PREFACE

This volume of essays by his former colleagues and students is dedicated to Professor W. N. Medlicott, Stevenson Professor of International History in the University of London since 1953, on the occasion of his retirement, in appreciation of his teaching and his contribution to historiography. Although his writings have not perhaps made the same impact on the lay public as those of more popular writers, Professor Medlicott’s career has contributed as much as that of any historian of his generation to the advancement of the study of history in Britain.

William Norton Medlicott was born on 11 May 1900. He took his B.A. and M.A., with distinction, at University College, London, where he was Gladstone Prizeman, Hester Rothschild Prizeman, and Lindley Student. From 1926 to 1941, with no more than a year’s interruption, when he was Visiting Professor at the University of Texas, he held the position of Lecturer in Modern History at University College, Swansea. During these years he accumulated and enlarged on the immense body of research which was to form the basis of his important writings on Bismarck’s Europe and the Eastern Question.

During the war years he worked first at the Board of Trade and then from 1942 to 1945 as official historian to the Ministry of Economic Warfare. In 1945 he was appointed to the Chair of History at the University of the South West (now Exeter University), where he built up a flourishing department in the years of the postwar boom. He served as Vice-Principal for a short time before leaving the College.

In 1953 he was appointed to the Stevenson Chair of International History at the University of London in succession to Sir Charles Webster. Made from a distinguished field of competitors, his appointment was an astute, discerning one. He continued to produce scholarly works of high quality. The following years saw the appearance of his two-volume official history and a further volume on the Bismarckian period. He made two visits to the United States as a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 1952 and 1957, and since 1965 has been Senior Editor of Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–39. At the same time
there was in London no relaxation of the organizing efforts which had marked his career at Swansea and Exeter. His appointment to the Stevenson Chair too was in this respect one for which his particular combination of talents and experience proved well suited. At the time of his appointment the undergraduate teaching for which he was ultimately responsible was confined to 'service' courses of a general character, designed only to provide a background of historical knowledge for students of economics and politics at the London School of Economics. Graduate work was confined to a single seminar for students of nineteenth and twentieth century diplomatic history, at the University's Institute of Historical Research.

Professor Medlicott began by introducing a whole area of specialization in international history within the framework of the Bachelor of Science (Economics) degree, an area which at first concentrated heavily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; though, after the reform of the B.Sc. (Econ.) introduced in 1958 it was widened to cover the whole period of 'modern history' after 1485. In 1956 he introduced a second graduate seminar on 'the diplomatic origins of the Second World War'. Under his control these graduate seminars increased in numbers until at the time of his retirement they had become the foremost graduate school in modern international history in Britain with at times over fifty students registered for graduate degrees. To aid him in handling this immense growth he built up a department of about a dozen specialists able to cope with all the source materials of western Europe, as well as with Scandinavian, Russian and Japanese materials. And in the fourteen years of his tenure of the Stevenson Chair, over fifty members of his two seminars were appointed to academic positions in Britain and overseas.

In his teaching, and in his approach to history, Professor Medlicott's methods were those of the traditional diplomatic historian with his great attention to the comparison of sources, to the proper ordering of events, and to the personality of the principal statesmen participating in the historical processes under examination. His main emphasis in his direction of graduate work, however, was laid on the importance of extra-European factors and events on the one hand, and on the strategic elements on the other. He played a considerable part behind the scenes in the development of War Studies at London University and served for three crucial years as Chairman of the University Board of War Studies.
Preface

In this he was displaying another aspect of that same passion of his for the improvement and expansion of the teaching of international history and allied subjects which had made him an early member of and later a Council member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, for a time Chairman of the British Co-ordinating Committee for International Studies, and for eight years Chairman of the Editorial Board of International Affairs. But his devotion to the cause was not confined to the narrow and esoteric fields of academic work. His main effort was spent for more than ten years in the service of the Historical Association of which he was successively Honorary Secretary and President. His efforts contributed greatly to its postwar revival in membership, and he played an important part in the development of vacation courses for school teachers of history, a considerable part of the membership of the Association. Still more characteristic was the drive he put, as chairman of its publication committee, into the development and improvement of the Association’s pamphlets, and in the movement for a historical magazine for the general reader—a movement which led ultimately to the establishment of that highly successful periodical, History Today.

All these achievements took place far from the public eye, as did the effort which he put into the Master of the Rolls’ committee on public records, which played its part in the revision of the Public Records Act of 1958. His work for Longmans, as editor-in-chief of their History of England series and on the advisory board of the Annual Register, on the research committee of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and for other organizations, was equally out of the limelight. Taken together it represents a very considerable effort for the advancement of learning and the spread of historical knowledge of the recent contemporary field.

Behind this achievement has lain his ability to perceive and encourage those genuinely devoted to research, wherever he might meet them. Naturally withdrawing himself, the complete professional in all he does, he distrusts flamboyance and has little time for those who are not prepared to match his own single-mindedness and dedication. To genuine students and scholars he has given every assistance and encouragement, personally as well as professionally. The contributors to the Festschrift include many of his former students and junior colleagues, whose ways were made easier by his support and assistance.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes on Contributors</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Delays and Paradoxes in the Development of Historiography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERBERT BUTTERFIELD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Rise of the Professorial Historian in England</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIR LLEWELLYN WOODWARD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANK BARLOW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleonic Wars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. S. ANDERSON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GORDON A. CRAIG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 A Projected Prussian Acquisition of Upper California</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN A. HAWGOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Palmerston and ‘Scandinavian Union’</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAGNHIILD HATTON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Lord Palmerston’s ‘Ginger-Beer’ Triumph, 1 July 1856</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. BOURNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Queen Victoria and Foreign Policy. Royal Intervention in the Italian</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question, 1859–1860</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. HEARDER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 The Mid-Victorian Reappraisal of Naval Policy</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. J. BARTLETT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Bismarck and Gorchakov in 1879: ‘The Two Chancellors’ War</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRUCE WALLER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Salisbury and the Indian Defence Problem, 1885–1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. R. Gillard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J. B. Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>How Turkey drifted into World War I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y. T. Kurat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lord Kitchener and the Partition of the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jukka Nevakivi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Allied Blockade Committee and the Inter-allied Trade Committees: the Machinery of Economic Warfare, 1917–1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marion C. Siney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The British Commonwealth and the Founding of the League Mandate System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H. Duncan Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Japan and the Ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. H. Nish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nordic Security, Great Britain and the League of Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nils Ørvik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>South African Attempts to Mediate between Britain and Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. C. Watt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>German Economic Policy towards France, 1942–1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alan S. Milward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Published Works of Professor W. N. Medlicott, 1926–1966* | 444 |
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


K. BOURNE, B.A., PH.D. (London); Lecturer in International History, London School of Economics and Political Science.

HERBERT BUTTERFIELD, M.A., F.B.A., Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, Master of Peterhouse; formerly President of the Historical Association.


D. R. GILLARD, B.A., PH.D. (London); Lecturer in History, University of Glasgow.


RAGNHILD HATTON, CAND.MAG. (Oslo), PH.D. (London), F.R.HIST.S.; Reader in International History in the University of London; Author,
Notes on Contributors


Y. T. KURAT, B.A. (Ankara), PH.D. (London); Associate Professor of History, and Chairman of the Department of Humanities, Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara.

ALAN S. MILWARD, B.A., PH.D. (London); Lecturer in the School of Social Studies, University of East Anglia; Author, The German Economy at War, London, 1965.

JUKKA NEVAKIVI, PH.D. (London); Member, Finnish Foreign Service.


NILS ÖRVIK, CAND.MAG. (Oslo), PH.D. (Wisconsin); Professor of Political Science, Institutt for Statsvitenskap, University of Oslo; Author, The Decline of Neutrality, 1914-1941, Oslo, 1953.

MARION C. SINEY, M.A., PH.D. (Michigan); Professor of History, Western Reserve University; Author, The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914-1916, Ann Arbor, 1957.

BRUCE WALLER, A.B. (Florida), PH.D. (London); Lecturer in History, University College of Swansea.
Notes on Contributors

D. C. Watt, M.A. (Oxon); Reader in International History in the University of London; Editor, Survey of International Affairs, Royal Institute of International Affairs; Author, Personalities and Policies, Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, London, 1965.

Sir Llewellyn Woodward, M.A., Litt.D., F.B.A.; Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford; formerly Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford and Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.
The knowledge that the human memory is fallible and that, for other reasons besides this, human evidence is unreliable, must have been familiar to the world even before there existed anything like a court of justice. Yet serious historical criticism is a remarkably late development in the world, and the emergence of an effective technique of ‘discovery’ in this field comes later than the parallel to it in the natural sciences. We need an explanation of this anomaly; for it cannot be argued that until so late a period the minds of men were not up to the development of the necessary ‘skills’. The truth is that in ages which were capable of profound philosophy, abstruse mathematics, and subtle self-analysis, historiography could be very backward, and there would prevail an amazing credulity about the records and stories of bygone times.

Some special reason must have existed that we have not quite brought home to ourselves; for it happens also that historiography was a late starter in the world, appearing only after art and architecture, technology and political systems had achieved wonderful things. It emerged at first in very crude forms, mere lists of kings or events, for example, or mere descriptive interpolations in dedicatory inscriptions or records of boundaries or songs of lamentation. When the heads of pre-classical empires began to produce annals merely to commemorate their own prowess, even these—which hardly concerned ‘the past’—made surprisingly little development, save in literary artifice, during a period of over a thousand years. During the Christian era itself historiography progressed much more slowly than the ‘natural sciences’; and in a sense it was only in the nineteenth century that there occurred the exhilarating moment when men seemed to feel that, now at last, they could really get down to the study of ‘the past’.
This study had to surmount one hurdle which the natural scientists did not have to confront; and it is not easy for the present day student to realize how serious and how very prolonged were the effects of the obstruction. The scientists did at least have the stars, the water and the living creatures before their eyes; but, in the early stages of the story, it was almost the case that 'the past' was not there—for there were only one's recent memories, the tales of a grandfather and a rag-bag of old fables. Apart from some items, rescued as from a shipwreck, 'the past' had disappeared like the pattern produced by last year's wind on the surface of a lake. In the vague memory of it that remained it lacked structure, and, since men had not learned to number the years, it lacked at first the possibility of measurement. For most people 'the past' was the realm of the epic, vaguely located as 'once upon a time'.

The result of this was, sometimes, that one attached oneself very devoutly to anything that did happen to remain, any genuine piece of the past that survived the shipwreck. But, also, the real development of historiography depended on those who were not interested in the past, those monarchs who wished to overawe contemporaries or impress the future with their building feats, their successes in battle, their prowess in the hunt. They took pains to secure that their monuments should endure, and by the lapse of time, the reports that these carried came to bear a more obviously 'historical' character. A record of the past could ultimately be produced out of a succession of these accumulated narratives. It was history indelibly engraved on commemorative monuments—hard as the stone on which it was printed. Future writers about the past would authenticate themselves by showing that they had properly reproduced the original inscription. Written history was true just in so far as it was hard and unchanging—the important thing was to preserve what was on the original record. When Josephus in the first century A.D. defended the historiography of the Orientals against that of the Greeks, he authenticated the work of the ancient Hebrews by pointing to the way in which it had remained unchanged for so many centuries.

Granted that men, for no matter what reason, had fallen into the way of writing something like 'histories of their own times', it would follow that their successors, looking back to what for them would be the genuine past, would find that the most authentic policy available to them was also the easiest—namely, the slavish adherence to what the 'contemporary
Delays and Paradoxes in the Development of Historiography

historians' of earlier times had said. The attempt to recover a past that is at all distant by an investigation and an act of reconstruction, instead of repeating like a parrot the narrative that had been handed down, is in general a more modern enterprise than is usually realized. The writers who really added to the transmissible fund of knowledge were those who set down what had happened within living memory; they were the real historians, and, curiously enough, it was they who initiated the serious developments in technique. This was the strength of Herodotus and Thucydides, who, if Collingwood was right, produced the one contribution which ancient Greece had to make to historical criticism; for they realized that an inquirer cannot get the best out of eyewitnesses unless one of them is set against another and each is submitted to cross-questioning. At a later date, it was often the writer of 'contemporary history' who—perhaps because of the part that he had played in public affairs—both had the idea of consulting archives and enjoyed the opportunity of doing so.

All this was largely true even in the period of the Renaissance, when those who stressed the importance of ancient history would not have dreamed of reconstructing that history for themselves, but understood that it was a thing to be taken from ancient historians. No doubt it was primarily for this reason that history—though now regarded as full of examples that threw light on the craft of the statesman—ranked comparatively low as a form of knowledge, and was considered a branch of literature rather than of science. It was not of great moment to Machiavelli that the work of Livy was already being doubted by a number of people: Machiavelli could have used Aesop's fables instead of examples from history as the basis of his meditations. The truth was that the world knew that the past was gone and was in an essential sense irrecoverable. They had not yet realized to what degree it might be recovered with moral certainty, at some future time—established in a more satisfactory manner, and less dependent on mere reporting. They accepted the stories of the past and used them, without thinking of them as things to which they must commit their souls, save where the truth was guaranteed by divine revelation. It is no wonder that, as the scientific movement developed, some people began to express very serious doubts about history. They were criticizing not academic history as we know it in the twentieth century, but an antecedent system, the basis of which was much less sure, because it involved reliance on mere 'reporting'. 
Only when these things are kept in mind is it possible to understand the significance of the scholarly debates on history which took place at the Académie des inscriptions in Paris in the 1720s when paper after paper was produced on the use and criticism of sources. It was held in the first place that the certainty of history depended on the authority of the ancient witnesses—generally the ancient historians—who were being quoted. The assumption was that somebody in the past had known what had taken place, and one must find the reliable person who had left the matter on record. The important thing was to check the authoritativeness of the writer, not to imagine that one could establish facts and details irrespective of the author who reported them. There was a tendency even to assume that an author who had presumably been accepted in his own day (which was in a better position for assessing his merit) and had endured through time, could be regarded as reliable for those very reasons; and the onus was on those who wanted to prove his unreliability. As one eighteenth-century scholar said, ‘Can anyone read Polybius or Clarendon and doubt their sincerity and exactitude?’ It was even held that where an ancient author had described implausible miraculous events, which had to be rejected, this did not invalidate or discredit his work where its narrative conformed to ordinary experience. It was coming to be believed in the eighteenth century that, if he were to be accepted as authoritative, an author ought to have been contemporary with the events he described, in which case he ought to be believed unless some special reason were shown for distrusting him. But it was held sometimes in the early modern period that an author might be regarded as ‘contemporary’ if he lived only a few hundred years later than the events he described; and in the case of writers with a great reputation, it was strongly and explicitly held that they must be regarded as having used older authorities now lost, even if they had not mentioned anything of the sort. Livy must have used contemporary annals and registers that went back to the very earliest history of Rome. Moses, in the Pentateuch, must have used previous histories going back to Adam; and these must have existed in writing, for otherwise the details could not have been so precise.

Where there were two available authorities for a period, and these had given different stories, it was sometimes explicitly recommended that the object should be to produce a narrative which would comprise both and achieve a reconciliation. Only when this process failed would it be neces-
sary to choose between the two sources. This point is the more interesting because it appears also in the Chinese historical tradition, which found it much more difficult than the West to escape the whole view of history that we are discussing. All that has been said did not prevent scholars from feeling a certain satisfaction when the word of an ancient author could be confirmed by external evidence. There had been grave doubts since the Renaissance about Herodotus—primarily because of the criticism to which his work had been subjected amongst the ancient Greeks themselves; and the discussion of this question in early modern times had been one of the factors in the development of historical technique. But monuments had now been found in Egypt which confirmed a section of his History. It was possible even to adduce facts which tended to support not just this or that piece of history but the whole system of ideas that we are discussing. It had been argued that Davila, in his history of the French Wars of Religion, might be unreliable because he had comparatively little opportunity for procuring firsthand evidence. But a duc d'Épernon who had actually experienced the wars, had confirmed the authoritativeness of the work.

The same set of ideas allowed a certain authority also to tradition, and semi-scientific rules were drawn up for the handling of this kind of evidence. Tradition might be authoritative for a simple and large-scale event, like the Flood, but it would be wrong to rely upon it for the precise details of a complex story. The facts communicated by this route ought to be public ones of the kind that would have been exposed and contradicted at the time—extinguished at birth—if they had been inaccurate. The tradition must go back to the time of the event itself and must not be open to the criticism that a certain party would have had a special interest in the invention of something of the sort. Also it must have been a matter of wide currency and must not be contradicted by other known facts of history.

In the case of historians who were not contemporary with the events they were narrating, attention might be turned to their sources, but it could be argued: 'Would anybody say that these authors were worse judges of the solidity of the evidences behind their historical work—evidences which they had before their eyes—than we who . . . at a tremendous distance. . . see [everything] only through thick clouds?' The contemporary source might itself be only a piece of 'reporting'; but 'reasonable men do not throw doubt on the authority of these contem-
porary evidences. . . . The whole of history has no certitude other than that which comes from the confidence we have in the testimony of others.' If men had adopted the severer criteria to which the modern historian is accustomed, it would not have been possible to have any history at all, particularly ancient history, whether religious or classical. At this intermediate stage in the story there were sceptics, but those who lacked faith had little ground on which to establish history. It is not an accident that the phenomenon of 'historical Pyrrhonism' emerges in the later decades of the seventeenth century. Controversy came to be particularly concentrated on the first five books of Livy and the question whether it would ever be possible to recover the early history of Rome.

II

Something of all this was to go on vaguely existing in the background of people's minds for a long time; and essentially it was with this large problem that Ranke was dealing when in 1824 he produced the work so often regarded as inaugurating the era of criticism in the writing of the history of modern times. At the same time, many things had happened which ought perhaps to have made that whole circle of ideas out of date by the early eighteenth century. They throw light on the paradoxes which accompanied the development of the modern technique, but at the same time help to explain its slowness.

It would appear that criticism is not an original instinct. When we receive a letter we do not naturally ask ourselves if it is a forgery. Only a highly trained and highly specialized mind will be sceptical in the face of a text almost miraculously salvaged from a past that has been annihilated. Some stimulus to critical activity seems generally to be needed in the first place; and it appears on those occasions on which men find it really necessary to know what happened in the past. The mind is alerted precisely when some kind of vested interest is in question; and, for this reason, sheer passionate partiality has had an important rôle in the development of criticism. When Laurentius Valla set out to expose the Donation of Constantine in 1440, he was secretary to an Aragonese king who was in conflict with the pope, and his treatise was avowedly part of a wider publicistic campaign. Certainly the Renaissance provides an example of a different kind of case—an effort to establish the truth for its own sake, to
establish the truth though one received nothing but trouble for one’s
pains, the truth being something that went against national interests and a
prevailing sentiment. This was the attack on the belief of so many peoples
that their particular nation was descended from the Trojans who had
escaped to the West after the downfall of their city. An example of a very
considerable treatment of this subject is the work produced in 1599 by
La Popelinière, a Frenchman writing with reference to the claim of his
own people. Both Valla and La Popelinière are illustrations of the fact that
even in those days men could have all the ingenuity that the work of
historical criticism calls for, if only something induced them to bring it
into gear. (In a similar way it has been suggested that the classical Greeks
had the tools and the intellectual skills necessary for the archaeological
investigation of ancient Mycenae if it had occurred to them to turn their
minds to such a thing.) Valla and La Popelinière attacked the offending
document (or the offending tradition) by reference to common experience,
to the known history of the period in question and to the internal contra-
dictions or technical faults in the evidence. La Popelinière had even moved
to a further point that is important in historical criticism: the explanation
of the way in which the error or the faulty evidence had arisen. But it must
not be imagined that their methods passed into general currency or had
the effect of establishing anything like a standard.

Much of the story groups itself around controversies; and one of its
further paradoxes lies in the fact that it was in religious and ecclesiastical
history that men felt an urgent need to know the truth of what had
happened. Here considerable vested interests were involved; so that a good
deal of the momentous Reformation controversy was centred on church
history, the Protestants having obvious motives for criticizing the story
that had been handed down. This did not mean that the Protestants were
necessarily scholarly or impartial—sometimes they merely inverted the
bias that had hitherto existed, the traditions that had served the interests of
the medieval church. In England they threw Thomas à Becket off his
pedestal because he had supported Rome against his home country; and
they elevated King John because he had been victimized by a pope.
Criticism meant distrusting monkish chronicles and a desire to invert their
interpretations. Yet the very bitterness of controversy and the violence of
partisanship served the cause of impartial history; for each side was kept on
its toes, each soon learned that it had to face a considerable opponent and
that its errors would be quickly exposed. Each drove the other to pro-
founder and more careful researches. It was in classical history, biblical
history and church history that the bases of the modern techniques were
established. By a conscious and deliberate act these were later transposed
for the use of the general historian—reaching the field of modern history
last of all.

It was a monk, interested in the history of his monastic order—and
thrown into controversy because a Jesuit had challenged the authenticity
of its charters—who provided in 1679 one of the thrilling moments in the
history of criticism, making it clear that some things in history could be
established in a more scientific manner than had hitherto been generally
realized, established independent of any reliance on mere ‘reporting’.
Mabillon became the real founder of diplomatic—showing how the
authenticity of charters could be tested by the examination of the parch-
ment, the writing materials, the form of the seals, the way of describing
dignitaries or recording dates, the conventional formulas at the beginning
and the end of the document, the technical terms employed, the kind of
Latin used, etc. It was necessary that historical scholarship should have
reached quite an advanced stage before some of these techniques could be
used for the required purpose; a considerable amount of knowledge was
needed before the clues that the document supplied could be correctly
interpreted. This is another reason why historical criticism was slow in
developing—until many things around the whole context of a document
have been fairly firmly established, criticism is only too likely to be hit or
miss.

The pressures that came from the world of practical affairs were often
more effective than any impulse arising within scholarship itself. Ancient
charters had been important in real life because property rights, municipal
privileges and constitutional liberties might depend on them. They seem
to have been easy to forge and the question of their authenticity would
confront the lawyers before the historians came to grips with it. In England
the needs of lawyers led to a more technical study of the past, a study of
actual technicalities, which did not easily combine with ordinary narrative
history, the story of courts and battles, compiled for a long time rather
from chronicles. From the Elizabethan period, the lawyers as well as the
ecclesiastics were collecting and studying documents with something like
an historical intent. This led to an anachronistic interpretation of Magna
Carta which was revised before the end of the seventeenth century in a reaction against lawyers' history, a reaction traceable to Sir Henry Spelman, who had made contact with continental scholarship and brought out the feudal structure of thirteenth-century England. In the controversies over the Great Charter after the Restoration it was clearly brought out that when a document is reinterpreted in terms of the social structure to which it had reference, its meaning is transformed; and it was explicitly pointed out that, amongst other things, words change their meaning with the passage of centuries, so that fallacies arise if ancient documents are interpreted according to modern usages. Yet a great deal of this went underground and the notion of Magna Carta as a 'feudal' document fell out of sight after the revolution of 1688; for, in the conditions under which historical scholarship was then conducted, acquisitions could be lost and the same things would have to be discovered again at a later date.

By the early eighteenth century, masses of documents were being published in Western European countries, and the results of these—the terms of treaties, for example—would be patched here and there into the narrative history. They were often not the documents that would provide the continuity and the actual story, so that a 'History of England' would rely very much still on the chroniclers or on 'contemporary historians' like Clarendon. A special critical endeavour might be made at certain points in the story which had become a matter of controversy. The form of the criticism had not necessarily changed—it still tended to mean that, where there was more than one source, one would choose which of the alternative pieces of reporting one would rely on. There was a considerable gulf between the erudite students of documents and the historians of the philosophe movement, and though these latter might urge the need for criticism, they often lacked the necessary industry. Like the Protestants, they realized the call for criticism when they were confronted by an ecclesiastical tradition; but in their reaction against this (as in the case of the vexed question of the premeditation of the massacre of St Bartholomew) they might land further away from the truth than their predecessors.

If Gibbon represents a synthesis between the antiquarians and the narrative historians there is a sense in which he stands alone; and for the student of the general development the important event is the appearance of the famous history school at Göttingen, which sought to combine the general contribution of the philosophes with profounder erudition and a
more authentic critical sense. The school emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and quickly achieved self-consciousness, establishing for example the first historical seminar and the first learned journal in the field. It retained its reputation in the early decades of the nineteenth century and was the chief instrument in the creation of what we call ‘academic history’, and in securing that this should have authority in the world. Henceforward it was possible to establish criteria and to see that an acquired standard passed into general currency, to secure that the man who used critical procedures was not left isolated and that his discoveries would not have to be made over again. Many of the things that we have attributed to Ranke ought to be traced back to the influence of the Göttingen school.

But that school avowedly borrowed its techniques from other university departments and particularly from the classicists and the students of the Bible. The point is illustrated and is made explicit in one of its most remarkable productions, Schlözer’s edition of the chronicle of Nestor at the very opening of the nineteenth century. In regard to the handling of purely technical matters, the influence of work on the books of the New Testament was specifically mentioned. One of the striking revelations of the possibilities of criticism in the eighteenth century was the book published in 1753 by the French physician, Jean Astruc, entitled Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paraît que Moyse s’est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse, a work which had its echoes in the Biblical department in Göttingen. By separating strands which designated the deity as ‘Yahweh’ from those which used the term ‘Elohim’, the author was not only able to explain many of the repetitions and much confusion in Genesis, but managed to discover and reintegrate the sources used and then to discuss writings that had long ago been lost. In a similar way, Schlözer recovered, and was able to discuss, one of the sources used in the chronicle of Nestor, though, again, the text had not survived independently. An important piece of technique taken over from the classical scholars was the use of a criticism that was creative and not merely negative in its effect. It was an escape from the dilemma of either accepting a source as reliable and believing it, or regarding it as unreliable and rejecting it. The statements of Homer could not be taken over as history, but an imaginative use of the work could throw light on the world of the remote past, and the text could be authoritative in respect of matters which the author had not intended to communicate. Even the early books of Livy need not be a dead
loss, therefore; and Niebuhr, treating them as something more like saga, and combining them with his knowledge of certain forms of agrarian life, pointed historians to something that was to prove exhilarating.

Yet these important developments in criticism had reference not to primary documents but to Genesis and Livy—to the reporting that had been done by historians of ancient times. As Acton said, it was criticism that could easily be adapted to the study of chronicles. And this is where Ranke takes his start.

Ranke's first book was his History of the Latin and Teutonic peoples, 1494–1515, and was produced without reference to manuscript sources. He appended to it a criticism of modern historical writing in which he examined those Renaissance writers who had produced 'histories of their own times', particularly the most famous of them, Guicciardini. He criticized Guicciardini for using other historians in a plagiaristic way, and pointed out that he gave poor or second-hand accounts of affairs in which he had had part, and of events that had happened before his eyes. He said that the narrative in the History failed on occasion to square with the letters or dispatches that Guicciardini had written about the same episode at the time. In any case this author had been guilty of distorting events in order to enhance the importance of the part that he had played in them. Also he had followed an objectionable ancient tradition—he had invented speeches which he put into the mouth of his characters. Ranke brought other 'contemporary historians' of the time to compare with Guicciardini and other contemporary documents to contradict his statements. He established the case that he set out to demonstrate: namely, that, when a man had written 'the history of his own times', his work was not to be regarded as a first class source.

