterling from Dutch bankers (Adams 2002: 235–253; Reeve 1979: 9–57, 226–274; Cogswell 1986: 1–21).

Without discounting the rational basis of Cromwell's policy in Savoy–Piedmont, which we will discuss below, it is important to note the attention paid not only by the press and in diplomatic relations, but also by the Lord Protector when expressing his personal feelings, on the secular (moral and legal) aspects of the transition to humanism. During the events described, Cromwell told foreign ambassadors that he sympathized with the poor folk of Piedmont, as if they were close relatives. Even shortly before his death in 1658, his thoughts were occupied not only by the future of the English Republic, but also about the Waldensians, remarking on more than one occasion: "Piedmont was still foremost in my thoughts," and "what will they do with the poor Protestants in Piedmont?" (Venning 1995: 100).[19] Also significant is the fact that the financial assistance given to the Waldensians was not a one-time deal, but continued until the Stuart Restoration in 1660. A special fund for Piedmont was set up, which additionally sent 320 pounds sterling annually to eight permanent English residents in the territory of Savoy. More than 38,000 pounds sterling was donated in total. The fact is that Cromwell's assistance to the Waldensians was not based solely on the fact that they were of the same faith, but also because he was genuinely outraged by the actions of the government of the Duke of Savoy, which had violated the honest principles of human politics (Bresse 2012: 219). In this sense, Cromwell's actions in defence of the Waldensians in 1655 can be seen as humanitarian intervention.

What is more, Cromwell's humanitarian policy was not limited to Piedmont, extending to the Protestants in the Catholic cantons of Switzerland and to Protestant Poles who had been repressed during the Deluge (1655–1660) – the successful Swedish invasion of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. In late 1655, for instance, when an attempt was made to expel the Protestants from the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, Cromwell, through his ambassador in Geneva, John Pell, called on the Protestant cantons to unite. And in 1657, after hearing a report from the Piedmont Foundation Committee, Cromwell's Council approved a motion to allocate part of the Foundation's funds to the Poles. In March 1658, the list of beneficiaries was expanded to include 20 more families from Bohemia who had been victims of the Jesuits in the Habsburg dominions. Humanitarian payments totalled 10,685 pounds sterling annually (Venning 1995: 100–101).

[19] Henderson F., ed. 2005. *The Clarke Papers. Further Selections from the Papers of William Clarke, Secretary to the Council of the Army, 1647–1649, and to General Monck and the Commanders of the Army in Scotland, 1651–1660.* Cambridge: University Press for the Royal Historical Society. P. 272.

Meditations on the Motives and Aftermath of Cromwell's Diplomacy in Savoy

According to the authors of *Humanitarian Intervention,* Cromwell placed greater emphasis on the goals of his government in far-off Piedmont than on the negotiations with France, which were far more important for his country. After all, the Anglo-French alliance was crucial for the war against Spain, which the head of the English Republic had been planning since at least 1654, while negotiations with France had been dragging on since 1652. The fact that the Lord Protector's was prepared to give greater priority to the Protestants of Piedmont in 1655 than to concluding an alliance with France clearly demonstrates that, in his worldview, Protestant interests were more important. There were no geopolitical or strategic benefits for England that could be obtained from the intervention in Savoy. Quite the contrary, it could only cause harm. The only thing that sending Blake's fleet to the coast of Savoy did was distract the country from the Lord Protector's main foreign policy strategy. And the Waldensians were unlikely to become useful allies in a new religious war, while the Savoy, as English statesmen knew all too well throughout the 17th century, was often hostile to the Spanish Habsburgs. From a purely political point of view, it would be better to ignore the deaths and forced migration of a small number of Protestants than to jeopardize the alliance with France and another potential strategically important ally: Spanish armies stationed in the Habsburg's possessions in Northern Italy would have to go through Savoy to invade France. The fact that Cromwell ignored all these other state considerations to help his Protestant Waldensian brethren is a poor example of realist politics (Simms, Trim 2011: 62–63).

