

The Public Square for August 2025

Attention Citizens!

Obviously the **Reform or Revolution? (1830 to 1832)** video is [out on Early Access on Patreon](#).

If you didn't know that already... then congratulations, this is a very exciting day it is for you!

I figured that this would be a great opportunity to go back and read over my old drafts for the video, and compare those to what made it into the final product. My early drafts are always very long and rambling and they kinda cover EVERYTHING. Very different from the final video. There are a few things in there that people may find interesting, I'll point them out as we go.

I'll put the relevant timecode in brackets just in case it's been a while since you've seen the video and you have no idea what the hell I'm talking about.

Okay, here we go...

“Something was going on in Europe, and whatever it was, it was seeping into every Great Power.” (2:30)

I think one of the most controversial decisions that I made for this video is that it makes absolutely no mention of the Greek War of Independence, which ended officially in 1832. You could argue that any discussion of Liberalism in the 1820s and 1830s should include a section about Greek Independence, since it was the big popular issue that Liberals across Europe latched onto. Britain, France, and Russia eventually gave in to popular Liberal pressure and intervened militarily, which later resulted in an independent Greece.

I did all of the research for this, and looking back I can see that my earliest drafts that I talk about Russia having Poland problems, Austria having Northern Italy problems, and then at the end of that paragraph I have a line that says [GREECE SECTION GOES HERE]. But I never actually wrote it up. I found that through the process of doing all of the research of the Greek War of Independence, I actually found myself coming to the conclusion that it was not that important.

I specifically remember thinking to myself “I can't go any further until I figure out what the hell I'm going to do about Greece,” so I sat down with just a pen and paper and for literally like 2 hours I just wrote my stream of consciousness thoughts about the Greek War of Independence. I remember reading somewhere once “you never know what you actually think until you write it down.” Which is true, in my experience. So I wrote it down.

I'm looking at those pages right now, and I'll briefly summarize what I wrote here:

- It's so damn complicated, I can't spend 10 minutes talking about Greece, it will completely derail the entire video. At most this can only be like 2 or 3 minutes, which means that I will have to yadda-yadda most of the research.
- I'm becoming less and less convinced that Greek Independence had much to do with the wider Liberal movement across Europe. European Liberals supported the Greeks, but that's mostly because of the unusual popularity of Greek history at the time. The Romanticism movement and all of that. That's just a coincidence, it's pop culture, I'm not sure that it has anything to do with the Liberal Uprisings/Revolutions in Poland or Italy or France or Britain.
- Plus, the Liberals across Europe felt safe embracing Greece because it was the white Christian Greeks rising up against the non-white Muslim Ottomans. If that wasn't the case, there's no way Britain would have intervened. They had absolutely no interest in supporting Revolutionaries in the 1820s. This was a 1 of 1, it was the the only time they acted like this.
- Do I think that Britain's military intervention in 1827 reflect any kind of political change happening in Britain? Honestly, no. It was an opportunistic thing, public opinion just happened to support Greece for unique cultural reasons, and so they cynically used that to establish a friendly state on the Mediterranean.
- The video needs to be about Liberal changes in Europe. If it's not about Liberal changes in Europe, then it's a distraction. If states outside of Britain are mentioned at all, it must be strictly in that context. (Poland, unsuccessful Liberal Revolution, France, successful Liberal Revolution, etc.) If I don't believe that Greek Independence had anything to do with the the broader Liberal movement, then it probably doesn't belong in this video. Wow.

This decision led to some very productive edits in order to streamline the narrative. I initially had Palmerston (the guy I quote in the beginning of the video) as a character throughout the story. He was Foreign Secretary under Grey, and while Grey was trying to push Reform, Palmerston was trying to simultaneously negotiate deals over both Greece and Belgium. Once I dropped Greece from the narrative, I had to think very seriously about the role that I wanted Belgium to play in the story. I ultimately decided that Belgium was important insofar as it reflected King William IV's anxieties over Revolution in Britain, and his strong bias against any sort of public unrest, but that the actual blow-by-blow breakdown of Palmerston's 1831 deal over Belgium was not really necessary. Once Palmerston didn't have that much to do in the narrative, I decided to simplify things by cutting him completely out of the video.

However! The opening Palmerston quote remains! It's an artifact from a time when Palmerston was an active character in the story. I considered changing the opening quote, ("who the hell is Palmerston?"), but since after 1830 he will serve as either Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister for a combined 23 years, I figured he'd come up again in future videos. Might as well plant the Palmerston seed early.