Either because the book and its appendix provided a signal occasion or because Ranke's careful dovetailing of sources set an example, this not highly surprising lesson never needed to be discovered or explained again, at least so far as the academic world was concerned. Yet Ranke himself proved not invulnerable and came under serious attack for this part of his work from the Italian Villari, author of a life of Machiavelli. Ranke had exaggerated the plagiarisms, had underestimated the degree to which some notions about politics and about the leading statesmen of the time had
become common property in Renaissance Florence. He had been unfair in quoting Jacopo Pitti to show that Guicciardini had exaggerated his own part in the conclusion of a certain agreement; Pitti had only been eight years old at the time and when he later wrote on the subject he was the enemy of Guicciardini and his party. Ranke argued that Guicciardini himself had not claimed to have had a leading part in the affair when he wrote a letter about it at the time; but Villari showed that the letter was consistent with the claim—the letter rather than the History was dubious, because Guicciardini had at first had an interest in soft-pedalling his own part in the matter. There was another point at which Guicciardini made in the History a claim which he had not made in an official letter written at this time. Again, Villari showed that the man had reason for disguising the truth in the letter; and Villari has been proved right, for a further letter has since come to light in which Guicciardini tells the whole truth to another person. In one place where Ranke accused the Renaissance historian of putting an invented speech into the mouth of one of his historical personages, and, in order to expose the imposture, referred to a contemporary account of the speech that had actually been delivered, Villari showed that the statesman in question had in fact delivered two speeches, and the account in question concerned the other one. There was a further speech that Ranke declared to have been invented, but the record of that speech has since turned up, and we now know that it was actually in print before Guicciardini wrote his History. Moreover, some of the things in the History which Ranke regarded as inherently improbable have been shown to conform to the further knowledge that has since been acquired. To crown all, it has been found in the twentieth century that Guicciardini's History, whatever its faults, had been copied, re-copied, revised and corrected—far more carefully produced than most modern histories down to the time of Ranke. He used more of the 'contemporary historians' of the day than Ranke realized, but also more original documents. His working-papers have come to light in the twentieth century, and amongst them are sets of diplomatic dispatches which had otherwise been lost. It can be seen how carefully he went through them, taking the gist of them and ultimately turning them into narrative. In one place where Ranke attacked him he was actually copying an ambassador's report.

For Guicciardini had written the history of his own times, and, down to this date, it had been the writers of contemporary history who had been
the most ready to see the need for reference to official records and documentary sources, and who, since often they had played a part in public affairs, had had the opportunity for consulting such papers. In The Historian and History (pp. 37–38) Professor Page Smith describes how, when the Abbé Mably talked vaguely of writing the history of the American Revolution, John Adams set before him the standard that was required. Besides reading the existing colonial histories, the writings, and, if possible, the personal correspondence of all the revolutionary leaders, the journals of Congress, the pamphlets and periodical press, he must

read all the charters granted to the colonies, and the commissions and instructions given to governors, all the codes of laws of the various colonies . . . (which cannot be found but in manuscript and by travelling in person from New Hampshire to Georgia); the records of the board of trade and plantations in Great Britain . . . as also the files in the offices of the secretaries of state.

We might wonder why Ranke's work in 1824 should have seemed necessary or should have created such a stir, if it had not been the case that the man who wrote the history of his own times was the original historian, creating the work that would be the fountain of knowledge for the future. Where the past was more remote, the historian was too like a compiler, and, as Acton said, till 1824 the writing of modern history had been easy.

Ranke was a young man in 1824 and had not then developed either the use or the criticism of manuscript material. It has been said that he could tear to pieces a chronicler like Guicciardini but had not yet vividly realized the limitations of primary sources. Indeed, we have seen that, where there were discrepancies between the History and the contemporary letters, he had been too ready to assume that only the former was open to criticism. He brought the writing of history to a further stage in his next book, where his preface mentions for the first time the dream of a modern history produced entirely from firsthand sources. He now introduces a new type of historical document, one that became very famous in the nineteenth century: the Venetian relazioni, which were not ordinary diplomatic dispatches, but full-length accounts of a country produced by ambassadors at the end of a mission there. In the sixteenth century these relazioni had been famous, they were about the shrewdest and wisest political documents that were being produced for business purposes.
anywhere at that time. Certain aristocratic families in Rome began to collect them along with other diplomatic documents, and at one time they were even sold in Rome at so much for a hundred sheets, though they were supposed to be lying secret in the Venetian archives. In 1616 a Venetian learned of one or two that had found their way to the Bodleian library; and in those early days one or two were even printed, while others existed in a number of copies. Some volumes of the collections made in Rome came to the Royal Library in Berlin; but there was a period when the relazioni seemed to be forgotten, until in 1807 Johannes von Müller discovered the samples in Berlin, wrote an essay on them and planned to make great use of them. It was through this that Ranke came to learn of their existence; and they so excited him that he went through Italy collecting more. He tried to secure admission to the actual archives in Venice, and it was only after an appeal to the Austrian emperor who held that city, that he succeeded. His object at this point was a study of the peoples and courts of southern Europe and in the first volume he dealt with Spain and Turkey, making great use of the relazioni, and describing in the preface the way he had discovered them. The next volumes in the series were the famous History of the Popes, where he made brilliant use of these documents. The English Catholic historian, Lingard, may have used some of them earlier; for, since his object was to convince a public that was initially hostile, he saw the necessity of presenting documentary proofs. It has recently been shown that he used documents from even Simancas much earlier than would for a long time have been thought possible.

The relazioni were descriptions of foreign countries by Venetian ambassadors who had resided there for two or three years—full accounts of the political situation, the manners and customs, the economic life and financial conditions. Ranke used them for the description of the internal affairs of a country, and historians of one nation after another began collecting them for the same purpose. Down to a remarkably late date they remained significant for the depicting of Tudor England. But what they contained was still only a species of reporting, and even if it was by a man who in a certain sense was an eyewitness, we should nowadays require firmer material for a study of, say, economic life in the sixteenth century. With Ranke, it meant that the historian was governed by the things that the writers of the relazioni noted and collected for their own purpose, the things they thought would interest their government. Somebody has said
that the result was history as seen through the eyes of a Venetian ambas-
sador. One of the things in which these diplomats seemed to excel was the
production of considerable portrait studies of the monarchs and statesmen
with whom they had to deal. They put a good deal of artistry into this
because they had first to deliver these relazioni orally before the elder
statesmen of Venice, on whom their further career depended. Ranke made
fine use of this material, which is still significant, because it is good to have
as many people as possible giving their serious impressions of the famous
personages of the sixteenth century.

Henceforward Ranke developed along with the age itself, as archives
came to be opened more and more widely to scholars, and as he came to
see that history calls for the whole of the available evidence. But he leads
the age, and does not merely follow—is a pioneer in archival work, and
through his seminar trains the historians of the coming generation. Also,
in him, the movement attains a high degree of self-consciousness. He
acquires a leverage which his predecessors never had, because there is an
academic organization and tradition which can adopt and guard the new
standards. Nobody could achieve more rapid successes in one field after
another than those who dashed through the archives as they first opened,
producing revolutions and reversals on all sides. From this time the
historian has to depend much less on mere reporting, and the situation is
radically changed, because he can study the papers in which business was
actually conducted.
In the year 1884 Mandell Creighton went to Cambridge, after nearly ten years in a Northumbrian country rectory, as the first holder of the newly established Dixie professorship of ecclesiastical history. He did not hold the chair for very long. He became bishop of Peterborough in 1891, and later was translated to the see of London, where, like Stubbs at Chester and Oxford, he found that the duties of a bishopric allowed little time for historical research. While he was a professor at Cambridge, Creighton was asked to be the editor of an English historical review. The publication of such a review had been discussed for nearly twenty years; Germany had the Historische Zeitschrift (begun by von Sybel in 1859) and France the Revue critique d’histoire et de littérature (founded in 1860), and, ten years later, the Revue Historique.\(^1\) Creighton undertook the editorship of this English Historical Review and published in the first number a long essay by Lord Acton on ‘German Schools of History’. This essay was remarkable for its comprehensiveness, though it suffered from the defect, which Lecky noticed in another article by Acton, of ‘throwing much more light on the multifariousness of Lord Acton’s reading than on the real merits and significance of the subject he is treating’.\(^2\) It might seem odd that Creighton should not have opened his Review with an article on English schools of history. In this case Acton could not have written the article, since he knew little of English historical work before his own time, and, owing to his German education, took for granted the superiority of German to English scholarship. Creighton himself accepted too easily this German claim to superiority. He wrote to Acton that ‘we must confess

---

\(^1\) The *Ecole pratique des hautes études* was established in 1868 to teach the critical study of documents. The *Ecole des chartes*, founded in 1821, was primarily for the use of archivists.

that we are not strong in historical method in England. Our work has all the advantages and all the disadvantages of amateur work. Again, in speaking of the kind of book which he hoped Acton would review for the journal, Creighton wrote apologetically: 'You must pardon me if you think sometimes that trifling English books exclude good German books.'

Earlier in the century other scholars had spoken highly of German scholarship and of the need of Englishmen to learn from it, especially in the field of textual criticism. Connop Thirlwall (1797–1875) and his friend Julius Hare (1795–1855) started a journal, The Philological Museum, in 1831 with the purpose of spreading a knowledge of German philology. Thirlwall thought the task almost a hopeless one (and, in fact, only six numbers of the journal appeared), but he wrote to Bunsen of the 'important functions which philology might and would discharge in England, if it had been cultivated among us as it has been in Germany'. Hare had recommended Thomas Arnold in 1825 to read Niebuhr's Roman History. Arnold learned German for the purpose, and, in the words of his biographer Dean Stanley, 'a new intellectual world dawned upon him, not only in the subject to which it [Niebuhr's History] related, but in the disclosure to him of the depth and research of German literature'. Grote wrote in the preface to his History of Greece of the 'new lights thrown upon many subjects of antiquity by the inestimable aid of German erudition'. Dean Stanley, although he might be counted as an amateur in Creighton's sense of the term, once said to Mark Pattison: 'How different the fortunes of the Church of England might have been if Newman had been able to read German.' Among the early English medievalists Sir Francis Palgrave

---

6 M. Pattison, Memoirs, London, 1885, p. 210. Pusey not only learned German, but went to Germany to study German methods for himself. He came back appalled at the 'infidelity' of German scholarship. Thirlwall complained that there was 'no English theological journal connected with the Church which does not studiously keep all its readers in the dark as to everything that is said or done in German theology'. Perowne and Stokes, vol. 1, p. 175.
(1788–1861) certainly knew German, and J. M. Kemble (1807–57) actually went to study in Germany under Jacob Grimm.\(^7\)

In general, however, and outside the field of Greek and Roman history, German scholarship had less influence than might have been expected. One reason was the question of form. Few Englishmen knew the German language. Mrs Grote, in the life of her husband, says that as a young man he learned German; she implies that this was not a common thing for young men to do. Even those who most appreciated the originality of German methods of textual criticism admitted that the uncouthness and cloudiness of German writing made it unacceptable to English, or, for that matter, French writers. Thirlwall, in spite of his wish to spread a knowledge of German methods in England (‘a right direction of intellectual energies [is] perhaps the greatest [need] that England now suffers’), thought it useless to try to get such direction from German philosophy; ‘some of the better spirits of the age have expected this regeneration from Germany’, but German philosophy would not suit the English character.\(^8\) The journalist and diarist Henry Crabb Robinson (1775–1867), who before Carlyle did much to make German literature known in England, wrote in 1830 in somewhat similar terms to a German friend:

> I do not at all wonder that you do not relish any of our writers, even of the highest reputation. It is ascribable to the same cause that renders the great masters of German thought unenjoyable by English readers. . . . Since the great change, introduced by Kant, in your philosophical studies, not one single book has yet attracted the attention of our scholars or soi-disant thinkers. Of the metaphysicians scarcely a book has even been translated. A few congenial minds (Coleridge, for instance) have announced that there is something worth knowing, but the mass care little about it.\(^9\)

Eight years earlier Jeffrey\(^10\) had warned Carlyle against too strong an advocacy of the Germans. ‘I predict that your cause is hopeless, and that

\(^7\) See below, p. 20. Benjamin Thorpe (1782–1870), went to Copenhagen about 1826 to work on Anglo-Saxon.


\(^10\) Francis, Lord Jeffrey (1773–1850), Scottish judge and critic. See below, p. 26.
England will never admit, nor indeed endure, your German divinities. It thinks better and more of them than it ever will again. Your elegance and ingenuity a little mask their extravagance and tiresome presumption. As soon as they appear in their own persons everyone will laugh. The only harm it has yet done you is to make you a little verbose and prone to exaggeration.'\textsuperscript{11} Carlyle's interest at the time (1828) was mainly in Goethe and Schiller, not in the new German methods of studying texts or primitive Germanic institutions. When he came to write the history of Frederick the Great he described the historians of Prussia as a dreary burden: 'endless German history books: dull, bad, mostly wearisome; most un instructive every one of them'.\textsuperscript{12} On a visit to Germany he found 'Gleichtten, in particular, less and less charming'.\textsuperscript{13}

Macaulay's attitude, as might be expected, was like that of Jeffrey. Macaulay had not tried to learn German until he was on his voyage home from India in 1838. He did not learn it out of any regard for German scholarship. He had indeed described Niebuhr's \textit{Roman History} as opening an era in the intellectual history of Europe, but later became impatient with Niebuhr's speculations and his absurdly anti-French views in 1830. Macaulay wrote before going on board his ship with a load of German books (mainly literary): 'I promise myself very great delight and information from German literature; and, over and above, I feel a sort of presentiment, a kind of admonition of the Deity, which assures me that the final cause of my existence, the end for which I was sent into this vale of tears—was to make game of certain Germans.'\textsuperscript{14} Macaulay cannot have kept up his reading of German authors very thoroughly, since some twenty years later he could write that he was 'losing his German' and that, in a resolve 'to win it back', he had begun to take Schiller's \textit{History of the War in the Netherlands} into the garden and to read a hundred pages of it daily.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., vol. II, p. 103. In summing up Carlyle's work on Frederick Froude wrote that he found the German authorities to be 'raw metallic matter, unwrought, unorganized, the ore never smelted out of it. . . . It is curious that, on the human side of things, the Germans should be so deficient, but so it is.'
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., vol. II, p. 449.
Sir Llewellyn Woodward

Nearly a quarter of a century after Jeffrey’s advice to Carlyle, Mark Pattison, who had very strong views about the backwardness of English universities in research,\(^{16}\) told the Oxford University Commissioners that ‘for all our admiration of the splendid development of German philology we cannot be blind to the glaring faults of their academical training, the absence of all taste in composition which buries their historical learning and the fatal defects of expression which cloud and mystify their greatest thinkers’.\(^{17}\) Finally one may quote Acton himself. In his article on ‘German schools of history’ he admitted that German scholars had certain serious shortcomings. He mentioned their lack of discrimination between important and unimportant facts, and their neglect of the maxim *Est quaedam etiam nesciendi ars et scientia*. He noticed also that ‘the extreme subdivision of labour narrowed [their] view, and gave an unusual scope and value to diligent mediocrity. Dull men built themselves an everlasting name.’\(^{18}\)

Even if English historians and their readers had been more disposed by temperament and education to take lessons from Germany, the lack of attention before 1850 to historical studies at the English universities would have been a very formidable obstacle to the emergence of a school of ‘professorial historians’ on German lines. J. M. Kemble (1807–57), one of the few English scholars to study for long periods in Germany, went back to Cambridge (where he had graduated) in 1833 to give, on his own initiative, a course of lectures on Anglo-Saxon literature and language. He did not hold an audience or repeat his experiment. There was little interest at Oxford or Cambridge at the beginning of the nineteenth century in early English history or in any history beyond classical times.

The remarkable school of historians, legists, and antiquarians which had flourished in England during the latter part of the seventeenth century did not survive through the age of Swift and Pope; their work suffered from an uncouthness of style and over-elaboration of detail which repelled a

---

\(^{16}\) See below, p. 30.

\(^{17}\) *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1852 [1482], vol. xxi, Oxford University Royal Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 47–48. In 1868 Pattison wrote that a German professor was regarded in England as an object of mild ridicule. ‘The German Professor—two words which are, even taken separately, not calculated to recommend anything to general acceptance in this country, and the combination of which is doubly unfortunate.’ M. Pattison, *Suggestions on Academical Organisation*, Edinburgh, 1868, pp. 169–70.

\(^{18}\) *English Historical Review*, vol. i, 1886, p. 26.
smoother and more sophisticated time. Lord Bolingbroke's *Letters on the study and use of history* (1735) show a polite contempt for such accumulations of learning. Bolingbroke quoted with approval the remark of a Frenchman to an enthusiastic pedant: 'Que Dieu vous fasse la grâce de devenir moins savante.' Lord Chesterfield recommended his son not to spend much time on the four or five centuries after Charlemagne. History was read as literature and had to conform to the requirements of the public. A writer with the genius of Gibbon could adapt his learning easily to the standards of his age; so in a lesser way could Hume and Robertson, but not one of them started a school of erudite historians.

George I, on the recommendation of Edmund Gibson, bishop of London, who was himself a notable medievalist, endowed chairs of modern history at Oxford and Cambridge in 1724. The purpose of these foundations was to assist in the training of civil servants and diplomats; lectureships in French and German were attached to the chairs. There was also a hope that these royal benefactions would contribute to the popularity of the Hanoverian dynasty at the universities. The professorships sank almost at once into sinecures. For many years this misuse of endowments did not trouble ministers; the 'patronage' value of the chairs was increased by the fact that they carried no tiresome obligations. The first Cambridge professor gave an inaugural lecture in Latin, and did not lecture again. His successor held the chair for twenty-seven years without lecturing at all. The third professor was killed by a fall from his horse when drunk. The poet Gray, after obtaining the professorship, intended to lecture, but never did so. The next professor gave courses of lectures; he did not attract much of an audience, and totally failed to develop historical studies at Cambridge.

---

19 A French bishop, Mgr de Boisgelin, who was invited in the reign of Louis XVI to preach at Versailles on the Feast Day of St Louis, was given the hint that he need not enlarge upon the subject of the king's crusade.

20 Oliver Goldsmith met the public demand neatly when he announced that he had written his four-volume *History of England* 'not to add to our present stock of history, but to contract it'.

21 For a long time Gibbons' choice of title left the 'cultivated' English public, even scholars, with a misleading impression of the Byzantine Empire.

22 He fell off his horse, insisted on remounting, and had a second and fatal fall. For a short account of the Cambridge professors before 1800 see D. A. Winstanley, *Unreformed Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1935, Ch. III. For the Oxford professors, see Sir C. Firth, 'Modern History in Oxford, 1724–1841', *English Historical Review*, vol. XXII, 1917, pp. 1–21.
Sir Llewellyn Woodward

The Oxford professors in the eighteenth century were less distinguished than Gray and not much more prolific, although the Heads of Houses in 1768 petitioned the Crown that the professor of modern history should lecture.

There was an improvement in the early nineteenth century when the universities had begun to reform themselves by the establishment of real examinations, the forerunners of present-day honours schools. The degree course, however, still had no place for medieval or modern history, and the professors, though they now fulfilled their statutory duties to lecture, did not regard it as their business to advance historical research. Henry Beeke, who held the Oxford chair from 1801 to 1813, was an economist of some importance to whose opinions Vansittart, as chancellor of the exchequer, gave weight. Edward Nares, who succeeded Beeke, received new and inescapable instructions about lecturing; he was also told to include political economy in his courses. Nares knew nothing of this 'curious science', as he called it, but honourably set out to make himself familiar with it. He found no books dealing with it in the Oxford bookshops, and noted that 'works which had excited the greatest interest in the political world were totally unknown' at Oxford. Nares actually wrote a three-volume historical work, though without conspicuous success; Macaulay's review of the volumes, giving their weight and cubic contents, has had more readers than Nares's own two thousand closely printed quarto pages.

The acceptance of the Oxford professorship by Thomas Arnold in 1841 might have brought a great change. Arnold was a man of first-class ability and had been greatly influenced and excited by Niebuhr’s work. He planned to give a course of eight lectures on English history, and to do for his subject what Guizot had set out to do in his lectures on the civilization of France.23 One the other hand Arnold was headmaster of Rugby. He did not intend to resign this post for some time to come. He proposed to stay in Oxford for two or three weeks at the beginning of the Lent term—after the Christmas holidays. He had no idea of developing a school of trained historians at the university, and indeed was unsuited by temperament for long and detailed research. Arnold died in the year after his appointment to the Oxford chair.

H. H. Vaughan, who became professor in 1848, was regarded by his contemporaries as a most remarkable man; he left little written work for posterity, but his evidence before the University Commission of 1850 was in favour of improving conditions for research. Vaughan put the need for more professorial learning at Oxford neatly by pointing out that teaching in the University was, on the whole, already determined by the professorial system, since 'our classical manuals, editions, histories, grammars, etc., are the work of professors'. These professors were foreigners, and 'as we have no similar class in our own University which might supply us, their superiority to our home-grown literature on such subjects is incontestable'. With this use of the works of foreigners went 'the necessity of instilling, in some degree, their general principles of criticism and philosophy. Had we a professorial system of our own, the national character and genius would assert itself in their works.'

Vaughan retired in 1858. Goldwin Smith, who was then appointed, gave up the chair in 1866, and, two years later, went to Cornell University; he subsequently settled in Canada. Goldwin Smith, if he had been less given to controversy, might have been a leading figure in the development of an English school of historians, but his interests were increasingly centred on political issues rather than on historical research.

With the appointment of Stubbs to the Oxford chair after Goldwin Smith's resignation, the regius professorship was held for the first time by a scholar whose professional qualifications would have been regarded as adequate in Germany. Conditions generally in the universities were now more favourable to historical studies. Oxford, just before the establishment of a University Commission which would have insisted upon a step of this kind, at last established an honours school of modern history. Cambridge took a similar step in 1852. In each university history was combined with jurisprudence. It is a matter of interest that, while at Oxford this combination (which was abandoned in 1872) was regarded as unduly subordinating law to history, the Cambridge experience was that history suffered from

---

24 Vaughan spent most of his later life at work on a book on moral philosophy which he never completed. Before his election to the Oxford professorship he had been clerk of assize on the South Wales circuit.

25 1852 Oxford University Royal Commission, Evidence, p. 86.

26 The Dictionary of National Biography gives Goldwin Smith's profession as 'controversialist'.

23
undue subordination to law. The commissioners recognized the importance of the new schools in general education; the Oxford commissioners thought that the law and history school would not only be useful as a professional preparation for lawyers, but that it would be of value to ‘future statesmen, and that important class of men who are to administer justice as magistrates, and to exercise great influence as landed proprietors’.

The commissioners did not limit themselves to considering the value of history as a subject of undergraduate instruction. They pointed out that ‘the fact that so few books of profound research emanate from the University of Oxford materially impairs its character as a seat of learning’. They thought that ‘if the Professoriate could be placed in a proper condition, those Fellows of Colleges whose services the University would wish to retain, would be less tempted and would never be compelled to leave it for positions and duties, for which their academical labours had in no way prepared them’. The commissioners did not go very far in proposing new history professorships. They recommended two new chairs in the field of modern history—one of them for the history of England. They also proposed better professorial salaries; the regius professor at this time received only £400 a year. Although the universities, faced with the prospects of large change, had taken steps to anticipate some of the likely recommendations of the commissioners of 1850, the introduction of modern history as a subject in an honours course was due more to an increased public interest in the subject than to any academic wish to widen the bounds of historical enquiry. H. H. Vaughan

27 1852 Oxford University Royal Commission, Report, p. 78.
28 Ibid., p. 94.
29 ‘Modern’, as opposed to ‘ancient’ history. ‘Modern’ in this sense included medieval history. The commissioners recognized that the division between ancient and modern history was ‘rather a matter of convenience than of reality’. They suggested the transfer of ancient history to the new school. Freeman later objected to the distinction between ancient and modern history as ignoring the unity of history. He argued that there was anyhow no agreement about the dividing line between the two subjects. Some historians put the beginning of modern history as late as the French Revolution; others thought that modern history began with the call of Abraham.
30 The commissioners suggested that the creation of a second chair might be postponed until it was seen whether there was sufficient demand for the teaching to justify the outlay (Report, p. 103). A chair of ecclesiastical history had been established in 1839, but the professorship was (and still is) limited to persons in Anglican orders, since it was attached to a canonry of Christ Church.
The Rise of the Professorial Historian in England

said to the Oxford commissioners that ‘perhaps the Public Debating Society, called the Union, gave more encouragement to the study of Modern History amongst the younger members of the University than any other public institution. . . . The study . . . is not generally pursued; nor is it . . . earnestly cultivated by a few.’ It is impossible to give any one reason for the increased public interest in history. The so-called Romantic revival in literature had obviously been one factor. Scott’s novels had both met and extended a popular demand. As has often been pointed out, the romantic search for glamour, for unfamiliar, far-off things, could be met most easily by a return of interest in the middle ages—the despised five or six centuries after Charlemagne. There were special, and different, reasons in England, France, and Germany for such a general revival of knowledge of the past; the historical facts were more remarkable than vague and undisciplined literary use of them. Ranke found Commines more attractive than Scott. In England the development of parliamentary institutions and the movement for parliamentary reform also stimulated an interest in history (Vaughan’s remark about the Oxford Union debates is relevant to this point). Most—not all—of the early nineteenth-century English historians were whigs, and their works provided a historical background to whig, and in some cases, radical enthusiasm. The ability of a good many of these writers was itself a reason for their popularity. The first two volumes of Macaulay’s History of England appeared towards the end of the year 1848; 13,000 copies were sold within four months. A better treatment of the public records, especially after 1836, and the beginnings of publication of their contents also opened new material to historians. Stubbs, in his inaugural lecture as regius professor at Oxford, was able to refer to these collections of documents which were making the sources of medieval history more accessible and providing, as he hoped, a basis from which an English historical school could develop.

The quarterly and monthly reviews and magazines which were so important a feature of the first three decades and, one might say, of the whole of the nineteenth century, stimulated an interest in history. These journals began with the Edinburgh Review in 1802. The Edinburgh Review was edited by whigs, though the earlier contributors were not all of one party. Whig views, however, predominated, and the Quarterly Review was

Sir Llewellyn Woodward

founded in 1809 as a rival Tory production. The Reviews introduced young men to the reading public, and contributed a good deal to their incomes. Many historians wrote for them. Kemble edited the British and Foreign Review from 1835 to 1844 and Froude was editor of Fraser’s Magazine for fourteen years. Jeffrey, the first and most famous editor of the Edinburgh, wrote of Macaulay:

Macaulay has made one addition to the [historian’s] task, that of exhibiting, not only the great acts and the great actions of the time, but the great body of the nation affected by these acts from whose actual condition they truly derive, not merely their whole importance, but their true moral character. By this innovation he has, to the conviction, I think of all men, added so much, not only to the interest, but to the utility and practical lessoning of history, that I feel confident it will be universally adopted, and no future writer have a chance of success who neglects it.

This appraisal is just, and also sums up what one may describe as the main effect upon English historians of writing for the Reviews. The writers were not addressing themselves to fellow experts and could not fall into the unreadableness of much German work. They had to keep to large issues, to treat living questions—whatever epoch they were writing about—and to avoid an accumulation of learned detail. Macaulay’s influence on English prose style—in breaking up and loosening the long periods, and heavy rhythms of his predecessors—was as great as his influence upon the content of historical writings.