While these claims would seem to be logical and self-evident at first glance, we believe there is room for debate here. Of course, there is no doubt that the throughline of the foreign policy of Cromwell, as well as of a number of his advisers, was Protestant interests. The Lord Protector's "grand design" as head of the English state was to promote the common aspirations of the people of God throughout Christendom.[20] In 1656, the Lord Protector convinced the Second Protectorate Parliament that England ought to have "a brotherly fellow-feeling of the interest of all the Protestant Christians in the world," for "he that strikes at but one species of a general to make it nothing, strikes at all."[21] In Cromwell's eyes, Protestant interest was the same thing as state interest, which is typical of the era of the "confessional century" and the confrontation between confessional and political unions (the first half of the 16th century to the first half of the 17th century). Although the modern German scholar of the

[20] Morland S. *Evangelical*… P. 552.

[21] *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell.* Vol. III. P. 52.

theory of Confessionalization Heinz Schilling contests that this period ended with the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) (Schilling 2007: 347–367, 385–395, 588–599), in reality, its repercussions were felt long after.

At the same time, the Lord Protector's policy towards the Waldensians should not be seen as disadvantageous for the English Republic. Of course, ideally, he saw Europe in terms of the specific brand of Christianity each country professed, and dreamed of embodying the idea of a pan-Protestant alliance against the Habsburgs in Central and Western Europe, an idea that had become anachronistic following the Thirty Years' War, excluding from his allies only the United Provinces of the Netherlands as its main economic rival. However, guided by the belief that he was a divine instrument in the creation of a new and bright future (Scott 2000: 159), the Puritan Cromwell was in fact a realist and a pragmatist. His diplomacy represented the unity of the policy of protecting European Protestantism with the "Western Design" of conquests in the West Indies, and at the same time with interaction with Catholic states, which was beneficial for England (Venning 1995: II). Viewing the vast Spanish Empire as a major threat, Cromwell sought to create a strong coalition to wage an offensive war against the Spanish monarchy in order to weaken its economic power and strategic position by depriving it of key territorial assets. The strategy for defending the state was to conduct military operations against Spain, both with allies in the Netherlands and unilaterally in the West Indies. The alliance with France, in addition to strategic and economic benefits it afforded the country on the continent and in the Atlantic, gave political and moral advantages against King Charles II, who was in exile in Europe, as well as against the royalists, whom Paris could no longer officially support. Could helping the Waldensians have impacted the conclusion of this alliance?

Equally, if not more, significant than Cromwell's political considerations in our case is the position of the French government, which was stated unequivocally by Cardinal Mazarin in a note entitled "On the English Republic" (January 1651), in which he wrote that the French should never do anything that is contrary to the rules of prudence, and that no matter what demonstrations the French side might make in favour of the English king would not result in the restoration of the throne, and the continuing refusal to recognize a republic that truly enjoys supreme power will do nothing to strengthen the rights of the king. The Cardinal went on to say that the current state of affairs in France did not allow them to offer the king any help, and that France, embroiled in a large-scale war and dealing with numerous agitators at home, could find itself in grave danger if the British were to unite with any of them (Guizot 1996: 495–496).

Mazarin wanted an alliance with England, as this would ensure military and diplomatic support in the long and exhausting war with the Spanish Habsburgs (1635–1659). He also took into account the fact that Cromwell maintained active ties with the leader of the Fronde of the Princes (1650–1653), Louis de Condé. Even after the famous commander of the Grand Condé and his supporters defected to the Spanish side in 1653 and took command of one of its armies in the Netherlands, the head of

the English Republic continued to provide assistance to the losing frondeurs, hoping to use the ongoing Franco–Spanish war for his own benefit. He received the prince's envoys, studied maps, sent his agents Joachim Hein and Jean-Baptiste Stouppe to the continent to assess the chances of success in international politics if he heeded the calls of Condé and his Spanish supporters (Saulnier 2002: 249–250).[22]