"The British election of 1830 returned the following results:

- 333 seats for the Conservative coalition**
- 291 seats for the Liberal coalition**
- 34 seats for other groups" (7:35)**

Every time I give election results in the video, I'm going out on a limb and making a series of tough judgement calls. It's actually way harder than you'd think to figure out who belonged to which political faction in the 19th century. In the video I talk as if political parties existed, but in truth they didn't, these were just informal alliances that would change and shift over time. That's how Lord Grey was initially made Prime Minister even though the Whigs had less seats. He was just "another dude" that the Moderate Conservatives briefly shifted over to support after Wellington alienated them with his extreme anti-Reform rhetoric.

For this reason, everybody has wildly different numbers whenever they try to approximate election results. The numbers I used in the video were 333-291-34. The numbers you see on Wikipedia are 250-196-60, with the 60 going to a group called the Ultra-Conservatives, a group that I don't even mention in the video. I spent some time looking into the number that Wikipedia uses and I really don't think it accurately reflects what was going on in 1830s Britain. I'll explain why.

I don't touch on this in the video, but the Tory (Conservative) faction under Wellington was going through a bit of a civil war. In 1829 the Tories passed Catholic Emancipation, which established (mostly) equal political rights for Catholics across Britain. It was a big deal and hotly debated at the time. Wellington and Peel were actually on the "moderate" end of that spectrum, and the vote actually split the Tories, with the hardcore right wing anti-Catholic bigots splitting off and forming the Ultra-Conservatives.

At the same time we have the Reform Movement bubbling up, which is ALSO splitting the Tory faction, with "Extreme Conservatives" like Wellington opposing any form of Reform, and "Moderate Conservatives" wanting to work with the Whigs to do some minor reforms.

So with those two splits in mind, it becomes nearly impossible to get an accurate count of who is in which faction in 1830. Because you have two separate groups of people who are, on paper, Tories, being like "I refuse to support the Wellington as Prime Minister. And the two groups

are doing that for opposite reasons, because he's too left wing on Catholic Emancipation and too right wing on Reform. It's so confusing.

So when I'm making a video on Reform, I have to make some tough decisions. What I landed on is, for the sake of clarity, I'm going to describe a Reform Faction and an Anti-Reform Faction. I'm calling the Reform Faction the Whigs (or Liberals), and the Anti-Reform Faction the Tories (or Conservatives). You'll notice that I didn't bother making a distinction between the Tories and the Ultra-Conservatives, since they were both broadly opposed to Reform. I just lumped them together because for the purposes of this video, they had the same political aims.

But this leads to some wildly different numbers. For example, Palmerston, the guy I mentioned earlier whose quote opens the video, was elected in 1830 as a Tory. He was even a pro-Wellington Tory, since he supported Catholic Emancipation. But by late 1830, he was openly pro-Reform, and was even serving as under a Whig Prime Minister as Grey's Foreign Secretary.

So in the 1830 election, do we count him as a Whig or a Tory? I would count him as a Whig, because Reform was the most important question of the day, his actions aligned him with the pro-Reform faction. Wikipedia and others would call him a Tory, because at the time of the election he was a Wellington supporter. It's honestly a judgement call.

But there are hundreds of weird cases like this, which means that literally every set of numbers that you see for the 1830 election are different. I basically found people who agreed with me, who believed that the political factions could just boiled down to where the politician sat on Reform, and followed their lead. When in doubt, I just used the numbers provided by Edward Pearce in his book **Reform! The Fight for the 1832 Reform Act (2003)**.

I'm suddenly reminded that I did have a paragraph in the video at one point talking about the Ultra-Conservatives. There was a moment when the House of Commons they were debating Russell's Reform Bill, when the Radical Liberals wanted to remove the wealth qualification. Russell and friends were afraid to remove the wealth qualification because they were briefly being supported by some of the Ultra-Conservatives. hilariously, some Ultra-Conservatives were supporting Reform because they believed that it would favour wealthy English landowners in Ireland, and that the wealth qualification would deny the poor Irish farmers the right to vote. They were basically supporting Reform because of their anti-Irish bigotry. I asked myself, "what do they think is going to happen when the Irish begin to enter the middle class and gain the right to vote?" But I could never find an answer. They were anti-Irish bigots, after all. Not that bright.

I had this in the video for a while, but eventually I thought to myself... this is an extremely confusing point I'm making! Anti-Irish bigots are briefly on the right side of history for the stupidest possible reason. And in any case, it doesn't seem like many (or any) Ultra-Conservatives ultimately supported Reform, so in the end it didn't really matter. So I took it out.