There were, of course, defects and dangers in this practice of writing for the

32 Blackwood’s Magazine began in 1817 as a publisher’s venture to rival the Quarterly. Fraser’s Magazine appeared in 1830. The distinction between the Reviews and the Magazines was never clear-cut. In general the Reviews did not print original work, except in the field of criticism, but many of their articles, e.g. Macaulay’s essays, were in fact pieces of original work nominally attached to the evaluation of books. On the other hand the Magazines included book reviews. In the second half of the century certain weekly journals, such as the Saturday Review, printed ‘middles’—short essays which appeared between the leading articles and the reviews of books—on historical, literary, or general subjects. Many of J. R. Green’s historical writings appeared as ‘middles’. For many years the Edinburgh had a circulation of about 13,000 for each number (excluding bound volumes). The sales of the Quarterly were not much less.

the **Reviews**. Style might be overemphasized at the expense of subject matter; the scale of treatment might be inadequate, and the manner superficial; judgements might be too hasty or exaggerated by political and literary partisanship, but editors like Jeffrey and Lockhart\(^3\) and most of their successors knew well enough the difference between the articles which they accepted and the ephemeralism of the daily press. The composition of historical articles for the **Reviews** did not tie the writers to academies or other learned institutions. Thus the early and mid-nineteenth-century English historians had no occasion to live or work in universities and were not expected to hold academic chairs. There were, as we have seen, few academic appointments. In this respect the contrast between English and German historians is again remarkable. The early careers and modes of livelihood of the former were far less uniform. Sharon Turner (1768–1847) maintained himself in business as an attorney until he was over sixty, and worked in his spare time on Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the British Museum Library. Palgrave was a barrister who specialized in pedigree cases; he was nearly forty before he began to edit documents for the Records Commission and fifty in the year of his appointment as deputy keeper of the records. Kemble had an official position as examiner of stage plays, though he carried out his duties mainly through a deputy. Henry Milman (1791–1868) and Thirlwall were Anglican clergymen who became respectively dean of St Paul’s and bishop of St David’s.\(^5\) Alison held a Scottish law office and was after 1834 sheriff of Lanarkshire. John Lingard (1771–1851), catholic historian of the Reformation, was a priest and for many years in charge of a catholic mission at Hornby in Lancashire. Hallam was a man of property who supplemented his income by the commissionership of stamps, a well paid office with few duties. Macaulay’s career is too well known to need description. Sir James Stephen, who became regius professor at Cambridge (a post which Macaulay refused because he did not want to lecture), was a lawyer specializing in colonial and board of trade cases; he was under-secretary of state for the colonies

\(^3\) John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), biographer of Scott and editor of the Quarterly Review from 1825 to 1853.

\(^5\) Thirlwall, one of the most remarkable, and, today, least remembered among the eminent men of his generation, gave up his fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge, because the master objected to his attack upon compulsory attendance at chapel. Thirlwall went to a country living given him by Brougham until Melbourne recommended him for the bishopric of St David’s.
before going back to Cambridge. His son, Leslie Stephen, was a tutorial fellow at Trinity Hall, Cambridge; he taught mathematics, but resigned his fellowship owing to religious doubts, and went to London where he became the first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography. Stubbs was a country clergyman, with the part-time post of librarian at Lambeth Palace. Grote was a banker, and for a time a radical member of parliament. Frederic Seebohm (1833–1912) was a barrister and banker, and Lecky the son of a well-to-do Irish landowner. Freeman and Froude held fellowships at Oxford as young men. Freeman’s fellowship lapsed on his marriage; he was comfortably off, and, since he never worked on manuscripts, did most of his study and writing in country houses. Froude gave up his fellowship when he broke with Anglican orthodoxy; he also lived for some time in the country before settling in London. J. R. Green, after an undistinguished career at Oxford, was a curate in a poor London parish. Seeley was for a short time a fellow and classical lecturer at Christ’s College, Cambridge; he then became professor of Latin at University College, London, before returning to Cambridge as regius professor of modern history. Acton was in every respect a unique figure: an English landowner, and, on his mother’s side, heir to an ancient and distinguished inheritance in Hesse-Darmstadt, a catholic who had studied in Germany, but had never held an academic post until his appointment to the Cambridge chair. Montague Burrows, the first holder of the Chichele professorship at Oxford, was a naval officer who had come to the university at the age of thirty-four, taken honours in the school of law and history, and set up successfully as a private coach.

The fact that only a very few of the leading English historians, even in the latter half of the nineteenth century, at Oxford and Cambridge had

36 He was a very good country clergyman; he said of himself that he knew ‘every toe of every baby in the parish’.

37 The professorship was established by All Souls College on the recommendation of the first Oxford University Commission. See above, p. 24.

38 Adolphus Ward, who became professor of history and English at Owen’s College, Manchester, in 1866, had been a fellow and classical lecturer at Peterhouse, Cambridge. His successor at Manchester, T. F. Tout, was a pupil of Stubbs at Oxford but never held a fellowship until he was elected an honorary fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1928. G. W. Prothero was a fellow and history tutor at King’s College, Cambridge, when he was appointed in 1894 to a newly created chair of modern history at Edinburgh. He gave up the professorship in 1899 to become editor of the Quarterly. Richard Lodge was a fellow and history tutor at Brasenose
The Rise of the Professorial Historian in England

passed through the ordinary academic *cursus honorum* is the more remarkable because the history schools at Oxford and Cambridge soon attracted teachers of great ability, some of whom wrote books of considerable merit. There was, however, for a long time no attempt to develop postgraduate work or any course of training for historians.\(^{39}\) Creighton’s judgement upon the ‘amateur’ character of English historians was to this extent true. As late as 1913, C. H. Firth, addressing the International Historical Congress, at a meeting in London, on the state of historical studies in Great Britain, said that adequate machinery existed for training men for the study of history—which Firth distinguished from the use of history as a medium of general education—but that the students came from outside; there was no demand for this training among English undergraduates because they could get posts at English universities without it.\(^{40}\)

One reason for this lack of demand for professional training in England—as opposed to France and Germany—was, oddly enough, the greater concentration at the older universities upon the teaching of undergraduates. History was used, in Firth’s words, as a medium of general education and at Oxford and Cambridge the control of the Faculties was not in the hands of the professors, who might have developed the postgraduate training of historians, but in the hands of the college tutors. There was a sense in which the revival of the older universities and the higher standards of undergraduate instruction were attained at the expense of the advancement of knowledge. The latter half of the nineteenth century was the great period of competitive examinations. At a time when the older universities were widening the subjects of study and examination for undergraduates, the state substituted open competitive examination for nomination as the mode of entry to nearly all civil service appointments at home and to the

College until his election in 1894 to the new chair of modern history at Glasgow. (These two chairs were the first of their kind in Scotland.) F. W. Maitland was called to the bar after going down from Cambridge, and practised for eight years as a conveyancer before his appointment, first, as reader, and later as professor of English law.

\(^{39}\) A research degree of B.Litt., awarded on a thesis, was established at Oxford in 1895; a more advanced degree of Doctor of Philosophy was not created until 1917.

\(^{40}\) In his inaugural lecture at Oxford, *A plea for the historical teaching of history*, Oxford, 1904, Firth had spoken even more strongly and in greater detail on this question. Tout, in speaking at the 1903 Historical Congress, said that ‘the vital difference between England and France and Germany is that with us . . . original work in his subject is not regarded as an essential qualification for the academic teacher’. 

29
Indian and colonial services. The state examinations for the higher branches of the services were based deliberately upon the honours schools at the universities, and thus added directly to the importance of these schools as a preparation for a career. The change from a system of patronage to one of open competition was an immense improvement, but it tended to overemphasize the importance of a good class. The more important the class lists became, the greater the danger that they would distract teachers and students at the universities from the attainment and advancement of knowledge. In Mark Pattison’s words: ‘Seeing the marvellous effects of the examination system inaugurated in 1800, in awakening life in this place [Oxford], a belief grew up that examinations could accomplish everything.’

It is significant that the largest university building put up at Oxford in the 1880s was neither a library nor a laboratory, but a new Examination School.

Mark Pattison was a somewhat bitter and disillusioned critic. He had hoped for great changes for the better from the reforms proposed in 1852 by the University Commission, but he wrote in 1868 that the changes in Oxford had been for the worse at least in one important respect. Men were now working just for prizes and classes. ‘This tyranny of the examination system has destroyed all desire to learn. All the aspirations of a liberal curiosity, all disinterested desire for self-improvement, is crushed before the one sentiment which now animates the honour student, to stand high in the class list.’ Pattison thought that Oxford should follow the model of the German professoriate. He wrote of Oxford teachers: ‘We have known no higher level of knowledge than so much as sufficed for teaching. . . . Hence, education among us has sunk into a trade, and, like trading sophists, we have not cared to keep a larger stock than we could dispose of in the season. . . . We shall never place our university on a sure footing as long as we regard the undergraduate alone as the end and purpose of the institution.’

41 M. Pattison, *Suggestions on academical organisation*, p. 234.

42 See Pattison, *Suggestions*, pp. 163–9. Pattison continued to attack what he regarded as a deplorable concentration on examinations. In 1883 he wrote in his *Memoirs* (p. 89), that ‘young M.A.s of talent abound, but they are all taken up with the conduct of some wheel in the complex machinery of cram, which grinds down all specific tendencies and tastes into one uniform mediocrity’. He also complained that ‘once a Fellow has been elected, he finds no suitable direction in Oxford. He must go for instruction to Berlin or even to Catholic and *arrivé* Vienna. Oxford cannot give it to him’.
From this angle of view further improvement in the teaching and greater tutorial zeal only made matters worse. The use of private coaches by honours men, which had been almost universal in the first half of the nineteenth century declined rapidly between the first and second university commissions. One of the most important reforms affecting the instruction of undergraduates was carried through by Creighton while he was tutor at Merton. Hitherto undergraduates had been taught only within their own colleges. This 'close' system limited the opportunities of undergraduates and prevented specialization by the tutors. The restriction mattered less when the work consisted mainly of construing classical texts or criticizing compositions in class. The burden on the teachers became impossible when the curriculum was widened. Creighton arranged with the neighbouring colleges of Oriel and Corpus Christi that lectures given in any one of the three colleges should be open to members of the other two. This sensible plan was soon accepted by all colleges and the modern system of intercollegiate lectures was established. A Modern History Tutors’ Association was formed to draw up a lecture list and to ensure that the syllabus was properly covered. The new arrangement had the incidental effect of cutting off the professors even from the control of the Modern History Faculty in which they were still greatly outnumbered by the college tutors. Stubbs, Freeman, and Froude, whose combined tenure of the regius chair extended for over a third of a century, found that they had little influence at least through their lectures on the development of advanced teaching. Neither Stubbs nor Freeman was a good lecturer; Froude had lectured brilliantly, but he came back to Oxford as an old man; he did not lecture on the subjects in the examination syllabus, and failed to attract an undergraduate audience. Freeman and Froude indeed made little effort to adapt themselves to an Oxford which had greatly changed from the university of their youth. Froude had doubts about accepting the regius chair in 1892 because he felt unable to give lectures 'directed to students' examinations'. When he saw the 'system' in operation he wrote that 'the teaching business goes on at Oxford at high pressure and

43 A somewhat similar development took place at Cambridge. In London and in the newer universities which did not adopt the old tutorial system the professoriate was more in control of the syllabus of instruction. Up to 1914 Manchester University did more in proportion to its numbers for advanced teaching than Oxford or Cambridge.
is utterly absurd. Education, like so much else these days, has gone mad, and is turned into a mere examination.  

A century has passed since Renan's sarcastic comment on Oxford: 'Une université allemande de dernier ordre . . . avec ses petites habitudes étroites, ses pauvres professeurs à la mine gauche et effarée, ses privatdozent [sic] hâves et faméliques, fait plus pour l'esprit humain que l'aristocratique université d'Oxford avec ses millions de revenu, ses collèges splendides, ses riches traitments, ses fellows paresseux.' This comment, though not without foundation, and not applicable to historical studies alone, had begun to be out-of-date at the time when it was made. It would have been less fair a generation later, and it could not have been made in the last forty years. The English school or schools of history could no longer be written down as 'amateur'; the universities, old and new, were no longer concerned solely with preparing young men for examinations, and English students had no need to go abroad to learn methods of research. With the multiplication of academic posts and the greater endowment of research most historical work is now done at academic institutions, and, in the foreseeable future, few people will be able to live as landowners or rentiers in country or town without troubling themselves whether their writings make a financial profit. The earlier opportunities to earn at least something of a living by writing for the great Reviews have almost disappeared. For reasons known to everyone, the use of the new means of mass communication is no substitute for the Reviews, and may well be a threat to historical standards.

Nevertheless, the amount of historical work done in the nineteenth century outside the universities by men who were not associated with

---

44 Freeman was not a tactful man. Sir Charles Oman told the writer that when Freeman was asked to dine with the History Tutors Association, he came into the room saying loudly, 'I have come to see the crammers cram.' Stubbs had written in 1885 that 'the historical teaching of history has been practically left out, in favour of the class-getting system of training'. W. H. Hutton, ed., Letters of William Stubbs, London, 1904, p. 264. Firth quoted this sentence in his inaugural lecture and indeed took from it the title of his lecture. See above, p. 29, fn. 40.

45 Revue des deux Mondes, 1864, vol. iii, p. 80. Renan was writing on 'L'instruction supérieure en France, son histoire et son avenir', and was in many respects as critical of French as of English backwardness. It is fair to notice his remark that 'le groupe nombreux d'hommes intelligents qui travaille avec ardeur et succès à tirer l'Angleterre de ses habitudes arriérées ne vient pas à l'école de la France; elle va à l'école de l'Allemagne'.

32
teaching has had a lasting effect upon the development of English historical studies. English historians of the twentieth century have included many types. The Webbs, John Fortescue, J. L. Hammond and his wife, G. M. Trevelyan for most of his life, J. H. Round, and not least, Winston Churchill, belonged to the old tradition. The variety of background and the independent status of English historians have given them advantages not to be found in countries where university professors have been more closely connected with official views. Critics of Macaulay have complained, not without reason, of his partisanship, but he was much less of an advocate than, for example, Giesebrecht who claimed that ‘the torch of German historical science throws its beams forward as well as backwards’, or even than Ranke who accepted employment from the Prussian government in 1832 to edit a review opposing the democratic ideas revived by the French revolution of 1830. In France the different interpretations of the French Revolution by academic historians have corresponded remarkably with the political changes of régime during the last hundred and fifty years.

Above all, English historians have never elaborated an esoteric language or learned jargon. Freeman once complained that history had ‘no technical terms’; he added, ‘I half wish it had, just to frighten away fools’. At the beginning of this century there was a fashion—supported by Professor Bury of Cambridge (though his practice was always better than his doctrine)—to assimilate history to the physical and biological sciences and to treat historical writing as though it were a record of exact calculations and measurements. Bury wrote that ‘to clothe the story of a human society in a literary dress is no more the part of an historian as an historian than it is the part of an astronomer as an astronomer to present in an artistic shape the story of the stars’. Apart from the fallacy that style is merely a ‘dress’, an irrelevant decoration laid on supposedly clear material, Bury’s dictum ignores the fact that history is not a sum of averages or a table of repetitions; historical situations do not recur as Halley’s comet returns. Firth answered Bury with the simple comment that history presupposed readers and that the historian must ‘arrange his ideas clearly, and state them so that they may be understood, and express them so that they may make a lasting impression on the mind of the person to whom they are addressed’.

Sir Llewellyn Woodward

Some professorial historians will always be better than others in the final presentation of their work. Some forms of education will give better training than others in the art of writing, and, on the other hand, some types of historical material will be more amenable than others to mathematical and statistical methods of presentation, and will be more—or less—attractive to certain types of mind. All in all, therefore, one need not be too much afraid that the dominating influence of highly trained professors, pursuing a well trodden path, will mean an end of the spontaneity and individualism of an earlier time. One may safely leave the professors of history to sort themselves out; there will even be room for those who still like to tell sad stories of the deaths of kings.
The earliest Norman sources for the history of Duke William's expedition to England in 1066 are William of Jumièges's *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* [GND], written between 1071 and 1075, William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi* [GG], written between 1072 and 1074, and the Bayeux Tapestry [BT], produced probably before 1082, possibly before 1077. On the English side the annal for 1066 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was written probably after 1069 and before 1080. The English and Norman accounts seem to be independent. The Norman sources, however, are 'synoptic': there are large areas of common subject matter and sometimes similar phrasing. The literary relations between them have been discussed extensively, and, although it can hardly be claimed that the intricate problem has been indisputably solved, there is considerable support for the view that William of Poitiers was familiar with the work of his namesake and that the designer of the Tapestry possibly knew both the histories. The problem of the literary relationship is especially difficult because all three works were produced at roughly the same time in the same political area by men who were drawing on the same background. Neither William of Jumièges nor William of Poitiers, nor possibly the designer of the Tapestry, was an eyewitness of the campaign he described; and each had to find sources of information. All would be familiar with the oral accounts in circulation, which may already have assumed a pattern, and while each would thankfully use any literary account that was available, all could, if

they wished, tap the memory of men who had been either participants in
the campaign or associated with it. Indeed, their independence one of
another is at least as striking as their borrowings. If William of Poitiers had
access to, and sometimes adapted, William of Jumièges’s work, he never-
thought wrote his own story. If the designer of the Tapestry drew on
William of Poitiers for his historical framework, he nevertheless made use
of the narrative account for his own ends and contributed his own version.
They all modified a common stock and added their own ingredients in
order to make the effect which their particular purpose required.

At least one historian, baffled by the problem of the literary rela-
tionship, has suggested that William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers had
a lost common source, a compromise which has found no favour. But we
are in fact offered such a source by Sigebert of Gembloux, writing in the
early twelfth century. In his account of Lanfranc of Pavia he states,
‘Scripsit laudes, triumphos et res gestas Guillelmi Northmannorum
comitis’. If Lanfranc wrote such a work we could hardly date it earlier
than 1066 or later than 1070, when he assumed his arduous duties in
England; and, if we use Lanfranc’s other compositions as a guide, it would
have been succinct. It is not impossible that Lanfranc, whom the duke
valued as a diplomatist, was employed to present the ducal case to the
political world in 1066. He was well fitted to stress his master’s moral
purpose and ecclesiastical achievements and among the best qualified to
compose a legal case in answer to Harold’s ‘usurpation’. Such a brief could
possibly have been used by later Norman writers. But it does not seem
credible that Lanfranc should have devoted his time to the duke’s secular
triumphs, or, if he did, that his own convents would have lost both the
manuscript and also all memory of it.

We can now turn to the anonymous poem on Duke William’s expedi-
tion, discovered by Pertz in the Royal Library at Brussels, at which
historians have usually looked askance. In MS 10615–729, a miscellaneous

2 G. Körtling, Wilhelm von Poitiers “Gesta Guilelmi ducis Normannorum et regis
Anglorum”; ein Beitrag zur anglo-normannischen Historiographie, Dresden, 1875, pp.
21–22, 40.

3 Liber de Scriptoribus ecclesiasticis, Migne, Pat. Lat. clx, col. 583.

4 Cf. F. Barlow, ‘Edward the Confessor’s Early Life, Character and Attitudes’,

27–51. The printed text occasionally improves, sometimes further corrupts, an un-
collection of pieces, there are 836 lines of the poem which start towards the bottom of the right hand column of a verso and occupy almost exactly three folios; in MS 9799–800 the first 66 lines of the poem occupy the whole of the righthand column on the verso of a folio. In neither manuscript has the poem a title or ascription. The first manuscript can be dated c. 1100 on palaeographical grounds, the second a little later. Neither could be English and both may have been written in northern France or Flanders. As it seems that the one manuscript is a direct copy of the other, there is no need to postulate more than the missing original text of the poem. But its anonymous appearance in a collection, the probable incompleteness of even the fuller text,7 and much textual corruption8 suggest a lengthier stemma codicum. Indeed, solely on textual grounds, it would seem safe to hold that the poem could hardly have been composed later than the death of William I (1087).

The anonymous poem was quickly identified. Orderic Vital, when writing his Historia Ecclesiastica at St Évroul in the years before 1141, was generous to other writers and especially to those whose works he had used. He was indebted to William of Poitiers; and it was presumably from his account of the archdeacon and his works9 that in the sixteenth century the single surviving manuscript of William’s history, then defective at both beginning and end and so without a contemporary ascription, was identified by Sir Robert Cotton and André Du Chesne. Orderic also describes a poem written before 1068 by Bishop Guy (Wido) of Amiens on the battle of Senlac, a poem in which Harold was reviled and William praised.10 Hence it was inevitable when Pertz discovered a poem which

satisfactory manuscript text. See Körner, pp. 91–100, for a discussion of the attitude of historians to the poem and his own views. My own studies have been helped by discussions with Mr R. H. C. Davis and many conversations with my colleague, Professor F. W. Clayton.

6 I have consulted Professor Francis Wormald and Mr N. R. Ker, and am most grateful for their advice.
7 See below, pp. 41–42.
8 Line 10 is a good example. The MSS read, ‘Sis iudex illi iustus de morte magistr’; the printed text gives, ‘Sis judex illi, justa de morte Magistri’; and the sense demands, ‘Sis iudex illi iusti de more magistri’.
10 Ibid. ii. 158, ‘Guido etiam praesul Ambianensis metricum carmen edidit, quo Maronem et Papiniun gesta heroum pangentes imitatus Senlacium bellum descripsit, Heraldum vituperans et condemnans, Guillerum vero collaudans et magnificans.’
seemed to fit the description, that the identity of the two should be assumed. Moreover, just as in the other case, there appeared to be in the poem enough internal evidence to corroborate the identification.

The second line of the prologue, written in hexameters, ends with ‘L. W. sālūtāt’; and it was conjectured that this stood for ‘Lanfrancum Wido salutat’. Although it is unlikely that all the possible alternatives were considered, an investigation of these produces no obvious substitutes. If we are to scan the line, and it scans only when the initials are extended, we need one name in the nominative and the other in the accusative case, for saluto invariably takes a direct object. As the final syllable of the second name (W.) must be short, that name must be the subject, for it is virtually impossible to find an accusative singular which scans. In which case we are, for practical reasons, confined to the forms ‘W . . . a’ or ‘W . . . o’ (the short ‘o’ permissible at least since Ovid: Nāzō, common in Juvenal, and usual in eleventh-century verse). Accordingly, since it is unlikely that the author was a woman, we are probably limited to Wādā, Wāzō, and Wīdo. This finding allows the following possibilities for ‘L . . . em’ or ‘L . . . um’: Lambertum, Lanfrancum, Lanzonem, Letoldum, Ludolfium, Leobertum, Lietardum, and possibly some other Germanic and Old English names (e.g. Leofriam). We must, therefore, allow that it was not unreasonable to expand W. to Wīdo; and, although the choice of Lanfrancum is on metrical grounds even more arbitrary, there is something to be said in its favour. W. asks L. to improve and protect his poem, and describes his correspondent as ‘renowned for his goodness and wisdom’ and ‘the morning star who with his learning has dispelled the darkness of the world’. These phrases fit Lanfranc of Pavia, abbot of Caen, then archbishop of Canterbury, and fit neatly into the canon.¹¹

The attribution of the poem to Guy of Amiens had weighty consequences, for Guy, who died in 1074 or 1075,¹² was the son of Enguerrand

Cf. also ii. 181. Robert of Torigni’s insertion in GND, p. 264, c. 1149, is probably based on Orderic, for he was well versed in his work: ‘Edidit preterea de eadem materia opus non contemnendum Guido, episcopus Ambianensis, heroico metro exaratum.’

¹² See below, Appendix A.
The Carmen de Hastigae Proelio

I, count of Ponthieu. The founder of the family was Guy's grandfather, Hugh, a vassal of Hugh Capet, duke and later king of the Franks. Hugh married a daughter of his lord and was appointed castellan of Abbeville as part of a plan to contain the Normans. His son, the bishop's father, assumed the title of count after he had killed Baldwin II of Boulogne in battle (apparently in 1033) and married his widow, Adelaide of Ghent. Although the family was not of great distinction, it had made useful alliances, and, because of its advocacy of the monastery of St Riquier and the piety of the countesses, was interested in the ecclesiastical life of the region. In 1066, because Bishop Guy represented a generation older than that generally in positions of power, he was related to most of the men involved in the question of the English succession and may, indeed, have known many of them personally. He was the uncle of Count Guy of Ponthieu (1053–1100), Earl Harold's captor in 1064 or 1065 and ruler of the principality from which Duke William's expedition sailed. His brother, Fulk, a monk of St Riquier, was, or had been, abbot of Forest l'Abbaye, across the bay from St Valery. His sister-in-law, Bertha, was the daughter, and had probably been the heiress, of the lord of Aumale. The bishop also had close ties with the neighbouring counties. He was the half-uncle of Eustace II, count of Boulogne, and through him related to Edward the Confessor. He was affiliated to the ducal house of Normandy. His nephew, Enguerrand II of Ponthieu, had married Adeliza, the Conqueror's sister, and a niece had married William of Arques, the Conqueror's uncle, who later had taken refuge in Boulogne. Guy would, therefore, have had every qualification, except of being an eyewitness, for writing an account of Duke William's campaign in 1066. He would have known the political, social, and military world that he was describing.

Frank Barlow

He would also have had the necessary skill and interest. He had been educated at St Riquier under Enguerrand (apparently not a kinsman), whose rule as abbot was considered by Hariulf, the chronicler of the house, its golden age. Hariulf names Guy as one of Enguerrand’s two most distinguished pupils, and all his references to Guy are enthusiastic. Guy became archdeacon and then bishop of Amiens, remaining a benefactor of the monastery. St Riquier had a special interest in England. Abbot Gervin is said to have been a favourite of King Edward and, on a visit to the English court, to have received a superbly embroidered cloak from Queen Edith, a cloak which subsequently Bishop Guy bought from the abbey, and a grant of land from a ‘Breton’, Ralf, presumably Ralf the Staller or his son, Ralf de Gael. In February 1068 Gervin crossed to England to see his estates and get them confirmed by King William. If the story is true, it is unlikely that Gervin could have had an audience with the king before Easter, when he was at Winchester. Before Whitsun the Duchess Matilda arrived in England for her coronation, bringing in her train, we are told, Bishop Guy of Amiens.

It is, however, the apparent discrepancy between Guy’s advantageous position and the doubtful trustworthiness of the poem which later caused some commentators to cast doubt on the attribution. This is not a very strong argument if expressed in general terms, for Hariulf, the St Riquier chronicler, who finished the first draft of his work in 1088, also wrote rubbish about England. In any case, doubt over the authorship of the poem should not condemn the work to neglect. The Carmen cannot be ignored in any discussion of the early accounts of the duke’s invasion, for it is clear that the poem and William of Poitiers’s history are intimately

---


15 He witnesses as archdeacon a charter which is dated by Lot 1046, Hariulf, col. 1338, p. 234. Cf. also col. 1328, p. 216.


related: there is parallelism of varying degrees of closeness, and most likely one of the authors borrowed from the other. The basic problem is, who was the borrower? If the poem could be shown to be the source, its importance would become obvious. But, even if the contrary could be proved, provided that the poem was written within living memory of the events it describes, its dependence would not rob it of all interest, for, in common with the other sources, it has its own special features. It cannot be disregarded on the grounds that it is entirely derivative from another extant account and so has nothing of its own to contribute. The question at issue would then become what value should be put on the poet's unsupported contribution, and the answer would depend largely on the authorship, date, and purpose of the poem.

It is, indeed, from these directions that the whole investigation is most conveniently approached. But there is a preliminary obstacle which has to be examined: the poem, as we have it, is almost certainly incomplete. It is metrically imperfect, for, although the main part is written in elegiac distichs, it ends with an hexameter and so lacks at least the second line of the couplet. The problem is, how much has been lost?

