

so-called Battle Tapestries commissioned in 1669 and executed by collaborators of the Belgian artist (and Hapsburg intelligence agent) Peter Paul Rubens. No copies of the eight giant tapestries have ever been made, and the original cartoons remain under lock and key at the palace.

The Taxis family of the 17th century, approaching the zenith of their power under the Hapsburgs, had bought themselves a genealogy linking them with the Torriani (Thurn) family of the Hohenstaufen era of Germany and Italy in the 12th century; even the family's own recent published histories admit the connection to be a bogus work of social-climbing. It is nonetheless ironic that the family has clung to its supposed relationship to the Hohenstaufen, the great city-builders of the Gothic era whose destruction in 1268 ushered in the new Dark Age and the great plagues that killed one-third of Europe's population. Dante Alighieri had criticized their attempt to complete Charlemagne's project of unifying European Christendom, for its failure to elevate the European population to the qualities required to make it successful. For this Dante proposed, and carried out in the case of Italian, the eloquence of the vernacular language, as an instrument to ennoble the common citizen, to make him worthy to be a citizen of a republic.

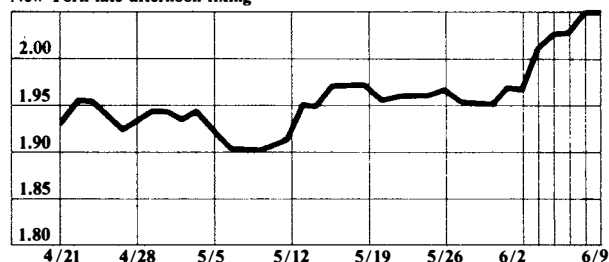
With the accession of Charles V of Hapsburg, already King of Spain and Burgundy when he took the Austrian-based imperial crown in 1519, the Venetian paymasters of the Holy Roman Empire turned the Hohenstaufen principle around, and made a leading principle out of its weaknesses. Instead of nation-states, which France under Louis XI had become during the past century, the Hapsburg principle became "universal monarchy," in opposition to the emergence of nations. Friedrich Schiller's evaluation of the history of the period was that the notion of "universal monarchy," the forerunner of what is now called "one-worldism," represented the greatest evil in the world; he defended the brutally destructive Thirty Years' War on the single ground that it threw this principle back, and gave room to the emergence of the modern nation-state in Europe.

For all the supposed progress in world political affairs since the time of Charles V, the issues and even the names that move history have not changed. What has changed, perhaps for the worse, is the capacity of the populations of would-be republics to understand those issues in a way they did two centuries ago. Fürst Johannes von Thurn und Taxis is no more afraid of expressing his intentions than the fictional Venetian inquisitors in Schiller's masterpiece *Der Geisterseher* (*The Man Who Saw Ghosts*). As he said, he believes that Americans lack the political culture to understand who and what he is in the first place.

Currency Rates

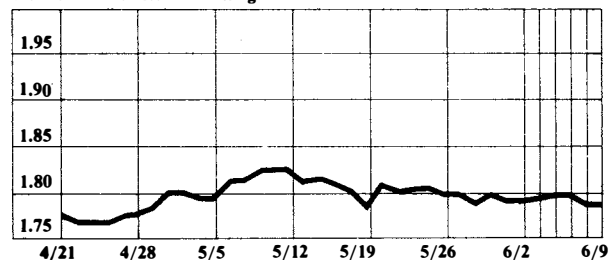
The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



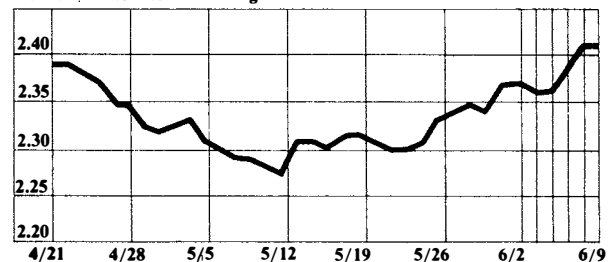
The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing