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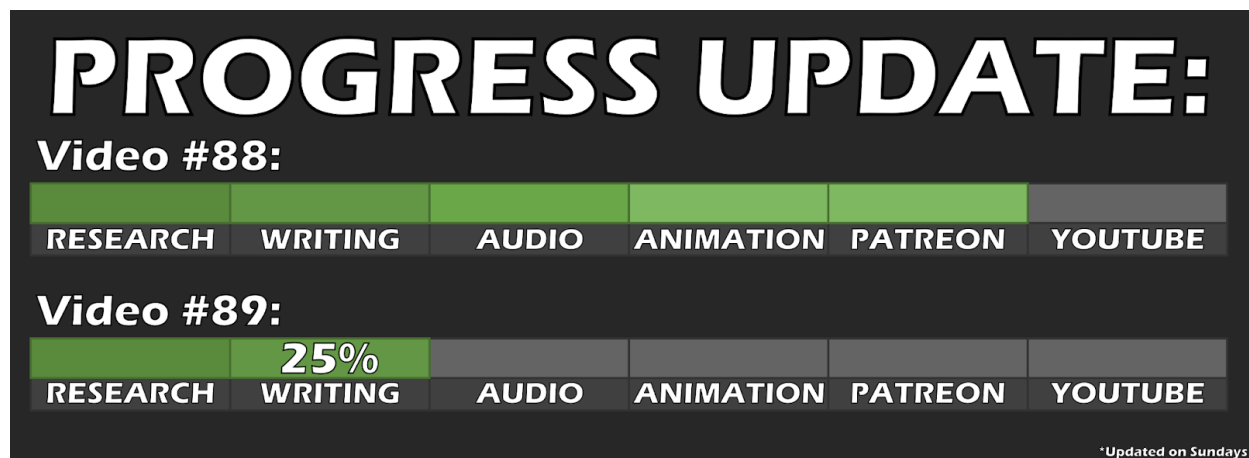
Oh God. This is already twice as long as I was planning, and I've still got 4 sections I'd like to cover. Whoops, this got out of hand!

I'll just cut it off there now, it's kinda rude to just drop a whole damn novel on people's heads. But I'll just write the whole thing up now, and we'll pick up where we left off in next month's newsletter.

I've got a section where I want to talk about King William and his horrible wife Queen Adelaide. And a section about why I cut out all of John Russell's pals. And a section about the Bristol Riots. And a section about the West India Interest. Yeah, if I included all of that it would definitely turn into a novel, it's best to cut it off here.

To Be Continued! Next Month!

Progress Update:



I haven't written a damn thing since I finished the Reform video. Except for this. I wrote this.

Books I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Perilous Question: Reform or Revolution? Britain on the Brink, 1832 (2013)** by Antonia Fraser

- This was my favourite book from researching the Reform video. If you're interested in "further reading," this would be the one to pick up. It closely follows Grey and Russell and friends as they struggle to pass Reform, it's a pretty great read if you like British politics. A close second was **Reform! The Fight for the 1832 Reform Act (2003)**, by Edward Pearce, which I mentioned earlier. Either of those will do if you're one of the 8 people in the world who is saying to themselves, "Golly, I wouldn't mind reading some more about the Great Reform Act of 1832!"

Films I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Superman (2025)**

- My go-to line for a long time has been "I'm OUT on superhero movies!" I can pinpoint exactly where it happened, I remember stifling laughter during **Avengers: Infinity War (2018)** and walking out thinking that it was embarrassingly bad. But then everybody else on the planet loved it, so then I was like "I guess I'm OUT on superhero movies!"

This might be too much to say out loud, but **Superman (2025)** might be the best superhero movie since the Raimi Spider-Man movies? On a good day, maybe **Superman (2025)** is even better? That might be crazy, I don't know.

It's the first movie like this that has actually bothered to make it feel like you're reading a comic book, it's 5 or 6 stand-alone stories that are loosely tied together by some character bits. And, all of the stories are different and fun! To me it was so obvious that this is the better way to structure these kinds of movies. Rather than, you know, a three-act structure where the third act is always just CGI Goop with no dialogue.

I got so pumped up on **Superman (2025)** that I was like "maybe they're good now?", so I also saw **The Fantastic Four: First Steps (2025)**. Nope! Still bad! I'm still out! But **Superman (2025)** was great.

Music I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Neil Young**

- I've been blasting Neil Young almost exclusively for this entire month, I can't get enough. **Thrasher** and **Powderfinger** and **Cortez the Killer** have been on high rotation, which now that I think of it are three similar songs from the same era. Anyways, it's been non stop over here.

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