The narrative, which opens with the duke trying to launch his invasion from St Valèry-sur-Somme in September 1066, closes with his coronation in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day. In the final scene, although there is much about the new crown, sceptre, and rod made for the ceremony, the description of the ceremony itself ends with the anointing. It seems hardly likely that the poet, who clearly was acquainted with a coronation ordo, would have deliberately omitted the subsequent stages, the investiture with the insignia, the coronation (for both of which he prepares the ground), the enthronement, and the banquet. Nor is it probable that the poem originally ended with the words, 'The archbishop ordered the people to pray, started the office, recited the collect, raised the king from the dust, anointed his head with chrism, and consecrated him king according to the appropriate rites'. Another fifty lines could easily have been devoted to the coronation ceremony and some 'rounding-off' lines, some final apostrophe to the new king, would have been appropriate. The importance of this incompleteness is that, if the poet in his final

19 The final line ends with a semicolon. This punctuation mark, followed by a somewhat bolder majuscule, is used about a dozen times to mark the end of a paragraph. In all other cases but one (line 249) a paragraph ends with a complete couplet.
section looked forward to the time of writing, some vital evidence for the poem’s authorship, date, and purpose may have gone astray.

Those who deny that the Carmen was written by Guy of Amiens do not suggest that Orderic was mistaken over its authorship but maintain that the anonymous poem is not the one that he describes. It has been argued that the servility of the introduction is unsuitable for a bishop, that, although the bishop was the uncle of Guy of Ponthieu, the poet does not name—therefore did not know the name of—‘the noble heir of Ponthieu’, who plays an important part in two episodes, and that Orderic’s description of Bishop Guy’s poem as ‘vituperating and condemning Harold’ does not fit the Carmen. The last objection is worthless and could only have been made in the light of the almost hysterical vituperation in William of Poitiers. Although the poet is much fairer to Harold, he is definitely opposed to his cause and several times describes him as a perjurer and faithless vassal. The deference shown to the person to whom the poem is dedicated is common form; and if L. is indeed Lanfranc of Pavia, the bishop’s respect should cause no surprise. By 1067 Lanfranc was the greatest luminary in the West.

The phrase, ‘Pontiiui nobilis heres’, ‘the noble heir of Ponthieu’ or ‘the heir of noble Ponthieu’, has probably been viewed with exaggerated suspicion. It could have been used because the poet did not know the name or exact identity of the member of the comital family who took part in the invasion or because he was inventing a participant. But the only possible way to prove this suspicion is to show either that there was no heir to Ponthieu in 1066 or that no one who could properly be described in those terms took part in the campaign. Neither, of course, can be demonstrated.

Although heres can mean an owner or master as well as an heir, the latter sense is the more usual and we may well think that the reference is

---


21 Cf. especially lines 239–44, 261–4. The expression, ‘Falsus et infamis, periuratus rex et adulter’ (line 261), is almost as strong as William of Poitiers’s, ‘luxuria foedum, truculentum homicidam, divite rapina superbam, adversarium aequi et boni’ (p. 166).
not to Count Guy but to his heir. 22 Guy had three children who survived infancy, a son, Enguerrand, 23 and two daughters, Agnes/Anna and Matilda. All that we know about Enguerrand is that he died before his father (1100) and probably before 1087, for it was William the Conqueror who arranged the marriage between Agnes, presumably by then Guy’s heiress, and the king’s favourite, Robert of Bellême, the eldest son of Earl Roger of Montgomery and Mabel of Bellême. 24 Who then was Guy’s heir in 1066? It could not have been Robert since he appears to have married Agnes after the Conquest and in any case was probably too young to have taken part in the campaign. 25 But there is no reason why Enguerrand should not have been alive in 1066 and, although young, of an age to fight.

It is also possible to suggest why the noble bishop deliberately suppressed this one name—deliberate because although the poet liked these high-flown phrases, elsewhere he always attached them to names, and Ingelrannus presents no metrical difficulty. Just as the dedication is ‘L. W.’, 26 so he may with proud modesty have thought that his kinsman appeared better under a fine epithet. ‘The noble heir of Ponthieu’ has an epic sound. So this phrase does not give much support to the case against the bishop’s authorship.

Indeed, these rather strained arguments could only begin to be persuasive if the poem, because of its language, form, or contents, created a strong impression of being a worthless derivative from William of Poitiers. Certainly it causes unease. It encounters prejudice: it is not in real harmony with standard Norman tradition. It is vague and literary, so that the

22 The noble heir is also called ‘peruigil Hectorides’ (lines 538, 564), which suggests that the poet had the son in mind. It may be relevant that Hector’s infant son, Astyanax/Scamandrius, was killed after the capture of Troy by the Greeks.

23 Clovis Brunel, Recueil des Actes des Comtes de Ponthieu (1026–1279), doc. no. VI, with outside dates 1053 and 1090, in which the count and countess make a gift for the redemption of their souls and of the soul of their son, Enguerrand.


25 His parents married c. 1050–54.

26 If the prologue to the poem (in hexameters as opposed to the elegiac couplets of the rest of the composition) can be regarded as a private letter from W. to L., the contradictions are understandable and could have been in the earliest MSS. It is more difficult to explain why a copyist should have suppressed the names.
isolated precise detail is markedly suspicious. What is more, the poem contains some incredible episodes, legendary in tone. But none of these features is evidence as to date. The earliest account of an event is not necessarily the most circumstantial, the soundest, or the most truthful. If the poem was written shortly after 1066 by an author who had no first-hand knowledge, unreliable sources of information, and an unscrupulous imagination, some of its characteristics would be accounted for.

Nor should it be overlooked that the features which are held to be suspicious in the poem are mostly present in William of Poitiers and (making allowance for the form) the Bayeux Tapestry: exaggerated numbers and heroic postures, speeches and conversations in oratio recta, largely anonymous armies and units, and generalized battle pictures with a few episodes selected for suspiciously detailed reporting. These features are characteristic of pretentious authors working at a distance on a vague and confused story which they can supplement by using a few direct sources of information and sometimes written accounts. Because William of Poitiers and the Tapestry are in substantial agreement (probably because the designer used the history) and both these sources are comparatively well known, their presentation has been more acceptable than that of the eccentric and less familiar Carmen. It may be that they do indeed tell a more trustworthy story; but there is nothing in their manner of telling it which should inspire greater trust. No anachronism has been found in the Carmen and there is no clear evidence for any terminus a quo but 1066. The king is regarded as alive, indeed as a recent victor. He is said to be compelling an unbridled race to love the yoke; but this is the only phrase which can be understood as referring to the rebellions of 1067 to 1071, and need not have that sense. The onus of proof seems to lie on those who would dispute an early date for the poem.

There are also clear pointers to Bishop Guy’s authorship. St Valéry and the exploits of ‘the noble heir of Ponthieu’ receive disproportionate attention and Eustace, count of Boulogne, is allowed the importance that his lineage and position merited but which Norman writers were inclined to mark down. It is easy to believe that one of the author’s purposes was to stress the contribution of those two counties to the success of the expedition. His standpoint, his attitude of a disappointed ally, would explain the

---

27 Lines 32–33. The poet is probably simply making a comparison with Julius Caesar, a theme developed much farther in GG, pp. 246–54.
rather detached tone of the poem. The author is describing *Normannica bella*, a Norman campaign. There was no love lost between the Normans and the rulers of Ponthieu. The bishop’s family was related to and remained on close terms with the Capetians. His grandfather had been established at Abbeville to withstand the Normans; the counts had usually joined the royal army against these barbarians; and two of the bishop’s nephews had been killed and a third captured and imprisoned while on campaign against Normandy. Even if the bishop truly admired Duke William’s exploits, he can hardly have forgotten the past, and a Norman conquest must have jarred. The writing of such a poem could easily have been a distasteful duty. Finally, when we come to examine the contents of the *Carmen* in detail, it will be found that these can often be explained with reference to Bishop Guy’s special interest and knowledge. It is difficult completely to avoid circular arguments in such a matter; but, as Gibbon wrote in 1774 about an even knottier problem, ‘If the several facts that I have drawn together blend themselves, without constraint, into a consistent and natural system, it is surely no weak argument in favour of the truth, or at least of the probability of my opinion.’ At all events, it must by now be apparent that the thesis that the *Carmen* is the poem on the Conquest believed by Orderic Vital to have been written by Bishop Guy of Amiens is hard to disprove.

There is, however, one difficulty in Orderic’s notice which does not seem to have been discussed. He states that Guy completed the poem before he came to England in 1068 in company with the Duchess Matilda.\(^{28}\) We need not attach unnecessary weight to such a statement: it may simply be an intelligent surmise that Guy took the poem as a gift, and we should discard the tradition if it proves awkward. It is, indeed, scarcely reconcilable with what appears to be the sense of the prologue to the poem. In a long nautical metaphor L. is treated as the *tutissima navis*, which gives the impression that it is L. who is to carry the poem across the sea to its ultimate destination, presumably King William I, who is hailed immediately after the introduction and whose deeds in 1066 are the subject of the poem. If Guy took the poem in person he would hardly require L. to convey it across the Channel. If, on the other hand, we hold to the prologue and also make Lanfranc the recipient of the poem, when did this prelate travel to meet the king? William was in England until February 1067 and from

\(^{28}\) *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 181.
December 1067 until 1072. The abbot of Caen is not known to have visited England before 1070 when he was promoted to the archbishopric of Canterbury. Although Lanfranc may have made unrecorded visits between 1068 and 1070, the last year was probably the only occasion which was well publicized in advance and would have allowed such a prologue to be written. The easiest way to smooth out these contradictions is to suppose that Guy went to England with Matilda for her coronation in May 1068, wrote the poem after his return to the Continent, and sent it to Lanfranc in 1070 for delivery to William.

This hypothesis has the merit that it enables the poem to be explained with reference to the politics of those years. The peculiarity of the Carmen is its emphasis on the contribution made by Ponthieu and Boulogne to the success of the Conquest. If Bishop Guy, the uncle of Guy of Ponthieu and the half-uncle of Eustace of Boulogne, was the author, such a bias was natural. But our supposition allows us to go further. Eustace quarrelled with William immediately after the expedition, unsuccessfully invaded Kent in 1067 during William’s absence, and was condemned, presumably after the king’s return at Christmas 1067, to the forfeiture of the English estates that he had been granted. The comital family of Ponthieu seems to have received no lands in England. St Riquier’s English estates may have been in jeopardy. It is possible, therefore, that Bishop Guy immediately appealed to Matilda, because of her Flemish connexions, on behalf of the two counts and crossed to England with her in May 1068 to plead their cause. Unsuccessful in his mission, he then wrote the poem, cunningly inserting reminders of the debt owed to the counts into a panegyric of William. In fact William and Eustace were reconciled, and Eustace had recovered his lands, before 1072/4 when William of Poitiers wrote his history.

We can now work in the opposite direction and consider whether the contents of the poem suit these circumstances. Just as the number of people featured is small, so is the geography circumscribed. After the attention given to St Valery no place is named (except Hastings, after the battle is over) until William and his army reach Dover, which is described. Canterbury and Winchester are then mentioned, but the scene changes

29 GG, pp. 264–8.
30 Ibid., p. 268.
31 Line 598.
quickly to London and Westminster, which play an important part in the final section of the poem. This limited geography suits an author who had only travelled from Dover to London and back.

The quality of the contents apart—and this remains to be discussed—all the indications point in the direction of Guy of Amiens; and, if we accept this, the poem was written before 1075, probably after May 1068 and possibly before 1070.

We can now turn to the relationship between the poem and the Norman accounts of the 1066 campaign. There seem to be few connexions between the Carmen and William of Jumièges. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that either William of Poitiers used the Carmen, or the poet used the history. Not only is there similarity in the contents and order of the accounts, but also there are the verbal reminiscences. If the poem was written before 1072 William was certainly the borrower. Only if the poem was written in 1074–75, or at the outside in 1072–75, could the poet have used the history. If we are right in thinking that the poem had as its political purpose the reconciliation of William and Eustace, it must have been written before the history, for by 1072–74 the two men were reconciled. The probability is that William of Poitiers used the Carmen as one of his sources. There is, however, a slender chance that the position was the reverse; and some words in the prologue to the poem must be taken into account. The poet writes, 'As I wished to avoid the wastefulness of an indolent mind and spirit, and as I know that poems are popular, I have devoted myself to recording (reponei) the Norman wars in verse.' If emphasis is put on the re-, it could be argued that Guy was turning prose accounts into verse. But a syllable necessary for the metre should not be forced to carry great weight, especially when the whole word has the acceptable sense of 'recording for posterity'.

If we compare the four Continental sources for the 1066 campaign, the Carmen, William of Jumièges, William of Poitiers, and the Bayeux Tapestry, the general position is that William of Poitiers gives the fullest account. He omits few facts and episodes present in the other sources and makes the largest individual (and unsupported) contribution of fact. He is

---

33 Except that they are alone in stating that the Normans made use of ancient fortifications at Pevensey; see below, p. 51.
34 Lines 15–17.
also, of the literary sources, the most elaborate in style and classical allusion, although here the poem runs him close. Hence, it would seem, the early tradition culminated in him. It is for this reason that most historians have preferred to think that he expanded William of Jumièges rather than that the other abbreviated him. The same attitude would make the Carmen one of his sources. But, although there is usually a tendency for a tradition to develop by accumulation, early abbreviations are always possible. The Bayeux Tapestry was probably designed and produced after William of Poitiers wrote. As a picture-story, however, it may be regarded as a special case. Another general observation is that all the accounts are in substantial agreement. Direct contradictions are rare, and one of the few cases—William of Jumièges’s statement that Harold was killed early in the battle\textsuperscript{35}—was such an obvious error that it did not seriously influence the literary tradition, although we notice that William of Poitiers avoids stating how and when Harold (and his brothers) died.\textsuperscript{36} Normally, each account supplements or modifies the others. At the extreme we have a choice between two possibilities: either a story evolved by accretion, or the most developed account was produced first and subsequently abbreviated.

If it were accepted that William of Poitiers was to some extent indebted to the Carmen as well as to William of Jumièges, and the Bayeux Tapestry to William of Poitiers, facts which have often been considered as corroborated by the agreement of two or more of these sources may sometimes be no more than repetitions or elaborations of statements for which the Carmen is the sole authority. This is a very important matter, for the overall picture of the battle and much of the detail comes into this category. The argument, however, should not be pushed too hard. Since all these accounts were written roughly at the same time, within a decade of the events described, they were controlled by common knowledge. The main features of the battle and many of the incidents were probably notorious. The least iconoclastic line is to regard all these sources as based ultimately on popular opinion, but moulded by the literary accounts which were available, and given individuality by the special attitude and contacts of each writer. Even so, if we accept Guy as the author of the Carmen, the poem must be given more attention than has usually been the case.

\textsuperscript{35} GND, VII, xv (p. 135). If he meant Harold’s brothers, he is in line with BT.

\textsuperscript{36} GG, p. 200.
The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio

It remains to examine the story told by the poet in reference to the other sources and see whether a detailed comparison of the accounts throws any light on the relationship.

The poem opens with the movement of the invasion fleet to St Valéry-sur-Somme. This event is also given by William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers, but is ignored by the Tapestry.³⁷ William of Jumièges simply mentions St Valéry as a staging point. The poet, under the influence of classical writers, especially Virgil, gives an elaborate description of the weather—tempestuous, rainy, and cold—and tells us that the Norman fleet was driven to St Valéry 'willy-nilly'.³⁸ He describes the town, refers to the inhabitants as 'skilled in war, always faithful, and often offering refuge to the shipwrecked'³⁹—possibly an answer to those who remembered the story of Count Guy and Harold, but also a reminder of Duke William's debt to the place—stresses the part played by St Valéry in changing the direction of the wind and bringing the sun, and is more than usually circumstantial. William of Poitiers, in a clearly related passage, has less to say about the weather, but makes two contributions to the story: he develops the theme of shipwreck (the duke secretly buried all evidence of the naval disaster so as not to discourage his troops), and he tells us that the body of St Valéry was taken in procession out of the church. Here it is possible to argue either that the historian condensed the Carmen and added details, or that the poet, especially if he were Guy of Amiens, contributed local colour.

The embarkation and crossing of the expeditionary force is described by the Carmen, William of Poitiers, and the Tapestry, but not by William of Jumièges.⁴⁰ Although there is substantial agreement between the three, each has its variations. The Carmen is the only source for the date and time. The weather changes on the eve of the feast of St Michael (28 September) and the fleet is at sea by sunset.⁴¹ The date is, if not correct, at least approximately right.⁴² The poet says that there was no moon, which is more or

³⁸ Lines 50–51.
³⁹ Line 46.
⁴⁰ Carmen, lines 78–124; GG, pp. 160–4; BT, pl. xxxix-xlvi.
⁴¹ Lines 76–77, 104–5.
⁴² Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D states that Count William came from Normandy to Pevensey on Michaelmas Eve (28 September), Chronicle E that he landed at Hastings on Michaelmas Day. These can be harmonized by taking them to mean that William
less correct. The three sources then describe the crossing a little differently. The *Carmen* says that the fleet was ordered to anchor at sea so that the weary men might rest and advance could be made at dawn; lanterns were on all the masts. William has a more elaborate story in which a light on the duke’s ship would give the signal to advance; and this lantern is shown on the Tapestry. Then, according to William, when they moved on before dawn the duke’s ship outsailed the rest of the fleet and there was an anxious moment at daybreak when the duke found himself alone and out of sight, but coolly ordered a banquet to be served while the remainder caught up. The Tapestry probably shows a man about to climb to the mast-head of the duke’s ship, but does not picture the banquet. The *Carmen* alone states that the Normans made their landfall at the hour of tierce. We seem here to have complementary accounts. On the whole the poet gives the more factual and prosaic story, the chronicler the more dramatic. It is, perhaps, easier to believe that William wrote up the *Carmen*, than that the poet sobered down the chronicler.

The Norman beach-head in England is described by the four sources in widely differing degrees of detail. The *Carmen* and William state that the landing was unopposed, explain the lack of English opposition by Harold’s absence in the north, and take the opportunity to revile the king, another Cain. The *Carmen* is the only one not to identify the landing place as sailed from Ponthieu on the 28th and landed in England on the 29th. English historians have, however, preferred to interpret them as meaning that William landed at Pevensey on the 28th and moved to Hastings on the 29th. See David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London, 1964, p. 397.

---

43 The Astronomer Royal has kindly informed me that on 28 September the moon rose at Hastings at 13.02 hrs and set at 22.10 hrs. It was about six days old, so that the phase was just before the first quarter.

44 Line 123.

45 *Carmen*, lines 125–202; GND, p. 134; GG, pp. 164–70; BT, pl. xlvi–lili.

46 Körner, op. cit. p. 97, suggests that here the *Carmen* and the *Vita Ædwardi* are interrelated. Certainly, because Harold kills his brother, Tostig, there is a reference in each to Cain (*The Life of King Edward the Confessor*, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow, London, Nelson’s Medieval Texts, 1962, p. 38); *Carmen*, line 137, and in each Harold of England and Harold Hardrada are described as *equivoci* (p. 58; line 174). But on the only occasion when more than one word is shared, Lucan underlies them both. *Life* p. 56, ‘Emathium furiis civili peste regressum . . . tulit’; *Carmen*, lines 135–6, ‘Alter in alterutrum plus quam civile peregit bellum’; Lucan, I, 1–2, ‘Bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos . . . tulit’. In this case it is clear that each poet borrowed
Pevensy. All but the Tapestry mention the duke's fortifications there; the poet and William of Jumièges agree that some use was made of ancient fortifications (Anderida). All but the Carmen then have the Norman army move to Hastings, a place not mentioned until later in the poem. The three agree that this place was fortified, and the Tapestry shows Robert of Mortain directing the work. After this the various stories diverge until they come together with the negotiations between the king and the duke conducted through monks immediately before the battle. William of Jumièges tells us nothing. The Carmen is ignorant of the duke's actions and transfers the scene to Harold's camp—on the road from the north and, from later indications, almost at Hastings—where an Englishman, who has witnessed the Norman disembarkation, informs the king, and Harold holds a council of war in which he easily persuades his nobles to fight a new campaign against the new invader. The orations are reported in direct speech. William concentrates on the actions of the Normans and tells a story involving William fitzOsbern and reports diplomatic exchanges between Robert fitzWimarch and the duke. The Tapestry shows a series of 'occupation' scenes, in some of which Odo of Bayeux and his men are involved. In this part of the story it is most unlikely that the poet had William of Poitiers in front of him. But the historian could easily have excised the unwanted English scenes and supplied from other sources the poem's deficiencies.

The negotiations before the battle are described by the poet and William of Poitiers. The Tapestry alludes to them. The poet gives an unlikely, the chronicler an even more romantic account. In the Carmen Harold, at the conclusion of his conference with his nobles, sends a monk to demand the duke's withdrawal from England and also to spy on his camp. The duke counters by offering his own unacceptable terms and stating his legal claims. Once the monk has left, William makes a speech to his troops to prepare them for the inevitable battle and announces that on the next day he will send his own envoy to Harold. When the duke's

independently from the classical model. The two eleventh-century poets probably came from the same area; and it is doubtful whether their similar reactions to the same theme should be regarded as proof of copying.

47 Carmen, lines 202–335; GG, pp. 172–84; BT, pl. liii, lvii-lxiii. There are many verbal similarities between the Carmen and GG here.
Frank Barlow

monk reaches the king he finds the English forces already moving, treacherously, into the attack. He states the duke’s legal case in greater detail than before, to which Harold replies that God will judge between the two on the morrow. It is the Norman monk who proves to be the more effective spy, for he reports to his master that Harold is close, is mounting a surprise attack, has an enormous, but effeminate army, and has stationed 500 ships at sea to cut off the duke’s retreat. Whereupon the duke moves his army into battle.

William of Poitiers gives another version of the same events, in which both the chronology and the detail are different. He relates that Harold’s envoy was found walking near the Norman ships and the duke pretended to be his own steward, presumably in order to have more time in which to consider his reply. On the next day William discloses himself, listens to a justification of Harold’s behaviour, more elaborate than in the poem, and asks whether he can reply through his own legate. The duke then instructs a monk of Fécamp with the case that we know so well from William of Poitiers, and sends an offer to settle the dispute by various legal methods. To this message Harold replies that he will not be deterred and that God will judge between the two that day. Reconnaissance parties inform the duke that Harold is about to launch an attack, hoping to take the duke by surprise, and that he has stationed 700 ships off the coast. William prepares for battle, attending mass and investing himself with the relics on which Harold was forsworn, and makes a speech to his troops before sending them against the enemy. The ducal harangues reported in the poem and the history are on different occasions and for different purposes. In the poem the duke is still negotiating and is putting his men on the alert; in the history he is about to attack. In William of Poitiers the duke opens his speech with the military traditions of the various nations in his army (a condensation of the main part of the speech in the poem), continues with the theme of the impossibility of flight and the need to do or die (a theme which, in the Carmen, appears in the duke’s second speech to his troops, during the battle), and concludes with other suitable words which are not closely paralleled in the poem. William of Poitiers writes, ‘We do not doubt that the duke’s speech to his troops was excellent, although it has not been transmitted to us with all its merits.’ Here is a reference to his sources, and we may think that he is alluding reproachfully to the Carmen, saying in effect that he has had to take pieces from here and
there and also draw on his imagination. Nor would he have cared for the poet's emphasis on the other nations, and we can understand why, if he was the borrower, he omitted their names.

The several accounts of the battle are variations on a common theme.\(^4^8\) The *Carmen* and William of Poitiers give similar descriptions of the English position and of the battle order of both armies. The Tapestry differs by omitting the Norman *balistarii* from its picture.\(^4^9\) According to the *Carmen* the Normans were in the centre under the duke, and the French attacked (*petiere*) the left, the Bretons the right. These dispositions probably accord with William of Poitiers's reference to 'the Breton cavalry and foot and all the other auxiliaries on the left flank', i.e. the Bretons were on the Norman left and attacked the English right. William of Jumièges is followed by William of Poitiers in stating that the battle opened at the hour of tierce. The *Carmen* alone relates that the *histrio*, Taillefer, struck the first blow; William of Poitiers alone states that the invaders advanced under the banner sent by the pope.

William of Jumièges does not describe the battle in detail. The various military actions mentioned by the poet and William of Poitiers have to be distinguished meticulously in order to compare the two accounts. Both describe in similar terms two successive Norman attacks on the English phalanx. They disagree on the nature of the subsequent Norman retreats. The poet gives the firmest outline: the first Norman attack is indecisive, so the French simulate retreat, then turn and destroy ten thousand of their pursuers. The main English army, however, is little diminished, and when attacked again resists even more fiercely than before. This time the Normans are compelled to retreat,\(^5^0\) and only the heroic conduct of the duke and a vigorous speech keeps them on the battlefield. William of Poitiers transposes some of these events. After the first attack the Bretons and the other auxiliaries on the left turn tail in true flight and almost the whole army is forced to give ground, which is no reflexion on the unconquerable Norman race; the duke then rallies his troops, as in the poet’s

---

\(^4^8\) *Carmen*, lines 336–567; *GND*, p. 135; *GG*, pp. 184–204; *BT*, pl. lxiii *ad finem.*

\(^4^9\) *Carmen*, lines 364–89, 410–15; *GG*, pp. 184–8; *BT*, pl. lxiii–lxiv.

\(^5^0\) Köerner, *op. cit.* pp. 98–100, interprets the *Carmen* as meaning that the feigned flight went out of control and developed immediately into a real one. William of Poitiers, however, was correct in distinguishing two separate actions. The clinching line (444) in the *Carmen* is: 'Et fuga ficta prius fit tune uirtute coacta.'
second episode; but the phase ends as in the poet’s first: the Normans
surround several thousands of their pursuers and kill them all. Then, as in
the poem, they make a renewed attack on the hardly diminished enemy
who fight back bravely. Although all the allied troops attack (and here the
men of Le Mans, the French, Bretons, Aquitainians, and Normans are
named) and Robert of Beaumont, commanding on the right flank (i.e. the
French), distinguishes himself in the assault, the English phalanx still cannot
be broken; so the Normans and the allied troops, remembering what they
had gained before from an enforced flight, now simulate retreat, and
again in the same way slaughter thousands of their pursuers.

The Tapestry contributes its own version. It shows four scenes: the
English phalanx under attack, the Normans killing Earls Leofwine and
Gyrth, a general mêlée, and Odo of Bayeux and the duke rallying the
army—the duke raising his helmet as in the literary sources. This version
cannot be interpreted with assurance. Either the first two scenes correspond
to the Carmen’s two separate attacks (in which case the design agrees more
with the poem than with William of Poitiers), or the designer has merely
simplified the literary tradition.

From this analysis it is clear that one of the writers has rewritten the
other’s account and transposed some of the details. Although no definite
proof can be produced to identify the editor, it is easier to explain the
history in the light of the poem than vice versa. The poet’s account makes
better military sense (it is hardly credible that a commander should have
risked a decoy retreat after he had with difficulty kept his fleeing troops on
the field),51 but is occasionally extremely obscure. After stating that the
French retreat as a ruse and that the rustics go in pursuit, he writes, ‘When
it (or he) sees that the left wing is becoming weaker on the ground (campum
tenuare), in that a broad way lies open for penetrating the right, both wings,
giving free rein, contend who shall be first to destroy the enemy; those
in feigned flight turn about and compel the encircled enemy to turn their
backs to death.’52 If we assume that throughout the passage we are con-

51 One of the best modern military commentaries on the battle, although directed
to the ‘stock’, synthetic version of the events, is by Lt.-Col. Charles H. Lemmon,
‘The Campaign of 1066’, The Norman Conquest, its setting and impact compiled by the

52 Lines 428–33: ‘Amotis sanis labuntur dilacerati, siluaque spissa prius rario ef-
citur./Conspicit ut campum cornu tenuare sinistrum,/intrandi dextrum quod [recte.
quo] utia larga patet,/ perdere dispersos uariatis cladibus hostes/laxatis frenis certat
cerned with the invaders' left and right (although on the earlier occasion it was the English left and right), assume also that it is the duke, not the rustic folk or the dense forest of the English forces, much closer subjects, who perceives the situation, we could interpret the poet as meaning that when the allied left wing had retreated so far that the Norman right had been outflanked by the pursuing English, both wings changed direction so as to encircle the pursuers. Further, we could deduce that it was the Bretons, not the French, who carried out the feigned retreat. Be that as it may, it was not the Normans who employed this successful ruse. It was their fate to be driven into involuntary flight later in the battle.