Paris was also concerned about the increased activity of the French Calvinists (the Huguenots) in connection with the events in Piedmont. For the most part, Mazarin continued the policy of his predecessor Cardinal Richelieu to protect the religious freedom of the Huguenots, that is, until the Catholic Church started to turn the screw. Thus, the Royal Declaration of 1652 solemnly confirmed the Edict of Nantes of 1598, lauding the Huguenots for their loyalty to the monarchy during the Fronde (1648–1653). However, in 1655, a meeting of the Catholic clergy demanded that the declaration be repealed and called for the destruction of Calvinist churches and the blocking religious services. Following this, Mazarin, weighing the domestic and foreign political needs of the French state, agreed to a religious compromise. The subsequent 1656 Declaration was more restrictive for the Huguenots than the previous document, although the Calvinist religion was not outlawed, and the Synod of Reformed Churches was allowed to convene in London in 1659. Cromwell was acutely aware of the pressure the Huguenots were putting on the French government, a fact that can be seen in his correspondence (Korr 1975: 150–156; Smith 2014).

Another factor that should not be discarded here is the presence of diplomatic competition: even during the Anglo-Dutch War of 1652–1654, France and Spain were vying for England's good favour. Alonso de Cárdenas encouraged Madrid to enter into an alliance with London and The Hague in order to stop the attacks of English privateers on Spanish ships in the Atlantic and obtain assistance in the war against France. In 1652, he sent a draft 24-point treaty on peace and alliance between England and Spain to the Spanish capital, which he also presented to the English Council of State.[23] At that very same time, the French ambassador had three meeting with Cromwell, and Louis XIV started to refer to the head of the English Republic in his letters as "Monseigneur mon cousin."[24] The antagonism between Spain and France, which intensified at the end of the Fronde, allowed Cromwell to significantly increase England's prestige on global stage, and to expect concessions in the future.

In a certain sense, Cromwell's support for the Savoy Waldensians can also be seen as a kind of compensation for the military humiliation of the British in the West Indies. In April 1655, an expeditionary force of 30 ships and 3000 soldiers under the command of Sir William Penn and Colonel Robert Venables was roundly defeated

[22] Michaud L.-G., ed. 1820. *Louis Joseph de Bourbon Conde (prince de), Charles Louis de Sevelinges. Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Maison Condé.* Vol. I. Paris. P. 236–237.
[23] Bruce G., ed. 1858. *Calendar of State Papers. Domestic series [during the Commonwealth]. 1652–1653.* London. P. 203; Du Mont J., ed. 1728. *Corps Universelle diplomatique.* Amsterdam. Vol. VI. Pt. II. P. 121–124.
[24] *Calendar of State Papers.* 1652–1653. P. 347, 356, 358.

at Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola, one of the most important colonies of Spanish America. The retreating British landed on the island of Jamaica, which the Spaniards considered unsuitable for colonization, and captures a local fort with a small garrison. The Lord Protector considered the expedition the single biggest failure of his "Western Project."[25] Upon their return to England, Penn and Venables were imprisoned in the Tower. As Barry Coward noted, back then "it was not foreseen that Jamaica would eventually in the eighteenth century become a sugar-producing colony and one of the major jewels in the British imperial crown, and its capture did nothing to soften the anger and humiliation felt in England at the expedition's failure" (Coward 1997: 77–78).

It is worth noting that, in May 1655, when Madrid, still hoping for a settlement in the conflict in the West Indies and an alliance with Cromwell against France, sent an ambassador extraordinary, the Marquis of Leda, to help Cárdenas, Mazarin was seriously worried that the mission might succeed, although the Marquis did not have the authority to acquiesce to Cromwell's claims in America (Venning 1995: 91–101). On June 3, the French minister in London, Bordeaux, lamented in a letter to the Cardinal that the massacre of Protestants had given Cromwell an excuse to delay negotiations: "the intention of the protector and this government was always to amuse us, and not to conclude till the very last: and this doth appear by what the secretary of state [Thurloe – *author's note*] hath sent me this evening, instead of the treaty, which he promised to send […] word, that his highness would first send an express to the king, with a letter in favour of the protectants of Savoy, who suffer great persecutions…"[26] And in a two-hour conversation with George Downing in late August, the French First Minister said that "of all things in the world he desired a right understanding with his highness; that he would do anything in his power to evidence it."[27] At the same time, Mazarin emphasized that "the accommodation now in Piemont was by his master's [Downing's – *author's note*] intercession," and that no "treaty or peace should be made in Spain," except with the consent of his highness.[28]