It is difficult to explain why the poet, unless he were a Breton, should have rewritten William of Poitiers in this way. But we can see that the historian could well have been both perplexed and also enraged by the poet's account. He could not possibly have accepted that the French (or the Bretons) carried out a successful ruse and that later the Normans fled. It was his habit to cheapen the contribution of auxiliary forces and he held the Bretons in special contempt. Whether his correction is right or wrong, it is explicable. Likewise, if it was he who reversed the two episodes, we can see why. Although by so doing he strained military probability, his presentation gave more dramatic form to the battle and heightened the duke's contribution to victory. By making the duke save the day at the very beginning of the action William of Poitiers demonstrates his hero's military superiority over Harold. Each general loses

utraeque prius.' Cf. lines 528–35: 'Amborum gladiis campus rarest ab Anglis,/ defuit et numerus, nutat et atteritur./Corruit apposita ceu silua minuta securi,/sic nemus Angligenum ducitur ad nihilum./... Cum dux, prospexit regem... dilacerare suos...' In the first passage the vocabulary derives from Caesar, Bell. Civ. 3, 'nonam legionem in sinistro cornu collocaverat, tametsi crat Dyrrachinis proeliis vehementer attentas'; 'timens ne a multitudine equitum dextrum cornu circumveniretur'; 'ne quo loco nostri intrare atque ipso s a tergo circumvenire possent'. As the poet first describes the thinning of the English forces, the natural interpretation of the following lines would be that William perceived that the English left was thinned by the forward movement of the rustics, an opportunity for him to penetrate the English right. But this interpretation compels us suddenly to change sides, because the two wings which counter-attack are certainly the invaders'.

53 The most striking example is his concluding remark on the battle of Val-des-Dunes (1047): 'Interfuit hic proelio Franciae rex Henricus, victrici causae auxiliis' (p. 18).

54 Cf. pp. 106 ff.
control over an undisciplined part of his army; but it is the resourceful and courageous duke who can snatch victory out of defeat.

So far we have been dealing with parallel literary accounts; we are now faced with a contrast in method. The Carmen continues with its straightforward account, but now larded with improbable detail. There is general combat during which the duke is twice unhorsed and kills Earl Gyrth and 'the son of Helloc' in revenge; the events leading to the killing of Harold are described; then the English feci, pursued by the Normans. The Tapestry does not illustrate this phase of the battle (unless it has placed some of it before the duke rallied his troops), but concludes with the death of Harold and the English retreat. Even more surprising is the abrupt change of tone in the history. William of Poitiers expressly disclaims any further attempt to describe the battle in detail and begins to generalize. He tells us that the duke's army used feigned flights on two (possibly subsequent) occasions; he lists some who fought in the battle; he praises the duke's courage and wisdom, and mentions that he had three horses killed under him, avenging the death of each; he introduces several classical parallels; and he finally states that at dusk, when the English knew that the king and his brothers were dead and no relief was in sight, the defenders broke away in flight. He then gives some space to an English rally and Eustace of Boulogne's timidity. He does not mention, like the Carmen, that 'the son of Hector', i.e. 'the noble heir of Ponthieu', was active in the pursuit.

William of Poitiers changed his style probably for two main reasons. A full-scale description of the battle was not relevant to his purpose. It was his habit to describe the opening of a campaign, for this illustrated the duke's patience, justice, and other virtues. But once he had made these points and demonstrated the duke's superlative generalship, he usually began to lose interest in the military details. His description of the Breton campaign of 1064 or 1065 is a good example of his method. This pattern was probably also due to the insufficiency of his sources; and in the case of the battle of Hastings lack of sound information was surely an important factor. William of Poitiers would have had every reason to doubt William of Jumièges's statement that Harold was killed in the first phase of the battle and he would have found the poet's account of the deaths of the English leaders hard to swallow: apart from the improbabilities the duke was given no part in the killing of Harold, worse, it was attributed to
Eustace of Boulogne. The stories in the poem of the killing of Gyth, 'the son of Helloc', and Harold are implausible literary pieces. Gyth kills the duke's charger, and the duke avenges this by slaying Gyth. 'The son of Helloc' kills the duke's charger, and the duke deals similarly with him. It is hard not to suspect that filius Hellocis in some inexplicable way conceals Leofwinus, Harold's other brother. This substitution would bring the Carmen and the Tapestry more into line and would also give a rounded pattern to the poem. The episodes are provided with circumstantial detail: on the first occasion the duke remounts by unhorsing a wounded and retreating soldier from Le Mans; on the second he is remounted by Eustace of Boulogne, who in turn is given a horse by one of his knights. We then pass from the duke's exploits to those of his followers. The duke and Eustace, now fighting together, see some Frenchmen hard pressed by Harold. Eustace, 'the noble heir of Ponthieu', who is like a son of Hector, a certain Hugh (possibly William of Poitiers's Hugh of Montfort), one surnamed Giffard (presumably William's Walter Giffard), and some others go to the help of those whom Harold is attacking, and succeed in killing the king. Eustace pierces his breast with a lance, the second cuts off his head, the third disembowels him, and the fourth cuts off his hip or leg. The Tapestry shows the deaths of the three brothers, but does not identify the knights who strike them down.

The problem of the historicity of these episodes does not concern us here. We should only note that if William of Poitiers and the designer of the Tapestry rejected them, they had nothing to put in their place. Yet if we, like they, cannot trust the Carmen, we can hardly trust William of

---

65 We can compare the poet's statement (line 137) that at the battle of Stamfordbridge Harold with his own sword cut off his brother Tostig's head.

66 Line 505, 'Filius Hellocis, ur celer et facilis', an enigma that has baffled all commentators. If it is an Old-English name, 'Hell-' could conceal 'Ælf-'; but we are still unable to complete a common personal name. If we have a dative plural or at least a toponymic, it is difficult to make a suggestion which is not absurdly fanciful. If we are in the classical world (cf. the next note), Hellocis is an obscure surname of Athens, and so could possibly be used as a personification of war, or even as meaning 'Greek'. Although it is tempting to think that the poet intended to describe the third of the sons of Godwin, the epithet, 'a swift and eager man', implicitly denies him high rank. Gyth (line 473) is 'regis traduce progenitus', as is Edgar Ætheling (line 648).

57 Line 538, 'Alter ut Hectorides, Pontiui nobilis heres'; line 564, 'Perugil Hecto-

rides'. It is this phrase which has been considered fatal to the ascription of the poem to Guy of Amiens: see Köner, op. cit. pp. 93-96.
Poitiers more. The historian would have us believe in two or three feigned flights, three horses killed under the duke, exaggerations of the poet's story. It may be that William excised from the poem some untrustworthy episodes and replaced them by more reliable information; but his surgery was not radical. Indeed, there is no acceptable story of how the Normans won the battle. The simple truth may be that they were still losing it, or at least had achieved no decisive advantage, when, to their surprise, the English fled, Harold having fallen, unrecognized by his foes, in some skirmish.

At this point the Tapestry comes to an end and we are left with the three literary sources. The *Carmen* has the duke remain on the battlefield while others pursue the English. William of Jumièges tells us that the duke returned from pursuing the English; and William of Poitiers elaborates this story, showing us the duke rescuing Eustace of Boulogne, hard-pressed during the pursuit. The *Carmen* gives us the fullest account of the treatment of Harold's body. At dawn the dismembered corpse was collected, covered by a purple cloth, and taken to the beach camp for burial. Harold's mother, mourning her three sons, asked by a messenger at least for Harold's bones and offered to pay for his body with an equal weight of gold; but the duke ordered the king to be buried under a pile of stones. An Anglo-Norman, taking pity on Harold, carried out the order and placed a stone over the grave with the inscription 'By the duke's command, Harold, you rest here, to guard the sea and shore'. The duke, sorrowing with his men at the grave, made gifts to God's poor. He then adopted the style of king, and, after remaining fifteen days at Hastings, left for Dover. William of Poitiers gives a shorter version in which he omits the limited respect shown for the dead king, identifies the Anglo-Norman as William Malet, and quotes the epitaph as a common jest. He states pointedly that the duke could at this point have taken the royal throne and crown and acted arbitrarily, but chose to behave with more moderation. He inserts a diatribe against Harold, in which he picks up

---

59 'Dux cum gente sua plangens super ossa sepulta/pauperibus Christi munera distribuit' (lines 594–5). Although the natural sense here is that the Normans showed grief at Harold's burial, William of Poitiers (p. 204) makes the duke show emotion at the sight of all the slain, even though most were English—typical evidence of rewriting.
some themes from William of Jumièges. It seems that in this episode William of Poitiers is rewriting the *Carmen*.

In their account of the duke’s actions between the battle of Hastings and his coronation, some ten weeks, the three writers tell basically the same story, but differ in detail and emphasis.\(^{60}\) The *Carmen* takes the duke and his army direct to Dover, which is described; the burgesses meet the duke halfway and submit; and the duke orders them to evacuate their houses as billets for his own garrison. Canterbury, and then other places, terrified by the news, send the duke tribute; and the duke and his army make Canterbury their headquarters for a month. During this time Winchester, held in dower by Edward’s widow, concedes the demanded tribute and fealty. The duke then advances on London, which is described. The citizens had decided to have their own king and had chosen a young prince to anoint; so the duke, ravaging the kingdom by fire and sword, establishes his camp close to the city and erects counter-fortifications. He particularly wanted to take London, for half a league removed was the royal hall known as ‘Guest’, or St Peter’s, church. The duke builds siege-engines, utters threats, and communicates secretly with the city leader, Ansger, a man crippled by war wounds and unable to walk.\(^ {61}\) Ansger reflects, calls a meeting of the magnates, and suggests in a speech, which is reported, that they should negotiate with the duke. Each side is trying to deceive the other. Ansger’s envoy is sent back, laden with gold, impressed by the duke and his case, bearing fair promises; and his report, which is given, persuades the Londoners to submit. They repudiate their boy king; take him to the duke with gifts; and are received graciously and pardoned. The main peculiarity


\(^{61}\) Ansger, or Eggar, the staller, a man of Scandinavian ancestry, possibly the grandson of Tofig the Proud, and the great-grandson of Osgot Clapa, was a large landholder in the south-eastern shires and held an important position, if not the office of portreeve, in London. His honour passed shortly after the Conquest to Geoffrey de Mandeville, who was also appointed portreeve of London and sheriff of Middlesex. See F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, pp. 51–52, 560–1. According to *Liber Eliensis*, II, 96 (ed. E. O. Blake, *R.Hist.Soc.*, Camden, 3rd ser. vol. xci, 1962, p. 165, Ansger was kept in prison until his death. If the *Carmen* is a relatively late production the attention given to Ansger could be explained as an attempt to strengthen Geoffrey de Mandeville’s position in London by emphasizing the power of his antecessor. But it is just as likely that the episode is based on a story that Guy of Amiens heard in London in 1068. There were several royal priests of Lotharingian origin connected with St Paul’s, and the siefe of one of them, Ingelric, became part of the honour of Boulogne.
of this account is the unique preoccupation with London, which is viewed from the inside.

William of Jumièges’s treatment of these events is, as usual, brief. The duke goes from Hastings to Wallingford, crosses the Thames and establishes a camp from which to attack London. After a skirmish on the London road (in platea urbis), in which many citizens are killed, the city submits and delivers hostages. William of Poitiers gives the most elaborate account as seen from the Norman side. He interpolates into the Carmen’s story the duke’s punishment of Romney, describes Dover in similar terms, but substitutes the burning of the town for the eviction of its inhabitants. He also tells us that at Dover many of the ducal army went down with dysentery. As in the Carmen, Canterbury submits; but the duke encamps at Frada Turris (unidentified), where he in his turn becomes ill; and, although he should have given himself rest, he insists on resuming his advance. The historian then turns to the political situation in London, and names the leading men, without mentioning Ansger, who elected Edgar Ætheling as king. The duke camps before the city, south of the Thames, fails to force a crossing, burns the suburbs, marches upstream, crosses at a ford and bridge, comes to Wallingford, where Archbishop Stigand submits, and continues to within sight of London, where the citizens come out, submit, and give hostages. If William of Poitiers knew the Carmen—and one pointed correction suggests that he did—he also had independent information with which to modify and supplement it.

The final scene that these sources have in common is Duke William’s coronation, of which all know the date.62 William of Jumièges writes simply that the duke was elected by both the Norman and the English magnates, and crowned and anointed by the English bishops. The Carmen provides a lot of padding, first an elaborate and probably imaginary description of the crown that was prepared for the ceremony, then an account of the first stage of the ceremony itself. He names none of the participants, and his indications are evasive. Chosen to perform the ceremony is the most celebrated of the bishops, a man distinguished by his high character.63 Here we might understand Ealdred of York; but a few lines

62 Carmen, lines 753 ad finem; GND, p. 136; GG, pp. 220–2.

60
The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio

later the duke advances in procession with a metropolitan at each side.64 A Norman bishop addresses the French, the English metropolitan translates; and the summus praesul continues with the ceremonies, which are described only as far as the anointing. The only authentic detail in the whole of this section is that the congregation were asked in two languages if they would accept William as king. The account seems to be based on a West Frankish, not on an Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman ordo.65 Guy of Amiens had attended Philip I's coronation in 1059 at Rheims;66 and the bishop's recollections of this event, slightly modified to suit the peculiar circumstances in 1066, could explain this version of the ceremony. William of Poitiers omits the description of the crown and the liturgical details, but is rather more factual. He contributes the duke's consultation with his men over the English offer of the throne67 and the military preparations for the ceremony; he informs us that Ealdred of York, whom he praises, addressed the English and then the bishop of Coutances the French; he adds that the Norman guards mistook the acclamations for a tumult and set fire to part of the city; and he states categorically that, for reasons which he explains, Ealdred of York, not Stigand of Canterbury, then consecrated (anointed), crowned, and enthroned the king-elect. Here, once more, it is possible to hold that it is more likely that William of Poitiers was adapting and correcting the Carmen, than that the poet was blurring the historical narrative.68

This comparison between the stories told by the poet and the historian

64 Lines 804–5, ‘Illius et dextram sustentat metropolita,/ad levam graditur alter honore pari’.
65 See below, Appendix B.
66 Mansi, Concilia, xix, 923.
67 This could be a riposte to the poet's insistence that Harold always took counsel. Cf. especially lines 200–4, where Harold consults his soldiers both high and low.
68 Although the identity of the consecrator of King Harold remains a vexed question, and William of Poitiers's assertion that it was Stigand of Canterbury is often disputed, his complementary assertion that it was Ealdred who crowned William seems never to have been questioned, presumably because it is supported by Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, D. E. Yet Stigand was allowed to consecrate the Norman bishop of Dorchester in 1067, and in 1070, after Stigand's fall, William was recrowned by the papal legates. It could, therefore, be argued that probably both archbishops took part in the coronation ceremonies and that the only matter in doubt is who took the principal part. With regard to the second ceremony the poet and William of Jumièges could have been genuinely confused or uncertain, William of Poitiers and the English Chronicle genuinely mistaken or deliberately untruthful.
Frank Barlow

does not prove conclusively who was indebted to the other. Either could
have adapted the other’s account. Yet the nature of the modifications
points unmistakably in one direction. Each author was writing in order to
please the Conqueror and directing his work to the king’s ears. If the poet
used the history, he excised or toned down William of Poitiers’s more
extravagant praise of the Normans and their leader, deleted all the
moralizing, cut out episodes which did honour to individual Normans,
especially the duke, and introduced persons and scenes which, although
producing a more balanced picture, could easily have caused offence. He
deliberately sobered down the historian’s narrative at several points and
occasionally, by omitting places and personal names, obscured the story.
For the later stages of the battle of Hastings he constructed a narrative out
of generalizations, and furthermore a reckless narrative, in which Harold’s
death was attributed principally to the courage of Eustace of Boulogne and
‘the noble heir of Ponthieu’. Unless the Carmen is a twelfth-century
romance such editorial vagaries are inconceivable. ‘De-bunking’ was not
an art much practised in the eleventh century.

On the other hand, if William of Poitiers used the poem as one of his
sources, his treatment of it is always explicable. His contractions, omissions,
and insertions are exactly what we would expect from a later writer with
the set purpose of justifying and glorifying the duke. Also his treatment of
the poem supports the view that it was the one composed by Bishop Guy
of Amiens. Although William regarded it as sometimes inept, occasionally
even offensive, he was writing in the bishop’s lifetime and refrained from
direct reference and explicit criticism. He confined himself to a few pointed
but tactful corrections when he considered that the poet was blatantly
inadequate or tendentious. \[ \sqrt{1-1} \frac{\wedge}{\wedge} \frac{5}{5} \]

To sum up, whereas at no point does the poet give the impression that
he was making use of an earlier narrative account, at several points we get
the strong impression that William of Poitiers had the Carmen before him.
Although conclusive proof cannot be claimed, is perhaps impossible, a
strong circumstantial case can be made that the poem was written by Guy,
\[ \sqrt{7886} \]

Apart from emphasizing the contribution of the auxiliaries and their leaders, he
balances English and Norman scenes. Although he ‘vituperates’ Harold, he stresses the
loyal support given him by the English nobility; cf. lines 190–4. William of Poitiers’s
version of this passage is typically ‘slanted’ (p. 186): ‘Studium pars Heraldo, cum
patricie praestabant, quam contra extraneos, tametsi non juste, defensare volebant.’
The Carmen de Hastiniae Proelio

bishop of Amiens, between 1068 and 1070 and became one of William of Poitiers's sources.

If the case is considered proved, or even likely, the consequences must be faced. Although William of Poitiers had the advantage of at least two written sources, was in a position to check some aspects of their accounts, and could, had he wished, have interrogated eye-witnesses, he himself had no firsthand knowledge of the campaign in England, was strongly biased, and was not writing history. It must be accepted that, in composing a panegyric of the Conqueror, he had little interest in the accuracy of the military detail: all that he required was sufficient suitable material to enable him to make his points, to portray the Normans as an invincible race and the duke as the possessor of all the virtues. In his selection of material he was not guided by a disinterested passion for the truth. We may be pained by the poet's ignorance and flights of fancy; William of Poitiers was probably much more disturbed by the unsuitable bias of the poem. It may be that in some ways, especially by omission and insertion, he improved the poet's account. But it should have become apparent that we can put only a limited trust in both these writers, that we cannot argue confidently that William corroborates some of the poet's detail, and that there is no valid reason why we should always prefer William to the poet when they disagree. Above all, we should resist the temptation to write the history of this period in more detail than the quality of the sources warrants. We should regard the battle of Hastings as being almost as obscure as the battles at Gate Fulford and Stamfordbridge.

APPENDIX A

The Date of Bishop Guy's Death

Guy died on 21 November⁷⁰ in a year which cannot be determined with certainty. According to Hariulf,⁷¹ it was the year in which Abbot Gervin of St Riquier died, and he attributes the abbot's death to 1074, indictment 11, 14 Philip of France,⁷² a year of grace and indictment confirmed earlier in the

The indictment is wrong: it should be 12; 11 is the indictment for 1073; but the chronicler also made a mistake with the indictment for 1067, although he gives it correctly for 1071. The regnal year, however, is right. As the chronicler seems to calculate this from the death of Philip's father and not from Philip's coronation, 14 Philip represents 29 August 1073–29 August 1074. So far so good, the abbot would seem to have died between January and August 1074. Unfortunately, we run into difficulty with the day and the month, which are given in another context. The entry reads, 'feria iii secundae hebdomodae quae habebatur v nonas Martii'. The difficulty is that 3 March can hardly be explained by the first part of the expression, which seems to mean, 'Tuesday of the second week [of Lent]', an equation which is false for 1074, although true for 1075. As we can dismiss 1073 for the abbot's death with some confidence, we are left with the choice between 1074 and 1075.

The editors of Gallia Christiana decided in favour of 1075, but on evidence which does not seem to support their conclusion, although they have usually been quoted as though they had produced convincing proof. They give this date to a charter of Philip of France in favour of the church of Compiègne, witnessed by eleven archbishops and bishops, including Guy of Amiens. The date, Paris 1092, which appears in the printed text, is certainly incorrect, for Geoffrey, bishop of Auxerre, died on 16 November 1076. But the one clear terminus a quo, 1071, the date of the accession of Richard, archbishop of Bourges, does not help us. The date 1075 is presumably based on the witness of Walter, bishop of Troyes, who, according to Gams, died in the year of his ordination; but what this year was does not seem to be known. It lay, apparently, between c. 1072, when his predecessor died, and 1075, when his successor was appointed. All that we learn, therefore, from this charter is that Guy was alive at some point between 1071, or 1072, and 1075, something we knew already.

The terminus ad quem for Guy's death is 15 October 1076, when a
bishop-elect of Amiens occurs. Hence Guy died in November 1075 or
November 1074. Since there is no satisfactory proof that Guy was alive in
1075 the problem cannot as yet be solved.

APPENDIX B

The Coronation Ordo in 1066

The ordo used at the two coronations in 1066 is unknown. One composed
between 1077 and 1085 is extant and the laudes at the coronation of Queen
Matilda in 1068 have been preserved. Most likely at Christmas 1066 an
Anglo-Saxon ordo was modified to include the laudes already familiar in
Normandy and to meet the special circumstances, e.g. the presence of
two nations at the ceremony.

The order of service described in the Carmen is as follows:

Processio to St Peter’s

The clergy are followed by the king and nobles.
The king is supported by a metropolitan on each side.
Laudes are sung.
The king is led to his royal seat in the church.

Presentation of the king to the people

The precentor orders silence.
A Norman, then an English, bishop from the pulpit presents the king to
the congregation and asks it to accept him.
The congregation acclaims William.

80 Gallia Christiana, x. 1166.
81 Three Coronation Orders, ed. J. Wickham Legg, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1900,
vol. xix, pp. 53–64; Liber pontificalis Chr. Bainbridge archiepiscopi Eboracensis, ed. W. G.
82 Three are known, and are most recently dated by Schramm: ‘Dunstan’ ordo I
(‘Leofric’ recension), drawn up between 960 and 973, P. E. Schramm, ‘Die Krönung
bei den Westfranken und Angelsachsen von 878 bis um 1100’, Zeitschrift der Savigny-
Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, vol. liv, Kanonistische Abteilung, xxiii (Weimar 1934),
212–18; ‘Dunstan’ ordo II (‘Egbert’ recension), drawn up between 960 and 973,
Leopold G. Wickham Legg, English Coronation Records, London, 1901, 3–9; and
‘Edgar’ ordo, for the coronation of Edgar in 973, ibid. pp. 15–23.
83 H. Lorioquet and J. Pothier, Le graduel de l’église cathédrale de Rouen, vol. i, Rouen
1907, pl. I.
The coronation mass

The archbishop, the bishops, and the king lie down before the altar. The precentor, standing, starts Kyrie eleison.
Litany (preces sanctorum).
The archbishop and bishops stand up, leaving the king prostrate. The precentor and the congregation are silent. The archbishop orders the people to pray. Introit (he starts the proper office).
Collect.
The archbishop raises the king from the dust. He pours out the chrism and anoints the king’s head with it.

This clearly unfinished account is not in agreement with the surviving Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman ordines. It is almost certainly wrong in omitting the promissiones regis, for they were a regular feature both before and after 1066, and ‘Florence of Worcester’ states that Archbishop Ealdred administered the oath in 1066.84 It is probably wrong in assigning the first address to a Norman and the second to an English bishop, for William of Poitiers gives the much more likely order of the archbishop of York followed by the bishop of Coutances.85 During the procession it was usual to sing an anthem, not the laudes; indeed, in the poet’s account the laudes reappear as litania and preces sanctorum. These improbabilities shake our confidence in the accuracy of the poet’s account and suggest that he had no firsthand acquaintance either with the actual ceremony in 1066 or with any English ordo. But they are evidence of ignorance not of the poet’s remoteness in time from the event he describes. There is no anachronism, and the mention of chrism points to an eleventh-century attitude.

84 Chronicon ex chronicis, ed. B. Thorpe, i. p. 229.
85 GG, p. 220.
PONTHIEU, BOULOGNE, NORMANDY AND ENGLAND (counts of Ponthieu in italic type)

Hugh Capet
duke of the Franks

Hugh = Gela
castellan of Abbeville
advocate of St Riquer

Guerinfridus
lord of Aumale

Enguerrand I =
occ. 1026, 1043

Adelaide =
of Ghent

Baldwin II
count of Boulogne
killed 1033

Lambert II
count of Louvain

Bertha = Hugh II
ob. 20 Nov.
1052

Guy = Richard II
bishop of Amiens
count of Normandy
1027-35

Robert I
996-1026

Papia

Guy = Adila/Ada
Fulk
monk of St
Riquer, abbot
of Forest l'Abbeye

Fulk

Eustace I =
count of Boulogne
1033-c.
1047

Judith =
Richard II
count of Normandy
1027-35

William =
daughter
of Arques

Ida =
Eustace II =
Godgifu =
Drogo

Eustace II =
Godgifu =
Drogo

Edward the Con-
count of the
fessor, king of
Vexin
England 1042-66

ob. 1035

Aethelred
king of England

Godfrey
duke of Lower Lorraine
king of Jerusalem

Enguerrand II
1052-3

Adeliza =
Enguerrand II
ob. ante 1100

Adeliza

Agnes/Anna = Robert of Bellême

Baldwin
king of Jerusalem

Walter III
count of Mantes
ob. post 1063

Ralf
earl of Hereford
ob. 1057

Fulk bishop of Amiens
1030-58
The Napoleonic Wars were a period of transition, of uncertainty and violent fluctuations in the history of Anglo-Russian relations. During them the relationship between the two states was still powerfully influenced, especially in the first years of the nineteenth century, by well entrenched traditions of friendship. During previous generations it had been widely felt in both countries that Britain with her wealth and sea power and Russia with her great military strength were in some sense complementary. They seemed then to be united by a mutual hostility to France and still more by strong and durable commercial links, and were clearly not divided by any territorial rivalries. But side by side with the persistence of this traditional viewpoint can be seen the growth on both sides during the Napoleonic Wars of a feeling that the march of events was now bringing the two states more and more into conflict. For various reasons distrust and resentment were now growing rapidly, in Russia as in Britain, especially during the latter years of these wars. In this interplay between persisting eighteenth-century habits and traditions and the growth of antagonisms which were to be characteristic of much of the nineteenth century lies the essential interest of Anglo-Russian relations in this period. And in this interplay, it may be argued, the creation of Napoleon’s Continental System was merely an incident, though a striking and important one.

The extreme anti-British animus which had dominated the tsar Paul during the last months of his reign, until his murder in March 1801, had been largely a product of the tsar’s unbalanced personality. It was opposed by many of his ministers, notably by his chief adviser on foreign policy, Count N. P. Panin.¹ Yet in a modified form it was continued by

¹ See Panin’s memorandum on Russian foreign policy, written sometime between the second half of March and the end of June 1801, in Vneshnaya Politika Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka, 1st series, vol. 1, Moscow, 1960, p. 66.
Continental System and Russo-British Relations during Napoleonic Wars

Alexander I until events had proved beyond doubt that it was dangerous to Russian interests. The decaying eighteenth-century tradition of Britain and Russia as natural allies made little impression on the young tsar. Nor did the anti-French and by implication pro-British attitude of most of his younger advisers—Count V. P. Kochubey, Prince A. A. Czartoryski, Count P. A. Stroganov—have much effect on him. He was determined, as he repeatedly stressed, to pursue policies designed merely to safeguard the interests of Russia and avoid unnecessary foreign entanglements; no longer should she be used as a tool by foreign states as had so often happened in the past. By the autumn of 1802, however, he was becoming seriously alarmed by the complete domination of Switzerland which France now threatened, and by Bonaparte’s hints at a possible partition of the Ottoman Empire. By the beginning of 1804 British co-operation against France in Greece and Albania had become an important objective of the Russian government, and in mid-May relations with France were broken off in protest against the kidnapping and execution, two months earlier, of the duc d’Enghien. The outcome was the Anglo-Russian convention of April 1805, an agreement designed not merely to restrain French aggression but to rebuild, on new and better foundations, the whole political structure of Europe.

But the events of the next two years were to give a death-blow to the lingering idea of Britain and Russia as natural allies. By the summer of 1807 Alexander I had made peace with Napoleon and become in effect his ally against Britain. By November of that year Britain and Russia were at war. In so far as the two partners were responsible for the collapse of the 1805 alliance Britain, or at least the Whig governments which were in power from January 1806 to March 1807, must bear most of the blame. The British government failed to meet the wishes of Russia with regard to subsidies—perhaps excusably, in view of the amounts lavished over the last decade in useless payments to continental allies. More serious, it made impossible, by refusing adequate funds, a diversionary attack from Pomerania on Napoleon’s communications across north Germany, which

2 Though the British ambassador in St Petersburg at first hoped that it would (St Helens to Lord Hawkesbury, 19 October 1801, British Museum Add. MS. 38237, folio 150).

Gustavus IV of Sweden was anxious to launch after the battle of Jena. Above all it failed to use the considerable British army in landings on the coasts of the French-held parts of Europe in 1806–07, landings which would have diverted elsewhere part of the great force which Napoleon was able to concentrate against Russia in Poland and East Prussia during these critical months. The effects of the British attitude, coupled with those of France’s military victories, can be seen in the growing strength in St Petersburg of isolationist and anti-British forces typified by Baron A. Ya. Budberg, who became minister for foreign affairs in June 1806, by N. P. Rumyantsev, minister of commerce, and his brother Count S. P. Rumyantsev, and by Admiral P. V. Chichagov, the navy minister. In Britain also the belief in an Anglo-Russian alliance as ‘natural’ had been greatly weakened by the events of 1805–07. After Tilsit Russia seemed to most British observers to have betrayed her ally. Moreover, even her power to resist France effectively if she wished now seemed open to the gravest doubts. Most Englishmen were deeply and rather unfairly disappointed by her military achievements against the French.

For the five years which followed the Tilsit agreement Napoleon’s Continental System was the greatest single factor in Anglo-Russian relations. Yet it introduced no new element into those relations; it merely emphasized a number of facts which had been visible for some time. In particular it drove home the fact that imports of raw materials from Russia, and to a lesser extent exports of manufactured goods to her, were now less essential to Britain’s economy than had often been thought.

About the effect of the Continental System on Anglo-Russian trade it is difficult to generalize satisfactorily for a number of reasons. In the first place the effectiveness with which trade links between the two powers were severed varied very considerably in the years 1807–12. The break which came in the late autumn of 1807 had been long foreseen, and efforts were made by the British government to obtain before the blow fell as


large supplies as possible of iron, naval stores and other commodities needed for the navy. About seventy British merchantmen arrived at Kronstadt for this purpose as late as October 1807. By 7 November, when Alexander declared war on Britain, only four of these were still in port and hence sequestrated by the Russians. At the other ports most frequented by British ships, Riga and Archangel, trade went on normally to the very outbreak of war, and the total value of Anglo-Russian trade in 1807 was almost exactly the same as in the preceding year. The import of timber and certain other raw materials from Russia to Britain even increased as compared with 1806.

It was in 1808 that the commercial effects of Russia’s new attitude first became apparent. British trade with her continued, but with difficulty and at a much lower level than in previous years. At Kronstadt, where it was easy for the French embassy at St Petersburg to observe what was happening and to complain of infractions of the Continental System, very few British ships appeared. At Riga, on the other hand, a good deal of trade was carried on, much of it by British ships flying the flags of the United States or the Hanse towns; and at Archangel, where the authority of the Russian government and the observation of French diplomats were both less effective, trade seems to have been relatively easy. But a sharp reduction in the total of Anglo-Russian trade was reflected in a correspondingly sharp rise in the price of hemp, the raw material above all others for which Britain depended upon Russia (from £66 per ton for ‘St Petersburg clean’ at the end of 1807 to £118 a year later). It was also seen in a rapid drop in the amount of cotton yarn imported into Russia, overwhelmingly from Britain, and a rise of 58 per cent in its price compared with that prevailing in 1807, even allowing for the continuous depreciation of the paper rouble which was now taking place. 6 A British naval commander in the Baltic commented, with a good deal of exaggeration, that ‘it is melancholy to think of the immense trade which so lately gave consideration to these ports [i.e. the Russian Baltic ports] and now to behold the whole extent of coast from Riga downwards without even a fishing boat daring to venture out’. 7

---

M. S. Anderson

On the other hand 1809, and perhaps also the first half of 1810, saw British trade with Russia once more flowing at something like its peace-time volume. An imperial ukaz of May 1809 ordered that the genuinely neutral character of all ships arriving in Russian ports under neutral flags should be carefully certified and that their papers should be sent to St Petersburg to be scrutinized there; but it seems clear that this had little effect and that the Russian authorities frequently accepted as genuine ships’ papers and captains’ declarations as to ports of origin and destinations which were certainly false. The more or less normal level which Anglo-Russian trade reached in 1809 was reflected in a marked fall in the price of hemp during the year (from £118 to £72 per ton). From the summer of 1810 onwards, however, the obstacles in the way of this trade steadily increased; they were to remain very formidable until the spring of 1812. During 1810 137 British ships loaded on account of British merchants were seized in Russian ports, nearly all of them in the second half of the year, and the greater part of their cargoes confiscated and sold.

It is true that Russia, by the end of the year, was showing unmistakably that she was no longer willing to submit to the economic restrictions which Napoleon was trying to impose upon her. Neither the Trianon decree of August 1810 (which placed very heavy duties upon all colonial goods imported into French-controlled Europe) nor the Fontainebleau decrees of October (which ordered the burning of all British manufactured goods confiscated on the territory of France and her satellites) were accepted by the Russian government. On the contrary, Alexander I issued, on 31 December, a well-known ukaz which, in effect, prohibited the entry into Russia of French manufactured goods, particularly silks, and also allowed genuinely neutral ships to trade with Russian ports. This, coupled with the refusal to enforce the Trianon and Fontainebleau decrees, meant that Russia had broken with the Continental System. By 1811 French goods were being burnt in Russia and Russian ones in France. But there was no resumption of normal trade with Britain. In principle all Anglo-Russian trade was still prohibited, and the import of many types of British manufactured goods was explicitly forbidden by the ukaz of 31 December

1810. Such goods entered Russia during 1811 and the first half of 1812 only with difficulty and in small quantities; and though the Russian government now did little to hinder exports to Britain, stocks of timber and hemp there were by the end of 1810 so high that there was little incentive to import these commodities on a large scale.

During 1811, when the Continental System was in many ways at the highest pitch of effectiveness it ever achieved, it was above all the growth of her exports to southern Europe which kept Britain’s head above water commercially. Moreover, the British government was now in its turn willing to restrict trade with Russia and the other Baltic countries and thus bring home to them the degree to which they depended economically on their ability to export to Britain. In July 1811 it decided that British merchants applying for a licence to import Baltic commodities must undertake to export a cargo of British goods to that area as a condition of receiving one. Only 550 licences for trade with the Baltic were issued in 1811 as against 1,689 in the previous year. Even in 1812, after Britain and Russia had made peace at Örebrö on 18 July and Russian ports had been formally reopened to British ships by an ukaz of 16 August, the decree of 31 December 1810 continued to restrict or prohibit the import into Russia of many British manufactured goods. The revival of British trade with the Baltic which undoubtedly took place in 1812 was based on an increase in Britain’s exports of colonial produce (sugar, coffee, and tobacco) much more than on greater exports of manufactures. Pokrovskii’s remark that ‘in practice the economic war with England was ended from the very minute when a tariff war was declared on France’ is a great exaggeration.

The picture of Anglo-Russian trade in the years 1807–12 is thus one of violent fluctuations. But one generalization, which was frequently put forward at the time, seems justified. It is that the Continental System injured Russia rather than Great Britain. Well before 1807 Russia had become a market of only secondary importance for British exports. She remained very much more important as a source of imports to Britain (in 1803–05 she supplied 8.6 per cent by value of all British imports) and many of the raw materials she supplied, such as timber, hemp, and perhaps iron, were of great importance to the British navy. But there was only one commodity—hemp—Russian supplies of which were really difficult to

---

M. S. Anderson

replace. The interruption of trade with Russia was therefore for Britain a nuisance rather than a disaster. For Russia, on the other hand, it was argued by some well-informed contemporaries, it meant serious difficulties, particularly for those members of the nobility whose finances depended on the export to Britain of naval stores produced on their estates, and also a serious loss of revenue through the lowered yield of customs duties. Sir Stephen Shairp, the British consul-general in St Petersburg, who was regarded as an expert on everything pertaining to Anglo-Russian trade, had expected in 1807, much too optimistically, that these difficulties would soon force the tsar to abandon any participation in the Continental System. 10

The belief that trade with Russia, and indeed with the whole Baltic area, was something Britain could do without, led to demands by some vociferous pressure groups for an ending of all contact with the area and a blockade of the whole Baltic coastline by the British fleet. This, it was argued, would soon show Russia in particular how much she depended on trade with Britain. 'Let her be one year without exporting,' wrote Sir Stephen Shairp, still optimistic, in December 1809, 'and she will really appreciate the value of our connexion.' 11 Also Britain's trade with the Baltic was carried on, during the Continental System, largely by foreign ships whose owners benefited by very high freight rates and whose crews received high wages; this annoyed British shipowners, many of whom argued that Britain should concentrate rather upon trades such as those with America and the colonies, which could safely be carried on in British ships. It could even be argued that the high freights paid to continental ships trading to the Baltic on British account were a major reason for the currency difficulties which Britain was experiencing. 12 Moreover, a British licence for the import of goods from the Baltic in a neutral ship might well be used merely to cover a shipment from one hostile port to another. One pamphleteer alleged that in 1810 at least thirty-seven ships with British licences arrived in Dutch ports from Archangel, mainly with cargoes of

10 Shairp to Canning, 9 and 18 September and 28 October 1807, Public Record Office, F.O. 65/71.
12 J. Inglis, Commerce as it was, is, and ought to be, London, 1811, passim. The freight of a ton of hemp from St Petersburg to London cost in peacetime about £2. By the autumn of 1809 it had touched £30. The rise, though shortlived, was very striking.

74
All these arguments led to the conclusion that Britain should do Napoleon's work for him and enforce a Continental System of her own, at least as far as the Baltic countries were concerned, since this would injure them, and particularly Russia, more than it would Britain.

This viewpoint underestimated the difficulties involved in a complete cessation of trade with Russia. Some imports from her could be replaced with relative ease; for example, the fats used in the soapmaking industry, which she had hitherto provided, were replaced from 1808 onwards almost entirely by supplies from the La Plata area of South America. But a long series of experiments in India, Australia, and Ireland failed to develop any satisfactory alternative source of hemp; the British navy depended on Russia for this essential commodity throughout the period. Moreover, although imports of timber from Canada increased rapidly from 1806 onwards Baltic timber was probably superior for shipbuilding to that from any other source. In particular, prolonged inability to import masts from Russia would certainly have had serious repercussions on the efficiency of the navy.

The writers who urged that Britain should voluntarily abandon her trade with Russia were therefore almost certainly mistaken. Nevertheless, the fact that such arguments could be advanced and could appear plausible to many contemporaries shows that the importance to Britain of this trade, and therefore of the way in which it was distorted and impeded during this period, can easily be exaggerated. By 1811 Britain was in serious economic difficulties. But these had little to do with the hindrances which Napoleon and Alexander placed in the way of trade with Russia, and perhaps little to do even with the Continental System as a whole. Their origins lay in the fall during that year in British exports to the United States and to the former Spanish colonies rather than in events in Europe.

In Russia the dislocation of Anglo-Russian trade had more serious

13 *An inquiry into the state of our commercial relations with the Northern powers*, London, 1811, p. 32.

14 A discussion of differing contemporary views of the commercial policy to be followed by Britain in the Baltic can be found in A. N. Ryan, 'Trade with the enemy in the Scandinavian and Baltic ports during the Napoleonic Wars: for and against', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, vol. xii, 1962, pp. 123-40.

15 In May 1812 Byam Martin looked forward to a reconciliation with Russia which would give Britain 'naval stores at half the present cost... to say nothing of the good timber we should get, in any quantity, instead of the rotten stuff from America' (*Letters*, vol. ii, p. 176).
repercussions than in England. This was partly because of the great rôle played by British merchants in the foreign trade of the country before 1807; in 1804, according to a well-informed contemporary, 35 per cent of the imports and 63 per cent of the exports passing through St Petersburg were handled by British merchant houses. It was also partly because by he later stages of the Napoleonic Wars Britain had acquired virtually a world monopoly of the supply of many important tropical and colonial products; and the fluctuations of Anglo-Russian trade meant corresponding fluctuations in the price of these in Russia. Moreover, exports of grain from Russia fell sharply in the years after 1807 (wheat exports were down by five-sixths in 1806–10 compared with 1801–05), and the nascent Russian cotton industry, already of some importance, was seriously hampered in its growth by sharp variations in the supply and price of imported English yarn. (Raw cotton, available from the Near East, Persia and even Central Asia, was never really difficult to obtain.)

Even in Russia, however, the effects of the Continental System can be easily exaggerated. It seems to have had little influence on the most striking development in the country’s economic life during this period—the great fall in the purchasing power of the paper rouble and of its value in terms of foreign currencies. This fall seriously tilted the balance of trade against Russia, since it reduced the foreign currency value of her exports and increased the price she had to pay for many imported goods. But it was not caused by the workings of the Continental System. The reason for it is clearly to be sought in the issue by Alexander I during the early years of his reign of enormous quantities of ‘assignat’ (paper) roubles. In 1807–10 he issued nearly 367 million roubles’ worth of paper money, well over twice as much as Catherine the Great had printed during the whole of her reign, and 260 million of this was issued in 1807–10. The result was that the paper rouble, which as late as 1806 was worth about three-quarters of its face value, had a purchasing power of only a third of its face value by the

16 J. Jepson Oddy, European commerce, shewing new and secure channels of trade with the continent of Europe, London, 1805, p. 132.
17 See the examples given in A. Semyonov, Izuchenie istoricheskikh sudenii o Rossiiskoi vneshnei torgovlei i promyshlennosti s Poloviny XVII-go stoletiya po 1858 god, St Petersburg, 1859, pt. III, pp. 53–54.
end of 1809 and only a fifth by the end of 1810. It is impossible, however, to show that this had much to do with the effects of the Continental System; the over-issue of paper roubles had begun long before the Tilsit agreement and they continued to be worth no more than a quarter of their face value for several years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. It is important, moreover, to remember how much less important foreign trade was to Russia than to Britain. The annual value of her internal trade in the first years of the nineteenth century has been estimated, very approximately, at 500 million roubles. That of her imports and exports combined reached hardly a quarter of this figure. Resentment in St Petersburg of French interference with Russia's foreign trade was merely one source, though an important one, of the Franco-Russian conflict which broke out in 1812. Other factors did as much, or more, to cause it—disagreement between Napoleon and Alexander I over the Near East and particularly over the fate of Constantinople and the Straits; the French seizure, at the end of 1810, of the duchy of Oldenburg, whose ruler was related to the tsar; above all the acute uneasiness aroused in St Petersburg by Napoleon's resurrection in 1807 of an independent Poland, though in the truncated and weakened form of the grand duchy of Warsaw.

In the history of Anglo-Russian relations, therefore, the Continental System is merely an episode. The estrangement of the years 1807–12 weakened still further the already moribund belief that Britain and Russia were natural allies. It showed that the commercial ties between them were less essential, at least from the British viewpoint, than had often been assumed. But it introduced nothing really new into the relationship between the two states.

The catastrophic defeat of the French armies in Russia in 1812 evoked in Britain an unprecedented burst of enthusiasm. 'The Russian news with which the year has ended', wrote a contemporary, 'has been hailed throughout the country with one general shout of delight.' The un-

10 I. I. Kaufmann, Iz istorii bumazhnykh deneg v Rossii, St Petersburg, 1901, pp. 22–23.
21 P. A. Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe razvitie Rossii v XIX–XX vekakh, Moscow, 1950, p. 94.
expectedness of the Russian victory, the fact that until the last weeks of 1812 most people in Britain had been reconciled to witnessing yet another Napoleonic victory, made the destruction of the French army seem even more impressive than it otherwise would have been. From the end of 1812 until well into 1814 British newspaper and pamphlet comment on Russia, and still more on Alexander I, was overwhelmingly favourable. In governing circles, however, enthusiasm for Russia and her victories was much more temporary. The completeness of the success she had won in 1812, the unprecedented advance of her armies in 1813–14 across Poland and Germany to Paris, quickly marked her in the eyes of many British politicians as a threat almost as serious as the Napoleonic empire to the European balance and the freedom of the European nations. In December 1812 Lord Liverpool, the prime minister, had assured Wellington that ‘if there is any political speculation upon which reliance may safely be placed, we may say that Russia is, for ages, alienated from France, and united to this country’. Yet within only a few months of this remark it had become clear that the great influence which Russia had at least temporarily acquired over the German states was by no means welcome in British ruling circles. The abdication of Napoleon and the conclusion of peace with France in May 1814 created a real possibility of Anglo-French cooperation to restrict Russian preponderance in Germany. By September of that year Liverpool, alarmed by the efforts of Alexander to mediate in the Anglo-American war of 1812–14, was afraid that the tsar was ‘half an American’ and therefore an untrustworthy ally. By January 1815 he was relieved to hear that the Russian government was in financial difficulties and insistent that ‘we must take care not to help their finances’.

In Russia the events of 1812 had evoked no pro-British reaction comparable to the temporary pro-Russian one they called forth in Britain. Count N. P. Rumyantsev, who had been foreign minister since February 1808, told the tsar in July 1812 that ‘I have always believed that the British cabinet has as one of its objectives the weakening of your empire’. Like Marshal Kutuzov, the hero of the 1812 campaign, he believed that

23 Anderson, pp. 218 ff., and sources there cited.
26 Historical Manuscripts Commission, Bathurst Manuscripts, p. 324.
Continental System and Russo-British Relations during Napoleonic Wars

Russia should be content with the annihilation of the French forces which had invaded her and with the recovery of most of Poland; she should not neglect her real interests, which lay in the Near East, for a quixotic crusade to liberate Europe from Napoleon. His advice was not taken, and long before his retirement in August 1814 he had ceased to have any real influence on Russian policy. But the pro-British tendencies which had been marked in many of the tsar’s advisers down to about 1806 were notably lacking in many of those who surrounded Alexander in the last years of this period. By 1814, with gratitude for the deliverance of 1812 no longer a factor in British policy, and with fear of Russian power growing in many of the European states, the stage had been set for the conflict of outlooks which was to bring Britain and Russia within sight of war over the Saxon-Polish question at Vienna in January 1815.

Anglo-Russian relations during the Napoleonic Wars were determined by political factors. The economic links between the two countries had now lost, if they had ever possessed it, the power to dominate the relationship between them. The Continental System, with the economic dislocation it inflicted on both states, was therefore an episode, not a turning-point, in that relationship. In their political environment, moreover, there was one factor alone which was really effective in bringing them together—mutual fear and dislike of France. On the two occasions during this period when they were allies, 1805–07 and 1812–14, the alliance was forced upon them, and particularly upon Russia, by the aggressions of France. Almost all the other political factors affecting the relationship between them tended to drive them apart—a nascent rivalry for power in the Mediterranean, which was to some extent implicit in the bickering over Malta in the first years of the century and which became more obvious during the Russian occupation of the Ionian Islands in 1805–07; signs, though as yet minor ones, of growing competition between them in the Near East; differences in their attitude to the German states; British fears, after 1813, of Russian dominance in Europe; Russian resentment of the selfishness of Britain’s attitude, of her willingness to use Russia as a mere instrument as she had seemed to do in 1806–07; above all the growing sympathy in Britain, at least in liberal and radical circles, for the Poles, and the resulting growth of hostility to Russia, their oppressor. By 1814–15 the idea of Britain and Russia as natural allies, as states which complemented and did not compete with each other, was not dead, at
least in Britain. But it had been gravely weakened. A powerful Russia no longer seemed to most Englishmen, as it had during much of the eighteenth century, a guarantee against excessive French influence in Europe and a state which Britain would never have to fear. Though the transition from the eighteenth-century position was still far from complete, Anglo-Russian relations had now assumed much of their nineteenth-century form, one which was to be marked by distrust and competition rather than by friendship and co-operation.
Some years ago, *The American Foreign Service Journal* received an article about Prussian and German diplomats in which the name Humboldt appeared. When they published it, the editors embellished the text with a photograph of Alexander von Humboldt, the explorer and natural philosopher.1 This was a natural enough slip; Alexander von Humboldt was much better known in the United States than his elder brother Wilhelm, and the large number of American towns and counties that bear the family name are, like the Humboldt Current, named for him. Even so, it is a bit startling to find a professional journal devoted to diplomacy confused about which of the brothers was the statesman,2 and this may be taken as symptomatic of a general lack of awareness and appreciation of Wilhelm von Humboldt's diplomatic talents and achievements. Even specialists on the Napoleonic period and historians of the Congress of Vienna have been guilty of this. In his work on Castlereagh, Sir Charles Webster makes no more than casual reference to Humboldt and is misleading with respect to his objectives and his relations with his superiors.3 Sir Harold Nicolson, usually a shrewd judge of diplomatic stature, mentions Humboldt only five times in a three hundred page account of the Congress of Vienna, and in Henry A. Kissinger's rather longer book on the


2 Occasionally the brothers were confused by contemporaries. On 13 December 1813, Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote to his wife from Darmstadt that, at a recent dinner with the grand duke, some of the female guests had thought he was Alexander and that he had not corrected this impression until they became too pressing about crocodiles and tigers. *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in ihren Briefe*, edited by Anna von Sydow, vol. iv, Berlin, 1910, p. 196. (Hereinafter cited as Briefe.)

diplomacy of the period after 1812, Humboldt's name barely manages to get into the index.4

This is hardly generous treatment of one who has a right to be called the most formidable diplomatic talent in the Prussian service before Bismarck's day, and it would have seemed odd to Humboldt's contemporaries. During the negotiations in Vienna in 1814, onlookers regarded him as one of 'two great contending athletes [in comparison to whom] the other delegates seem[ed] to make little impression,' (the second being Talleyrand).5 Friedrich von Gentz said that the representatives of the assembled powers generally regarded him as the 'most significant' figure in the deliberations, while Talleyrand, who had no reason to love his great antagonist, said that Europe possessed only three or four diplomats of Humboldt's stature and competence.6

These contemporary judgements are certainly not free of hyperbole, but a review of the relatively brief diplomatic phase of Humboldt's varied career tends to support them. It also throws light on some problems that have been endemic to diplomacy in general, and Prusso-German diplomacy in particular.

I

Like his greater follower Bismarck, Humboldt came to the world of international statecraft late and reluctantly. He had turned his back on the world of practical politics in 1791 at the age of twenty-three, after a scant year's service as Auskultator (junior counsellor) in the Berlin city court, and, despite the storms and crises that affected his country for the next eighteen years, he remained intent upon his own aesthetic education and absorbed in travel and theoretical studies of literature, art and language. His service as Prussian resident in Rome in the years 1802–09 marked no break in this aloofness from politics, for his duties in the papal capital were few and encroached in no significant way upon his programme of reading or his linguistic studies.

5 August Fournier, Die Geheimpolizei auf dem Wiener Congress, Vienna, 1913, p. 386.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

If he had had his way, he would have lived his life out in these pleasant circumstances, but this design was frustrated by two men: Napoleon, who deprived Prussia of most of her Catholic inhabitants by the Tilsit settlement, and thus made it unnecessary for the state to maintain a mission in Rome, and Stein, who, on the eve of his own dismissal from the Prussian ministry, offered Humboldt the post of minister of public instruction in a way that made it impossible for him to refuse it. This office, in which Humboldt rendered those services to the Prussian state for which he is usually remembered, proved to be a way-station between the scholarly and diplomatic phases of his career, for in June 1810 he was surprised to hear from the lips of the new state chancellor, Hardenberg, that the king had appointed him ambassador to Vienna.

It cannot be said that he was overjoyed by the prospect. Indeed, he reacted to it with even less enthusiasm than Bismarck was to show when he was appointed envoy to the Frankfurt Diet in 1851. Even three years later Humboldt could write to his wife that he detested drafting diplomatic notes, and that, although he had got used to it, it was against his whole nature, which could also be said of all aspects of the ambassador's life. The indefiniteness of the work, the continual dependence upon foreign initiative, the stretches of idleness that so frequently interrupt business, and the protocol—all this thoroughly repels me. It is only the freedom that the occupation affords, as well as my love for foreign countries and my penchant for seeing my own from abroad, that could ever have led me into it.

To make things worse he found himself in the most awkward and exasperating of all possible positions for the working diplomat, that of being distrusted both by his own court and the one to which he was accredited. It is highly likely that the principal reason for his appointment

7 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 116.
9 Compare Bismarck's letter to his wife in 1851: 'In the art of saying absolutely nothing with lots of words I am making raging progress, and I write dispatches of many pages which read just as plain and blunt as any leading article, and if Manteuffel [the minister president] can say what's in them after he has read them, then he can do more than I.' Briefe an seine Frau und Gattin, Stuttgart, 1920, p. 281.
10 Briefe, vol. iv, p. 70.
was Hardenberg's desire to remove him from Berlin, lest his ideas on ministerial reform prove embarrassing. This design was facilitated by a rumour, which the chancellor made no effort to check, to the effect that Humboldt was a member of the *Tugendbund*, a kind of moral uplift society founded in 1808, which had gained an undeserved reputation for conspiratorial and revolutionary intentions and had, in Clausewitz's words, become 'a chimera with which one keeps the people and court of Berlin in continual terror'.

Unfortunately, the court of Francis I was just as susceptible to this kind of nonsense as that of Frederick William III, and, for some time after his arrival in Vienna, Humboldt found himself threatened with political ostracism.

This situation was not relieved by the fact that Hardenberg kept him imperfectly informed about developments in Berlin and, not infrequently, used special envoys to do business that should properly have fallen within the province of the embassy, practices hardly calculated to raise Humboldt's prestige in Vienna. At a later date he described his position at the inception of his mission in language that could have been echoed by some of Bismarck's envoys (and, indeed, by some of John Foster Dulles's):

> Given the nature of my situation here—knowing nothing of the real intentions of the King and Your Excellency, receiving the disclosures of Count Metternich less as official communications than as friendly advice (and because of this receiving them all too late and unsystematically) and often not daring to make use of them in reports to my government—I could in no way work effectively for the King's service, and even as a simple observer had no confidence in [the effect of] my reports, which could only be understood if one kept this peculiar situation constantly in mind and regarded it from my standpoint. This situation was extremely painful to me.