As we can see, the French side was more interested in an alliance than the English side, and Cromwell obviously knew this when he was defending the Waldensians. The foreign policy needs of Britain and France facilitated the conclusion of a peace and trade treaty (with additional secret articles containing obligations of mutual financial and military support) in November 1655, and an offensive alliance against Spain in 1657. The French historian F. Saulnier called the union between these two outstanding politicians – a Catholic and a Puritan – a "unity of opposites" (Saulnier 2002: 233).

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[25] *State Papers of John Thurloe.* Vol. III. P. 305, 309, 659.
[26] *State Papers of John Thurloe.* Vol. III. P. 469.
[27] *State Papers of John Thurloe.* Vol. III. P. 734.
[28] Ibid.

An equally significant factor in the stability of the British vector of France's foreign policy was England's position among the Protestant states of Europe, for whom France had acted as defender and financial sponsor before and during the Thirty Years' War. During the war with Spain and the ongoing process of political stabilization after the Fronde, the French state could not afford to lose its standing among the Protestant principalities of the Holy Roman Empire and Scandinavia.

Now, at last, Cromwell could be confident that Savoy would look to France as the guarantor of its relative independence and as a country that could help it elevate its status in the emerging system of European states, something that the country that had been defeated in the Thirty Years' War – Spain – could not offer. In the latter half of the 17th century, the strengthening of state power brought about profound changes in the social and political structure of society, nested in the fierce competition between "courts and alliances" that led to widespread *monarchization* (the acquisition of a royal title), or, to use the Latin term, the *regalization* of European rulers. But this was actually part of another process of great significance noted in the literature of the time – the rise of small states and middle powers striving for sovereignty (Duchhardt 2003: 38; Schnettger 2008: 605–609). In Italy, the struggle for the crown had begun while the Thirty Years' War was raging, when, in 1632, the Duke of Savoy, Victor Amadeus I, unavailingly encroached on the royal dignity. However, it would not be until the beginning of the 18th century that the House of Savoy, along with the House of Hanover and the House of Hohenzollern, would adorn the royal purple, now with the support of Great Britain (Symcox 1983: 71–78).

Conclusion

It would thus be incorrect to state that Cromwell abandoned all considerations of state for the sake of the Waldensians of Savoy. Well aware of the complex internal political situation in France and the priorities of French foreign policy, Cromwell was confident that Mazarin would not turn his back on the anti-Spanish alliance with London that Paris so badly needed just because England had come out in support of the Protestant subjects of the Duke of Savoy. The intervention in the affairs of Savoy was detrimental to the English state in financial terms only, due mostly to the fact that it had to maintain special embassies and the Mediterranean Fleet, as well as establish the Waldensian Relief Fund.

That said, the Anglo-French alliance is precisely what bolstered France's hegemony in Europe a few years later, and, with the benefit of hindsight, we can say that this was a miscalculation on Cromwell's part.

The foreign policy of Cromwell's Protectorate in Savoy set one of the most significant precedents for the application of humanitarian principles to international relations. There is a long tradition of states intervening in the affairs of other countries to stop mass atrocities and tyranny, one that dates back to the origins of the international system of states. By the middle of the 17th century, such actions were already

being justified in the political and religious thought of Europeans by secular arguments and interpreted from a humanitarian perspective, as a right and duty of human society. England became the first state to successfully implement its policy by using such language in its official diplomacy. It would be wrong to think that Oliver Cromwell infringed upon the interests of his own country. On the contrary, supporting the persecuted Waldensians, despite the financial costs, demonstrated the strength and authority of the English state. And to this day, humanitarian diplomacy is almost always intertwined with state interests.

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