This was, perhaps, overstated. In the course of his first year in Vienna, Humboldt managed to overcome both the doubts of his superiors in Berlin and the suspicions of his hosts. His impeccable social background

---

11 Carl von Clausewitz, *Politische Schriften und Briefe*, edited by Hans Rothfels, Munich, 1922, p. 84.


Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat
gave him the *entrée* to the great houses of Vienna, particularly those of political importance, and his light, unconstrained, and agreeable manner (which Callières had recommended to an earlier generation as the proper and effective attitude for the diplomat in society\(^\text{14}\)) belied and in the end dissipated the rumours that surrounded him. More important was the fact that he gained Metternich’s confidence, principally, one gathers, by giving no credence in his reports to gossip designed to weaken the Austrian chancellor’s own position and by remaining aloof from the anti-Metternich *fronde* in Vienna. One of the earliest and soundest judgements that Humboldt made after entering the jungle of Austrian politics was that Metternich was shrewder than any of his rivals and would hold on to his post, a view not widely held in 1810.\(^\text{15}\) Sensing this,\(^\text{16}\) Metternich responded by opening as much of his mind to the Prussian ambassador as he did to any foreign representative.

Humboldt’s relations with his own government changed markedly during the first eighteen months of his mission, and this was due primarily to the quality of his dispatches—despite what he was to say later on about the labours of drafting them. In them he did more than make a correct guess about Metternich’s staying-power. The critical question upon which the Berlin court needed information in 1811 was what the Austrian government would do in the event that the deterioration of relations between France and Russia should lead to war between those powers. On the basis of his conversations with Metternich and a shrewd assessment of Austria’s financial and military resources, Humboldt supplied the right answer in a series of reports that infuriated the patriotic party in Berlin and removed the *Tugendbund* label, at least temporarily, from his own person.\(^\text{17}\) In the event of a Franco-Russian war, he wrote, Austria could not be


\(^{15}\) The best expression of this, as well as Humboldt’s most extensive appraisal of Metternich’s personality and policy, is in his dispatch of 17 February 1811. *Wilhelm von Humboldts Gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Königlichen Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. xi, Berlin, 1903, pp. 5–8.

\(^{16}\) Gebhardt, vol. i, p. 388 n.

expected to withstand French pressure for an alliance, the more so because Russian policy in the Balkans had aroused the liveliest suspicions in Vienna.\textsuperscript{18} The Prussian government must therefore guard against basing its own policy upon the expectation that Austria would try to remain neutral or experiment with armed intervention; and, whatever its own sympathies in the event of war, it must be careful not to commit itself to Russia too soon. This line of reasoning, repeated and elaborated throughout 1811, conformed to Frederick William’s own prejudices, and his ambassador’s reports had a not inconsiderable effect upon his decision, in February 1812, to yield to Napoleon’s insistence and to conclude an alliance with him, which promised, at small cost, to guarantee Prussia’s safety until the European situation was somewhat clearer. However much Humboldt may have personally regretted this step, the soundness of the reports that had induced it was demonstrated when the Austrian government concluded a similar alliance with France on 14 March 1812.

At the end of his diplomatic career, Humboldt wrote: ‘Nothing is as important in any political process as the ability to comprehend exactly how things are, whether one wants to leave them that way or to change them.’\textsuperscript{19} His own reports from Vienna exemplified this ability, and this was particularly true after the outbreak of hostilities between France and Russia. War reawakened the hopes of the patriots in Berlin, and, by the time Napoleon had received his first checks at Borodino and Moscow and had begun his great retreat, the most egregious expectations were being entertained about what the German powers might contribute to his discomfiture. Humboldt himself was not insensible to the enthusiasm of the moment, but he did not allow it to distort his judgement. The hatred of France that was so common in Prussia was foreign, he pointed out, to Metternich and the Austrian court. Metternich’s ‘system’ he had described at the outset of the Russian campaign as being directed not to the destruction of French power but to its containment within a just and equitable European order that would secure the independence of the major powers.\textsuperscript{20} Napoleon’s retreat from Russia had not changed the Austrian chancellor’s views.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Gesammelte Schriften}, vol. xi, pp. 17 ff.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

Napoleon's enemies could expect no Austrian support if they fought a war of ideas rather than one of interest or if, in their zeal to overthrow Napoleon, they did so at the expense of the European balance that Metternich was seeking to re-establish. In any event, Austrian policy would continue to be tentative and vacillating in the months that lay ahead, and, if possible, the Prussian government would be well advised to avoid committing itself before the Austrians did. An alliance with Russia might have unfortunate results if the Austrian government decided to place its growing military resources at Napoleon's disposal.  

On this occasion, Humboldt's advice was powerless to check Prussia's drift toward war. As he himself recognized, his country's policy could not be based on long range estimates of Austrian intentions alone; the developing military situation could upset the nicest calculations and present the state with dangers or opportunities so urgent that its policy would in effect be made in the field. The advance of the Russian armies into Europe, the quasi-mutinous action of General von Yorck at Tauroggen, which committed Prussian forces to the Russian cause, and the enthusiasm with which this was greeted throughout East Prussia forced the king's hand; and in mid-March Prussia was at war with Napoleon.

II

This turn of events changed Humboldt's rôle and increased its importance. Till now he had been a mere reporter of conditions and prospects; now, as it became a vital concern of the northern courts to persuade the Austrian government to join the anti-French coalition, he became an advocate as well. From now until the collapse of the Prague conference in August, he was engaged in a continuous process of informal negotiation with Metternich, seeking by a variety of approaches to win a definitive commitment from him. At the same time he found that he had to devote an almost equal amount of his energy and his dialectical skill to combating the forces of impatience, on the one hand, and discouragement, on the other, within the allied camp. Although his work later at the Congress of Vienna is the only aspect of his diplomatic career that has attracted the

attention of western scholars, Humboldt was probably correct in regarding his labours in 1813 as the most important part of his public life.\textsuperscript{23}

Once again his task was complicated by Habsburg fears of revolutionary enthusiasm. The declarations made by Stein and his agents in East Prussia, the inflated rhetoric of some of the more unbuttoned soldiers in the Blücher-Gneisenau camp, and particularly the minatory references to the punishment that would be meted out to the German princelings who had collaborated with Napoleon and to the united Germany that would be erected at their expense, disturbed Emperor Francis and his advisers, and Humboldt was impelled to urge a moderation of language. In allied councils, he wrote, it was customary to talk about the liberation of Germany and Europe, but here one prefers to speak only of political systems and of great powers, and Germany is mentioned infrequently. I am far from approving of this, but I must say that, when I consider the spirit of the communications that come to us from the allied armies and think about our objective, which is to win the princes of Germany to our side, I am inclined more to the manner of regarding things that has been adopted here. I regard it as my duty here to minimize this difference and to prove that basically we are completely united with respect to our goals and objectives.\textsuperscript{24}

In his conversations with Metternich, Humboldt sought to convince the chancellor that Prussia and Russia were also interested in establishing a viable balance of power in Europe, but that the only way that this could be assured would be for Austria to declare itself boldly on their side. To delay doing so unnecessarily would merely protract Napoleon’s resistance and make it more difficult to establish the kind of equilibrium that would provide security for Austria and Prussia. In that case, he argued, posterity would take a dim view of Metternich’s statecraft.\textsuperscript{25}

Privately, Humboldt was perfectly aware that these arguments would not deflect Metternich from the delicate course he was pursuing. A shrewd judge of military facts, he had kept abreast of the build-up of Austria’s armed forces, and he knew that within a few months the chancellor would

\textsuperscript{23} See, for instance, \textit{Briefe}, vol. iv, p. 201, and Schaffstein, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{24} Gebhardt, vol. 1, p. 423.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Gesammelte Schriften}, vol. xi, pp. 32 f.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

have 150,000 men behind him. Metternich was not going to be foolish enough to make any agreements until that force was available to win him good terms, and there was little point in becoming irritated about his studied un receptiveness to allied offers and his cynical trafficking with the French in the meanwhile. In a masterful dispatch of 1 May 1813, Humboldt wrote:

I cannot conceal the fact that, if one examines all the details of the present conduct of the court of Vienna, one finds things either difficult to explain or capable of giving umbrage, but I would think that I was neglecting my duty if I overemphasized these and did not go ahead, asking myself always what are the essential facts about the position of Austria and what are the practical methods best calculated to work on the cabinet here and to lead to a more favourable result.  

It was unfortunate that Austria had not joined the coalition, but, he added with an oblique reference to the Empire's growing military strength, it did no good to be annoyed by this. The allies should remember that, when the time came for the reordering of Europe, the co-operation of all of the powers would be needed. In the meantime, it would be wise to maintain a close and sympathetic understanding with the Austrian government.

Until May Humboldt was forced repeatedly to urge the headstrong allies to be patient with the Austrians and to indulge in no defiant gestures; from then on, after the unexpected and disconcerting Napoleonic victories at Großgörschen and Bautzen, he found himself in the position of arguing against tactics born of panic. To plead frantically for Austrian aid now, he wrote, or to nag at Vienna because of non-fulfilment of promises which Metternich could probably prove that he had never made, would be equally bootless. Far better to make it clear to the Austrians that the recent setbacks were not critical and would not affect the allies' will to victory, and to use language that indicated that they were confidently assuming that, when Austria's military preparations were complete, her government would not hesitate to join them. 'There is a way of expressing confidence', Humboldt wrote to Hardenberg, 'which places an obligation upon him who receives it, and this is the mode that should be employed here.'  

At the same time, it would do no harm to intimate to Metternich that any

26 Ibid., vol. xi, pp. 29 f.
attempt on his part to arrange a peace with Napoleon that did not accord with the interest of the allies would be rejected and that they would take up the fight without Austria, which might be awkward for the Habsburg dynasty in the sequel.\footnote{Ibid., vol. i, p. 433.}

In June 1813, the centre of European diplomatic activity moved from Vienna to the boundary of Bohemia and Silesia. Hoping to exploit the allies’ post-Bautzen discouragement in order to secure a settlement with Napoleon, Metternich and his sovereign moved north so as to be in close contact both with allied headquarters and with the French emperor’s court at Dresden. Simultaneously, Hardenberg authorized Humboldt to hand over the embassy in Vienna to a chargé d’affaires and to join him at Reichenbach. In the king’s entourage the ambassador found muddle and dissension, the Stein-Blücher-Gneisenau party demanding a policy of war à outrance, the king and his close advisers Ancillon and Knesebeck showing every sign of willingness to make peace on any terms. In this situation, Humboldt sided with the soldiers, repeating the advice he had sent on from Vienna. ‘Believe me’, he wrote to his wife on 13 June, ‘I have not been idle and I have advised nothing but the strong line’, so much so, indeed, that Stein said to me today that I was like St Elmo’s fire that shows on the masts of ships when there is a storm.\footnote{Briefe, vol. iv, p. 27.}

It was probably at this time that Metternich began to regret the confidence he had earlier placed in Humboldt and to regard him as an awkward colleague. The Austrian chancellor was relying on the influence of the faint-hearts at allied headquarters to help him get a compromise peace with Napoleon, and the armistice he arranged with Napoleon in June and its subsequent prolongation until 10 August were intended to strengthen their hand. But these tactics availed him nothing because Humboldt, with Hardenberg’s backing, was successful in making allied assent to his arrangements conditional upon Austrian agreement to enter the war on their side if Napoleon did not, in fact, accept peace terms considerably stiffer than Metternich, left to his own resources, would have accepted. The infighting that went on during the complicated negotiations at Ratisborschitz, Gitschin, Opotschina, and Dresden in June and July 1813 is not well documented; but it is known that Humboldt worked persistently to weaken Metternich’s influence at the Prussian court, persuading Harden-
berg to tell the king that he would resign rather than sign a peace that did not give Germany security, and doing his best to get the congenitally pessimistic General-adjutant von Knesebeck replaced by one of the younger and more militant soldiers like Boyen or Grolman.\textsuperscript{30}

At the beginning of July, after reading a memorandum of Knesebeck's, in which the general showed a willingness to lower the price of peace by abandoning such war aims as the dissolution of Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine and the annexation of Magdeburg by Prussia, he wrote a devastating reply in which he once more demonstrated his awareness of the facts of power.

In general it seems difficult to me when speaking of states [he wrote], to separate independence from power. . . . The present moment is doubtless the most critical in which the Prussian monarchy has ever found itself, and certainly nothing would be more criminal than to expose the welfare of the state to the most imminent dangers by false enthusiasm or exaggerated ambitions. But war is not the only thing that destroys states; peace often leads them much more surely to their destruction, by depriving them of the means of defence and leaving them vulnerable to their enemies.\textsuperscript{31}

Rather than accept terms that would be dangerous, Prussia must be prepared, if necessary, to resume the war with Russia as her sole ally. Torn between his desire for peace and his hope of increasing the strength and resources of his country, Frederick William III came down hesitantly on Humboldt's side, perhaps swayed by the ambassador's additional argument that firmness at this juncture represented no great risk, since the logic of events would bring Austria into the war as his ally.

The armistice came to an end in August at a conference in Prague in which Metternich served as mediator between Napoleon and his antagonists, having privately agreed to join the allied cause if the French emperor did not accept their terms.\textsuperscript{32} Since, thanks to Hardenberg and Humboldt, the Prussian and Russian governments had remained true to the essentials of the programme they had agreed on at the time of their alliance—

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 38 ff., 54; Gebhardt, vol. i, p. 446 n.

\textsuperscript{31} Gesammelte Schriften, vol. xi, pp. 67 ff., 82.

namely, the complete destruction of the French position in Germany—Napoleon had no intention of making peace, although it took him some weeks to make this clear. By 10 August, however, there was no mistaking it, and relations with France were broken off. Whatever his hopes and fears, Metternich now had to declare war. As Enno Kraehe has written: "Any other course would have cost him his personal prestige, forever impaired his ability to negotiate, and invited a . . . peace at Austria’s expense."\(^33\)

Humboldt could not help but regard this result as in some measure a personal triumph. On 11 August he wrote to his wife: "I stand at the point I wished to reach. I have now carried through one important matter in my life, although, when I say that, I don’t mean I really did it alone. Other people contributed just as much as I did, the circumstances more, and Napoleon most of all."\(^34\) Two years later, in a letter to Hardenberg, he went a bit farther and ventured an appraisal of his diplomatic activity in the whole period from the time of his appointment to the Vienna post until the collapse of the Prague conference.

When it was a matter [he wrote], of maintaining a just balance between unconsidered judgement and untimely zeal, and when one incurred just as much risk of arousing false expectations by encouraging confidence as of contributing to defeat by awakening distrust, I believe that I can say without boasting that without me the affair would not have succeeded, or would not have turned out as well.\(^35\)

This seems fair enough. Humboldt had counselled patience with Austria when the opposite would have had no effect upon her position and firmness when the reverse might have led to a disastrous peace. He had a right to claim a share in bringing her into the alliance on tolerable terms. But his success was bought at a price. His stubbornness in the matter of peace terms, and his campaign against the appeasers at court, had reawakened his own sovereign’s suspicion of him and revived the Tugendbund myth,\(^36\) while his hard-headed defence of Prussian interests had aroused Metternich’s respect, but also his antagonism. The Austrian

\(^{33}\) Kraehe, vol. 1, p. 184.

\(^{34}\) Briefe, vol. iv, p. 93.

\(^{35}\) Gebhardt, vol. 1, p. 438. See also Briefe, vol. iv, p. 94.

\(^{36}\) Briefe, vol. iv, pp. 76 ff.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

chancellor did not allow the memory of pleasant midnight walks with Gentz and Humboldt over the bridges and through the streets of Prague to soften his resentment or his determination to deny Humboldt the opportunity to get in his way again.

III

The diplomats now moved into the field, and the months that followed were filled on the one hand with the clash of arms and on the other with bitter wrangling among the allies over political and strategic questions. It was, to use the modern parlance, a time of hawks and doves, the former, represented by Stein, the leaders of the Silesian Army, and, in his optimistic moments, Alexander of Russia, wanting to liberate Germany completely and carry the war into France, the latter—Metternich and the commander-in-chief Schwarzenberg, Frederick William III and Knesbeck, and Bernadotte of Sweden—desirous of a speedy settlement with Napoleon and an end to hostilities short of the Rhine. Humboldt inclined to the former party. The movement and the sound of battle exhilarated him; he was conscious of being involved in a decisive development in history and was critical of those who had no part in it (like Goethe, trying to cadge a medal from Emperor Francis to replace the one Napoleon had given him, and Alexander von Humboldt, sitting out the war in Paris); and his head teemed with visions of the new Germany that could arise if only a ‘soft peace’ were avoided.

This martial ardour, which was to be tempered at a later date, had little effect upon the decisions taken by the allies during the winter and spring campaigns. Metternich remembered Prague and had no desire to have his policy of seeking peace handicapped by the exertions of one whom the French were now calling ‘a passionate man’ and whom he himself regarded as ‘petty and difficult’. He tried to revive Hardenberg’s dormant

suspicions of his ambassador by accusing the latter of intriguing for the state chancellor’s post; he succeeded in sidetracking Humboldt from the allied talks at Frankfurt and excluding him from the important negotiations at Langres in January 1814; and, when Hardenberg’s health made it necessary to appoint Humboldt as Prussian delegate to the Châtillon conference in February—a meeting that represented the Austrian chancellor’s last hope of a compromise peace—Metternich appealed to the Prussian government to issue explicit and binding instructions to his old antagonist. ‘He has a way’, he wrote, ‘of handling the whole business as a joke . . . and I know Humboldt well enough to recognize that, if you do not give him firm orders, he will manoeuvre and hold a back door open for the northern and southern Jacobins.’

Thanks to Metternich’s vigilance, Humboldt remained more a spectator than an actor in the diplomacy of the spring campaign; his advice, on the big issues, was unsolicited and, when offered, disregarded; and he was speaking the truth in April 1814 when, discovering that he had the reputation in Paris of having blocked a compromise with Napoleon, he described this as undeserved, adding, ‘I am firmly convinced that, if I had never been present, things would not have differed by a hair.’ His time during the campaign had been spent for the most part in performing petty administrative tasks and formulating plans for a new German constitution which were, despite their eloquence, to remain unrealized. The shrewdest diplomatic proposal that he made in this period—a suggestion to Hardenberg that it might be a good idea for Prussia to negotiate a hard and fast agreement with her allies with respect to territorial and financial compensation before peace negotiations got under way—was let slip by the state chancellor until it was too late to do anything about it.

This proved to be a grave omission, as became clear once Napoleon had been dethroned and the allies had begun the long process of peace-making that started in Paris in April 1814, continued in London in June, and culminated at the great congress in Vienna in the autumn. In Paris

42 Schaffstein, p. 260.
44 For instance, the famous memorandum of 9 December 1813. Gesammelte Schriften, vol. xi, pp. 91-95.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

Humboldt watched disgustedly as his country's allies competed for influence over the new Bourbon government and, in the course of doing so, showed little concern either for the requirements of German security or for financial claims the legitimacy of which the Prussian government had unwisely taken for granted.\textsuperscript{46} It was no satisfaction to reflect that this could have been avoided if his advice had been taken. His bitterness grew during the talks in London, where the tsar flatly refused to discuss the question of territorial compensation, while Metternich took refuge in equivocation; and he looked with foreboding toward the gathering of the diplomats at Vienna because it was clear to him that allied solidarity had broken down completely and that there was no fundamental agreement on any of the issues that were basic to a new European order.\textsuperscript{47}

After the Vienna deliberations had begun, Humboldt raised the complaint that was to be heard after each of the great wars of the twentieth century.

The evil results caused by the postponement of many things from one epoch to another are now coming to light; one cannot postpone them any longer and yet does not know how to get out of the embarrassment they are causing. During the whole war we kept our eyes only upon the problem of overthrowing Napoleon ... seizing upon everything that seemed to make that goal yet more certain and pushing aside everything that might even momentarily have delayed it. Therefore, we never reached a prior agreement with Russia about Poland ... and we never used the right language toward Bavaria and Württemberg. That is all avenging itself now in the most shameful manner, and difficulties are springing up in places where, had we acted differently, we could have had a perfectly smooth path.\textsuperscript{48}

To the extent that these deficiencies could be repaired by technical expedients and administrative skill, Humboldt repaired them. The labours performed by him and the privy councillors of Hardenberg's chancery were prodigious. Humboldt himself provided the procedural plan that prevented the Vienna negotiations from becoming hopelessly complicated


\textsuperscript{47} See his letter of 1 August 1814, \textit{Brie\ss e}, vol. iv, p. 367.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. iv, p. 400.
and spelled out the way in which the decisions of the great powers would be communicated to and enforced upon the others; and his staff made almost all the statistical studies and calculations that served as the basis for the redrawing of the map of Europe. At times their industry depressed or annoyed the other delegations, and Talleyrand once pointed to the statistician Hoffman and asked, 'Who is that little man who is always counting heads and losing his own?'

But the procedural plans, the statistical briefs, and the situation papers on every conceivable subject from the military importance of the Swiss-German frontier to navigation rights on international rivers had no power to solve the intractable problems that separated the powers. These were territorial, and the most difficult of them was that raised by Tsar Alexander's desire for all of Poland and the Prussian government's hope of annexing the kingdom of Saxony. It was this question that almost caused the congress to end, not with a European settlement, but with another war, a conclusion that was prevented in the end only by a secret alliance between Austria, Britain, and France against the northern courts. In the sequel, Prussia was forced not only to suffer the disappointment of her Saxon ambitions but to watch the emasculation of her proposals for a new German constitution as well.

The historian Treitschke blamed this setback on the weakness of Prussian diplomacy at Vienna and pointed in particular to a memorandum written by Humboldt on 20 August 1814, in which the ambassador described Metternich's fears of Alexander's Polish design and his hope of forcing its modification by joint Austro-Anglo-Prussian pressure. Humboldt argued that Prussia's interests too were threatened by Alexander's plans and that the government should therefore give loyal support to Metternich in this matter. If they did so, they could expect him in return to support their claims on Saxony, despite the concern of certain Austrian soldiers over the prospect of Prussia controlling the passes in the Erzgebirge.

Treitschke describes this as 'a remarkable piece of writing, which shows with surprising clarity how grossly even a fine mind of decided political talent can misread the political relationships of the moment', and he goes

49 See Gesammelte Schriften, vol. xi, pp. 163–72; Webster, p. 338.
50 Treitschke, Deutsche Geschichte, vol. i, p. 610.
on to argue that Humboldt, misled by 'Metternich's false tongue', misled Hardenberg in turn, so that, instead of remaining true to his Russian comrade in arms, he led his state to a shameful setback.\textsuperscript{52} This argument is charged with all the power and emotion of which the great Prussian historian was capable, but it does less than justice to Humboldt's thinking, and its argument that complete loyalty to Russia would have brought Prussia Saxony, Mainz, and whatever else she wanted is hardly convincing. Humboldt had had enough evidence of the tsar's volatility and his studied unreliability during the spring campaign and the negotiations in Paris and London to distrust him, and in any event he felt it time to do away with the client relationship with Russia that had continued since the treaty of Kalisch of February 1812 and to restore the independence of Prussian policy. Far from being deluded by Metternich, he had correctly gauged the extent of the chancellor's concern over Russian expansion, and he believed that, if Prussia helped to relieve it, she would lay the basis for an effective Austro-Prussian collaboration in central Europe, which would be reflected in a German constitution that would satisfy the spirit of national self-consciousness inspired by the war and in a viable European balance of power that would keep both Russia and France within proper bounds. It is worth noting that such sound observers as Gentz and Carl August of Weimar were persuaded that Metternich was willing to grant Prussia's claims on Saxony in return for the kind of support Humboldt proposed; and Hardenberg, a lazy but not a naïve man, entirely agreed with his policy and accepted it as his own.\textsuperscript{53}

There is no way of telling whether the Humboldt plan would have succeeded. The most that can be said of it is that, before the Polish-Saxon question had reached full crisis, Hardenberg had enlisted the support of the British, and the combination envisaged in Humboldt's memorandum seemed on the point of being realized. But Alexander possessed an unbeatable weapon. Observers in Vienna had been amused by the deference which the Prussian king paid to the tsar in all matters, out of gratitude for his services to Prussia in 1812;\textsuperscript{54} and this misplaced loyalty confounded Humboldt's plans now. In the first days of November, Frederick William

\textsuperscript{52} Treitschke, \textit{Deutsche Geschichte}, vol. \textit{i}, pp. 583 f.


\textsuperscript{54} See Fournier, p. 260.
summoned Hardenberg to his presence and forbade him to act further with Britain and Austria in the Polish question. The state chancellor was astounded, but gave way; Humboldt, more doughtily, fought back against this almost classic example of sentimentality in politics with a strong appeal to his sovereign, but this had no effect, beyond angering the tsar, who told Frederick William that Humboldt had been bribed by the Jews. The royal intervention immobilized Prussian policy, alienated the British, and freed Metternich from any commitments to Prussia. In consequence, the Austrian chancellor not only defeated her Saxon ambitions but, in the protracted negotiations over the German question that filled the last months of the congress, supported the South German states in their systematic and successful evisceration of Humboldt’s constitutional plans.

By June 1815 all of Humboldt’s hopes had been disappointed and, as the negotiations dragged to an end, he felt drained of energy.

The war was the really great and beautiful thing [he wrote to his wife], and it was like a young and beautiful tree suddenly reaching toward the clouds. The Paris Peace put the first blight upon it, and the Congress more. . . . At no time in my life have I had fuller control over my energies, but equally at no time have I been so filled with a lively desire to retire from all these affairs.

IV

Having seen his proposed line of policy at Vienna defeated by the romantic notions of his king, Humboldt was now, in his last important negotiation, to find his task needlessly complicated by the soldiers and to discover, as Bismarck, Bethmann-Hollweg and Stresemann were to discover after him, how difficult it was to keep the German military within their proper sphere.

He suffered this experience at Paris, during the peace negotiations that followed the campaign of the Hundred Days and Napoleon’s second


56 Briefe, vol. iv, p. 572.
defeat. Because Hardenberg was ailing, Humboldt played the leading part in the discussions that took place in the French capital in June and July 1815, and it was his hope that Germany would receive stronger frontiers than those drawn at Paris a year before and that, in view of the dominant rôle played by her army in the recent campaign, Prussia would be granted generous financial compensation, as well as strongpoints on the Mosel and the Saar. He prepared his case carefully⁵⁷ and presented it with the authority and acerbity that had characterized his confrontations with Talleyrand at Vienna.

It was clear from the outset that the other powers were hardly enthusiastic about these claims, but Humboldt would probably have received a more sympathetic hearing had it not been for the behaviour of Prussian military authorities in France. The dissatisfaction of the soldiers over what they considered to be inadequate diplomatic reward for their efforts had been growing since the first Peace of Paris, and so had their tendency to indulge in political gestures. During the London conference of 1814, the British were concerned over the reluctance of Prussian forces to obey orders to evacuate the Netherlands;⁵⁸ and during the Congress of Vienna Talleyrand reported to his king that the Prussian General Grolman had, without consulting his government, actually written to Wellington to warn him that the Prussian army would never consent to the loss of Leipzig.⁵⁹ But these manoeuvres were nothing to those indulged in by the military when they moved into France in 1815. Prussian army commanders levied contributions on the civilian population, superseded local authorities, and made arrests without authorization from their government, and Blücher’s headquarters turned a deaf ear to Hardenberg’s complaints and admonitions. The Prussian high command was animated by a spirit of revenge and rebelliousness that alarmed Prussia’s allies and, because of their alarm, made them unresponsive to Prussian diplomatic proposals.⁶⁰

Humboldt, whose relations with the army chiefs, and particularly with Gneisenau and Grolman, had always been cordial, was as worried as his

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. xii, pp. 2–18.
⁵⁸ Webster, p. 319.
⁵⁹ Talleyrand, Mémoires, Paris, 1889, vol. iii, p. 58. See also Briefe, vol. iv, p. 484.
allies. 'In the army', he wrote to his wife, 'they go much too far... and so we have to defend things that we would rather prevent, if we had the power', and again—after a summary of army measures against civilians—'these things are useful neither to the state nor to the army and simply give the French weapons against us'. It was all very well for Blücher to complain that he could make a better peace settlement than the diplomats; he did not realize that, unless Prussia was capable of fighting all Europe for what she wanted (and she did not have the resources for that), she must negotiate, and negotiation generally resulted in getting rather less than one desired. Humboldt tried to convince Gneisenau of this, and through him the other army chiefs, but he was unsuccessful, and he concluded that, thanks to the soldiers, the peace settlement would be worse from Prussia's standpoint than even the pessimists had thought. He was right, and the peace signed on 20 November 1815 satisfied few of Prussia's claims.

In February 1814, at Châtillon, Humboldt had written that peace-making was one of the most thankless tasks in the world. 'In it we have the real conflict between what is desirable in itself and what is attainable under the circumstances, and one never escapes the reproach of having fallen short of the attainable.' This now proved true in his own case, and, ironically, it was the soldiers, who had done most to defeat his efforts, who now blamed him for lack of determination and courage. He was abandoned by those he had supported during the campaign of 1814, and even his friendship with Gneisenau now faded away.

This was not his only loss. His performance at Paris, which had been marked, as he foresaw the defeat of Prussia's ambitions, by increasing bitterness and sarcasm, had completed the alienation of the tsar's sympathies, annoyed the British and the Austrians, and aroused the hostility of the Bourbon régime in France; and Humboldt soon discovered that this would have some unfortunate personal results. He had hoped that his next post would be in Paris, but he had now become persona non grata in that

---

62 Ibid., vol. v, p. 43.
63 Ibid., vol. v, pp. 56 ff.
64 Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 243 f.
Wilhelm von Humboldt as Diplomat

capital. In fact, except for some routine and very boring assignments in the
next year, his diplomatic career was at an end and, thanks to the tsar's
continuing influence over his master, his prospects in domestic politics
were not bright either, as he was to discover during the constitutional
crisis of 1819 that ended his public career.

v

Not so long ago James Joll wrote a book about intellectuals in politics in
which he described 'the difficulties and frustrations which confront the
man of theory in the world of practice . . . where none of his intellectual
concepts apply precisely' and where his sensibility is constantly offended
by 'the compromises, half-truths and personal sacrifices of political life'.
Few people would deny Humboldt's qualifications as an intellectual, yet
he remained, during his diplomatic career, singularly unaffected by these
difficulties. Between his scholarly proclivities and his professional duties no
great conflict developed, and he confirmed Callières's belief that men of
letters make good diplomats. After some initial hesitation, he brought to
the practice of diplomacy the same lively curiosity and intellectual energy
that marked his work in linguistics and literature, and he soon made him-
self a superb technician in a profession at that time not richly supplied with
technical talent. From his study of aesthetics he brought the habit of seeing
things in their uniqueness, their consonance and their interrelatedness,
which greatly contributed to the objectivity and incisiveness of his reports.
From his travels and his reading and his life in the world, he brought a
freedom from sentimentality that was as marked as Bismarck's was to be
and an awareness that life is largely a matter of compromises and half-
truths and that rigid formulae and total solutions rarely work. All of this
made him a good diplomat—although perhaps not, as he himself seemed
to believe, the only good diplomat in the Prussian service in his time.

Humboldt was never, like his greatest successor, in a position of com-
plete responsibility. He was always a working diplomat in the second rank,
sometimes busied with the most routine tasks and always subject to the

60 James Joll, Three Intellectuals in Politics: Blum, Rathenau, Marinetti, New York,
1960, p. xi.
67 The Practice of Diplomacy, p. 62.
68 See, for instance, Briefe, vol. iv, p. 133.
freaksations from which the professional diplomat must suffer—of being imperfectly informed of matters relevant to his own work, of having to carry out instructions of which he does not approve, of seeing his own advice disregarded at subsequent cost to his country, of being criticized by the hawks for timidity and the doves for bellicosity, and of having to take the blame for the faults of others. Yet at the end of his career he could look back to some solid achievements. In the difficult years from 1810 to 1812, his accurate reporting of tendencies in Vienna had prevented his government from adopting policies that might have been dangerous; in the days after Tauroggen his patient pressure and his tactical prescriptions to his own government had played an important part in bringing Austria into the Grand Alliance; and during the long period of peacemaking he had made the most of the situations presented to him, forced as he was to cope, not only with the hard-headed representatives of other powers, but with a not entirely reliable chief, a timorous and sentimental king, and a group of greedy and insubordinate brasshats. All things considered, the years of diplomacy are not the least creditable phase of Wilhelm von Humboldt's extraordinary career.
The state of Brandenburg-Prussia had emerged as a major power under Frederick the Great. She was to become a great power and to assume the leadership of the German-speaking peoples under Bismarck. To possess colonies had become a status symbol among European nations, quite apart from the trade and treasure that these colonies might bring. Their chronic disunity and their comparatively small size and population had kept the German states out of the race. Austria, the largest and most populous of them, was too beset with difficulties in Europe; Prussia, the most energetic, was similarly involved, though she did attempt some ventures in South America under the Great Elector and in the eighteenth century. But by and large it was left to individual Germans or private German commercial enterprises to seek land and wealth overseas, under other flags. The Hanseatic League, which might otherwise have developed a colonial policy after the great age of discovery had opened up the world overseas, was now in decay.

Germany thus entered the nineteenth century without overseas possessions, although the Dutch, the Swedes and the Portuguese (all small nations) had founded successful colonies, even if some of these had been subsequently lost to greater or powerful nations. France and Britain had both (in 1763 and in 1783) lost large portions of their overseas empires, but were in the process of securing even larger dominions. Even Russia had now established a foothold in Alaska, and Spain, to everybody's surprise—though she was about to lose it all—extended her imperial domain in the late eighteenth century by successfully colonizing Upper California.

Prussia emerged from the Napoleonic wars flexing her muscles. Almost wiped off the map by Napoleon in 1806, she had witnessed a military and spiritual recovery in the era of liberation that was a wonder of the world. Leipzig and Waterloo restored her prestige; the Vienna treaties added the
Rhine province (which contained the coal seams of the Ruhr valley) and a large portion of Saxony (rich in skilled industrial labour) to her territories; she began to look around for new worlds to conquer. To dominate Germany seemed a large enough order, for Austria still had the nominal leadership and the prestige and cunning to stay on the top of the heap for a generation under that astute statesman Metternich, whereas Prussia, under two weak kings, had dismissed Stein, the architect of her civil rejuvenation, and disgusted Fichte and other leaders of her national revival. She, like the rest of the German world, was beginning to experience a brain drain. In 1827, a gifted young political scientist called Francis Lieber, formerly secretary to Mommsen, the historian of Rome, reached South Carolina—of all places—just one jump ahead of the secret police, suspected of un-Prussian activities and with no fifth amendment to hide behind. In 1825, a brilliant young political economist called Friedrich List had crossed the Atlantic to write his Letters to Ingersoll, and to help revolutionize Prussia's economic policy; in 1829 Karl Follen left Giessen to its intellectual fate for the prairies of Illinois. In 1833 Gustav Koerner, having led a protest march in Frankfurt am Main and attempted to burn down a police station, found it prudent to emigrate; in 1834 a resourceful young German-Swiss named Sutter boarded a sailing ship at Le Havre to escape his Bernese creditors (with whom he left his wife and five small children as a sort of involuntary security) and was to find his way, in the course of a five-year odyssey, to the Sacramento valley, with momentous consequences for both the old world and the new; and there were many others.


Young Germans who stayed at home dreamed dreams. The celebrated Prussian scientist and traveller Alexander von Humboldt, whose home was just outside Berlin, had set many of them on fire. In their minds they hunted crocodiles on the Amazon, ogled the lovely criollas of La Plata, and searched for gold in the Cordilleras, volcanoes popping off all around them and giant condors circling the skies. For them Baron Christian von Bunsen, historian, theologian and diplomat, friend of the Humboldts and persona grata at the strait-laced court in Potsdam, worked out a seductive destiny. 'Go East, young man', he said (in effect), and woo the topless beauties of Java, Sumatra, Burma and Bali and other places the other side of Eden, and create a Mischvölk, 'a loftier race than 'ere the world hath known' (as the hymn writer has put it) to bring Utopia down to earth. This plan of human hybridization reached—again, of all places—Columbia, South Carolina, in a letter sent to Francis Lieber. That prudent American citizen (as he had by this time become) filed it away carefully. One would have given much to have watched John C. Calhoun's face had he lived long enough to be given it to read, while it surely must have administered a jolt to one Adolf Hitler in the womb of time. Baron Christian von Bunsen was entirely sincere: he was simply a little before his time.

The fertile mind of Bunsen the race-mixer had hit upon another idea in the year 1842. Why should not Prussia, acting perhaps on behalf of all the German states but maintaining effective control over the operation herself, purchase the whole of Upper California from Mexico and colonize it with hard-working, God-fearing, land-hungry and patriotic Germans? Britain, France and the U.S.A. might object, but what could they do about

---


8 This four-page letter, the original of which is in the Lieber MSS (No. 1009) in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, was printed in its original German text by John A. Hawgood and John S. Stephens, with an introduction and notes in English, in The University of Birmingham Historical Journal, vol. ii, 1949, pp. 97–102.

9 Adolf Hitler (1890–1945), born 1890 at Braunau am Inn, Austria, was the author of Mein Kampf (Munich, 2 vols., 1925–7) and of much else. He, also, had a Rassen-theorie.
it? The Danish Navy could be hired to give protection by sea, while on land a Prussian-trained militia would suffice. It was a terrific idea. While Duflot de Mosras was snooping around San Francisco Bay on behalf of France; while Captain Wilkes was scientifically working his way down from the Columbia to the Sacramento on behalf of the United States;10 while the British fleet was cruising aimlessly in Pacific waters and concentrating its main attention on the Sandwich Islands; while the Russians were packing up and leaving Fort Ross and Bodega Bay; while Governor Alvarado was ruling Upper California as a ‘free and independent state’ with its own flag, and transmitting no revenue whatsoever to Mexico City, although giving away a grant of eleven square leagues of land to a smooth-tongued Swiss adventurer, Prussia would step in and take all. Germany’s colonial deprivation complex would be dissipated and all would be well with the world. Nobody—but nobody—had told Baron Christian von Bunsen about Thomas Ap Catesby Jones; nobody had even mentioned to him the name of Thomas Oliver Larkin; even his colleague Baron von Gerolt, Prussian minister to Mexico and a friend of Thomas Hart Benton, had not warned him about the up and coming young topographical engineer the senator’s beautiful and enterprising daughter Jessie had recently married. No, California lay basking in its sun and fog, ripe for Prussianization!

How did such a pipe dream arise? It is best to tell the story in the actual translated words of one of the principals in the affair, Baron Fredrich von Roenne, Prussian minister to the United States. Roenne was usually a level-headed and astute diplomat but this time he let his enthusiasm and his patriotism run away with him. Perhaps after seven years in the America of Jackson, of Houston, of Benton, of Hall Jackson Kelley, of Asa Whitney and of John L. O’Sullivan he had begun to think like an American too.

Friedrich Ludwig von Roenne,11 born in 1798, had as a youth fought at

10 Captain Charles Wilkes, U.S. Navy, (1798–1877), made his reputation as a surveyor, principally on a three-year survey of Antarctica, the Pacific islands and the north-west coast of America, 1839–42: see his Narrative of the United States exploring expedition, New York, 1844. In 1861, while in command of the U.S.S. San Jacinto, he boarded the British mail steamer, Trent, in the Bahama Channel and arrested the Confederate Commissioners, Slidell and Mason, see D.A.B., vol. xx, pp. 216–17.

Waterloo in the German–English legion, had entered the Prussian civil service after taking a law degree and had become a member of the diplomatic service in 1831. In 1834 he was sent to Washington, D.C., as Prussian minister and was recalled to Berlin in the spring of 1843, at the special request of King Frederick William IV, to head a proposed new Prussian department of trade and commerce. He had, in 1839, chaired the mixed commission appointed to adjudicate the disputed boundary between the United States and Mexico. He was to return in 1848 to represent the first German Provisional Central Government in Frankfurt at Washington, after having published a pamphlet advocating a form of government for Germany on the American model. He negotiated a trade treaty with the United States in 1849. His reports were voluminous and well informed. I have called him in another place and I think not without justification, 'A German Tocqueville', even though his magnum opus on the government and people of the United States was never completed. He died in 1865 after having ineffectively opposed Bismarck's arbitrary acts, which were not exactly democracy in Prussia as he had come to know and admire it in America.

Roenne wrote from New York to Bunsen in London (where the latter was Prussian Minister and head of Legation) on 14 November 1842:

I fully agree with you that now is the moment, under the rule of our excellent King, who has a genuine German mind and heart, which beats aloud for everything that is noble, to lay the foundations of the

---


Bunsen had written to Roenne in August 1842 'Unsere beiderseitige Lage hat viele Verknüpfungspunkte; wir sind die Vertreter Deutschlands bei den beiden grossen Zweigen des britischen Volken, und John und Jonathan haben manches miteinander gemein und manches miteinander zu schaffen', Lieber MS, Huntington Library.

greatness of our beautiful German Fatherland, in a political as well as in a commercial sense. England will always, as you say, see in us an awkward rival, but the time has arrived when we must act in a bold and independent way, and this can only happen if we are united as if we have a Navy and colonies. What a country Germany could become in such circumstances! She would be the equal of any other . . .

Your idea of purchasing California is an excellent one. I would never have thought of doing such an audacious thing, but, nevertheless, as early as the year 1837 I already had the notion, for when I reported on the condition of immigrants—especially with regard to the question of establishing a penal colony—I called attention to the possibility that Mexico might agree to give up a piece of land in California. The idea of buying *all* California deserves in every way to be preferred to this. The many Germans who go there yearly from the United States very soon cease to be Germans; they adopt local manners and customs and are completely lost to Germany. On the other hand, a completely German colony, even long after migration, would retain for our German manufacture a permanent market and yield all the profit to the Mother Country. The possession of such a colony would also provide a good training ground for our army and offer innumerable other benefits.

Upper California—which alone can be considered—if one can trust the many descriptions of it which have been produced; the [latest] is I believe that by Alexander Forbes,14 published in 1839 in London—is one of the finest countries in the world, and on account of its happy position between the tropical and northern zones, is capable of bringing forth all the products which are suitable for exchange with the Mother Country, and which also would even be sought after by Mexico and the South American states. It is only necessary that it should be in the possession of an active, industrious and energetic people, and who would dispute these qualities to our German countrymen? These are the qualities whereby they earn so much respect here in the United States. No people on earth are better as cultivators of the soil than the Germans.

England, France and the United States would no doubt look at such an undertaking with jealous eyes, but I can hardly believe they would use force to prevent it from happening. Certainly not the United States! But in any case it would be a good thing, before taking any of the contemplated steps, to assure the co-operation of Denmark through her Navy. Only then would we be powerful enough, and have the means to carry out this plan.

The sovereignty of Mexico over California may hardly at present be said to be more than a paper one—as a matter of fact I don’t exactly know what the situation is. Three years ago independence was declared. Nevertheless, it would be very important vis-à-vis the other powers that sovereignty should be ceded by Mexico. Actual possession could then easily be secured without the use of very much force being required. Also, I am inclined to think, because of the looseness of the existing connexion, that she would be readily disposed to entertain such a proposition. In any case she would prefer to see Germans there to the English, the Americans or the Texans, and I believe that even these two last would prefer to have Germans to the English.

Nevertheless, I am not absolutely in a position to say whether this is likely to have enthusiastic acceptance on the part of Mexico. If Denmark appreciated her advantage she would not hesitate for a moment to co-operate in the closest possible way with Germany. The time is past—or at least should be—when smaller nations should see advantage in being hostile to their more powerful neighbours. . . . The smaller states can only reckon on the continuance of their independence if they don’t stand in the way of their larger neighbours. . . .

and Roenne goes on shaking the good old mailed fist at little Denmark (he

15 The Alvarado revolution in Upper California of 1836 (see H. H. Bancroft, vol. iii, chapter 17) did in fact declare that Upper California was now ‘a free and independent state’ and devise a new flag for her with ‘six stripes and one star’ (according to Thomas Oliver Larkin), but independence was never formally secured and Juan Bautista Alvarado, the revolutionary leader, subsequently became governor with the blessing of the Mexican government. He was succeeded by Manuel Micheltorena, who was sent by Santa Anna from the Mexican capital to take over the governorship in 1842. The situation was thus slightly confused and Roenne had every right to be uncertain concerning what was actually the status of California in 1842. For details of Governor Alvarado’s career see D.A.B., vol. i, pp. 233–4.
himself came from Holstein, and no love was lost across the border) for several more pages.

Ronne next recommended that he should be instructed to negotiate with Denmark and that negotiations with Mexico should be left to his colleague Baron von Gerolt, who lived in Mexico between ten and fifteen years and who was fluent in Spanish. But Ronne was to change his mind when, on his return to Washington at the beginning of December 1842, he met the newly arrived Mexican ambassador there. Then the plot began to thicken and Ronne decided to keep negotiations in his own hands. He reported progress to Bunsen in a highly excited letter dated Washington, 12 December 1842.

Today, my most honoured Privy Councillor—[mein hochverehrester Herr Geheimrat]—I am able to make a very interesting disclosure to you. . . . Directly after my arrival here about a week ago I made the acquaintance of the new Mexican Ambassador, Mr Almonte. I found him a pleasant, educated and enlightened man, very different from all Mexicans whom I had hitherto met, and very open-minded. We spoke a good deal about the situation of Mexico and of her pros-

16 Friedrich von Gerolt does not feature either in the D.A.B., or in the A.D.B., though he was Prussian minister in Mexico and subsequently in the U.S.A. for many years. He went to Mexico in 1824 as assistant to the chief agent of the German-American Mining Association, Wilhelm Stein. He subsequently acted as a Prussian consular secretary in Mexico, then as Prussian chargé d'affaires, and finally as minister plenipotentiary. He succeeded Ronne as Prussian minister in the United States in 1843 and remained at that post until after the Civil War. He was on terms of friendship with many American public figures, notably the Benton family, which he kept informed concerning events in Mexico. His dispatches in the Prussian Secret State Archives are voluminous. He also sent reports to the Berlin Academy of Science, mainly concerning mining and mineral resources. No biography of Gerolt is known to exist, but his career deserves further investigation. See further W. Pferdekamp, Auf Humboldts Spuren. Deutsche in Jungen Mexico, Munich, 1858, pp. 94, 113, 129, 137–8, 195.


18 Juan Nepomuceno Almonte (1803–69) was not only Santa Anna’s sidekick, as Ronne rightly reports, but he subsequently took part in intrigues in France leading to the ‘election’ of the Archduke Maximilian of Austria as emperor of Mexico in 1864. For his services he was made an imperial marshal and sent as the minister plenipotentiary of Mexico to the Court of Napoleon III. The fall of the Mexican empire, which he managed to survive for two years, ended his public career. He was typical of the men that Santa Anna gathered round him. See further Diccionario Biográfico Mexicano, Mexico, D.F., n.d., vol. 1, pp. 40–41.
pects for the future. One thing followed another and he finished by expressing his deep regret that Texas had not become a real German state,\textsuperscript{19} and had not, as a neutral country, effectively kept apart the Anglo-Americans and the Mexicans. He was full of hope that Mexico would reconquer Texas and raised the question of whether, in this case, his idea could not be realized after all. I said to him that this would be quite possible, but I did not make a secret of my doubts concerning the reconquest of Texas and I immediately used the opportunity of asking the question whether his idea could not equally well be realized in part at least, by establishing a German colony in California. He was puzzled at first and put forward a number of other proposals—for establishing commercial companies, and the like under Mexican sovereignty—but I countered these by pointing out that the United States and Great Britain would not respect German–Mexican colonies of this sort; instead, it would be in the true interests of Mexico to see a German sovereignty acknowledged in the intermediate areas.

He now began to show great interest in this plan and had me explain to him in detail the situation in Germany and the Zollverein and their interconnexions. At this moment we were interrupted but he came again to see me the next day and indicated that some agreement might be reached whereby a part of Upper California might be ceded for the establishment of a German colony there.

Since then there have appeared in the newspapers [here] the two articles\textsuperscript{20} which I attached to my dispatch, concerning the rumour that California might be ceded to the United States or to Great Britain. But General Almonte gives me the definite assurance that the one possibility is as unreal as the other—that is to say, Mexico would never cede any part of California either to Great Britain or to the United States—and he is fully convinced of the advantage, which would follow for Mexico as well as for ourselves, from the cession of the whole of Upper California to a German power. It is also possible to assume that neither Great Britain nor the United States would oppose such a plan by force. They might even recognize it as the best way out.

\textsuperscript{19} For the attempt to establish a ‘New Germany’ in the Texas Republic during the early 1840s see John A. Hawgood, \textit{The Tragedy of German America}, New York, 1940, pp. 137–200 and Bibliographical Notes, pp. 321–4.

\textsuperscript{20} The ‘two articles’ referred to were not in the file with the letters.
I explained to Almonte that I was without any instructions from my government concerning this subject and that it was entirely my own idea, but he is so vitally interested in it that he has asked me to lose no time in writing—not officially but confidentially—to my friends about it. He will do the same. We agreed to this being kept strictly secret, which is necessary, for, should England or the United States get wind of it, the whole matter would become much more difficult to accomplish. Now Almonte was aide-de-camp to Santa Anna and was taken prisoner with him in Texas. He is considered to be in the confidence of, and indeed to be the righthand man of Santa Anna, and it is to Santa Anna that he will be writing confidentially about it. He is perhaps going to Mexico next May and then he will take the opportunity of talking personally with Santa Anna on the matter.

You thus see, my most honoured Privy Councillor, that I have brought the matter as far as possible [in den letzten Gang gebracht]. Should the present opportunity be let slip, the chance will probably be lost forever. Therefore we must act—and both as speedily and as secretly as possible. They have here so little notion of our plans that they have asked me to be their go-between for sounding Almonte as to whether Mexico would be willing to cede California to the United States, and I have not rejected this role completely [Ich lehnte diese Rolle nicht ganz ab] in order to remain au fait [un am Alène au fait zu seyn] with what is going on here. Almonte tells me that such a cession has already been discussed here on all sides [von mehreren Seiten]. I know, however, that Webster, as a Northerner, is in his heart against it. It is Tyler who is very much in its favour and that is the reason why Thompson\(^\text{21}\) who is completely obsessed with the idea of the annexation of Texas—see the speech by Adams, has been sent to Mexico. Major Lewis\(^\text{22}\) who has been used in all matters as a negotiator . . . was with me this morning. He has already seen the president and


\(^{22}\) 'Major Lewis' was almost certainly William Berkeley Lewis (1784–1866), an intimate friend and former quartermaster of Andrew Jackson; employed by successive administrations as a political negotiator and 'fixer'; see further D.A.B., vol. xi, p. 226.
brought to me a map of the western half of America, in order to show me which parts of California the United States would like to have. He asked me to sound Almonte about it. There is only one place where the central mountains can be crossed without difficulty and this is called the South Pass, between the headwaters of the Platte and the Colorado rivers, and from there the United States would like to draw a line to the Pacific Ocean which would give her a territory that would include at least the harbours of San Francisco and San Diego—the only part of California possessing any value. Almonte tells me that the Mexican Embassy\textsuperscript{23} [Botschaft] is at present very well established in California and that Santa Anna placed so much value on that territory that he has recently sent a garrison of 400 men to San Francisco.\textsuperscript{24} The Russians have given up their settlements [Besitzungen] in California completely and thus no longer stand in the way.\textsuperscript{25}

In your hands, my most honoured Privy Councillor, is now placed the further pursuit of this matter. If there should not be any decision earlier, I hope to be able to talk with you in more detail about it during my stay in London. Certainly I will take the opportunity when I am in Berlin next summer, to place our ideas before her Majesty.

Bunsen sent these two effusive letters from Roenne on to his superiors in Potsdam, with his blessing. In a hastily scribbled and almost indecipherable memo dated London, 10 January 1843\textsuperscript{26} which he sent with them, he urged the Prussian Foreign Ministry to act immediately and to keep Roenne in the United States until the deal with Mexico could be consummated: ‘Such a fine opportunity as this hardly ever occurs twice’, he said and quoted the old German proverb to the effect that ‘the Devil is sure to sow weeds in the meadow’\textsuperscript{27} if it remained unmown.

\textsuperscript{23} Roenne uses the word Botschaft, but this was not strictly correct, because Upper California was not an independent state but still technically part of Mexico in 1842.

\textsuperscript{24} Alvarado was succeeded by Micheltorena in 1842 as governor (see p. 109, note 15) and the latter brought a small force of soldiers with him (certainly not as many as 400), most of them chulos and the off-scourings of Mexico’s jails. Their misbehaviour was to contribute much to Micheltorena’s unpopularity and to his overthrow and deportation in the revolution of the spring of 1845. See H. H. Bancroft, vol. iv, chaps. 20 and 21.

\textsuperscript{25} This was true. Fort Ross and Bodega Bay were evacuated by the Russians (who had been there since 1812) in 1840–41; see H. H. Bancroft, vol. iv, chap. 6.

\textsuperscript{26} Prussian Secret State Archives. Central Bureau II. D, 5.

\textsuperscript{27} Der Teufel sät sonst sicher Unkraut in den Wiezen, wrote Bunsen.
John A. Haugood

To show that Bunsen and Roenne had become sufficiently Americanized to realize that nothing could be accomplished in Washington, D.C., even in the year 1842, without the assistance of an efficient lobbyist, preferably an ex-Congressman, the correspondence forwarded to repose in the Prussian Secret State Archives (where I was fortunate enough to come across it after a search lasting, on and off, for many years) includes a letter dated 16 November 1842—only two days after Roenne’s first mention to Bunsen of his enthusiasm for the idea of purchasing all of Upper California from Mexico, and even before he had met and talked with Almonte—written by one William Hogan to Hebler, the Prussian consul-general in London. Hogan, born in England in 1792, had been taken to the United States at the age of eleven and had graduated from Columbia College in 1811. He served in the war of 1812 on the side of his adopted country, entered the New York State Assembly in 1822 and also became a county judge; he served in the House of Representatives of the 22nd U.S. Congress as a Jacksonian Democrat from 1831 to 1833 but was defeated when seeking re-election to the 23rd Congress. Unlike Davy Crockett, he did not drown his sorrows in the Sabine River and achieve undying fame in Texas, but stayed right on the Potomac to lend his aid to deserving causes. Finally he was to secure a series of government jobs (being appointed an examiner of claims in 1855, and subsequently a translator in the Department of State, where he served until his retirement in 1869). He was to die in Washington, D.C., in 1874.

On 16 November 1842, William Hogan wrote to Prussian Consul General ‘B. Hebler Esquire’:

The full texts of these letters were found in the Merseburg Archives. The reference numbers on the relevant files made it possible to discover that positive photostats of them had been made for the Library of Congress in the 1930s. A short passage from Roenne’s letter of 12 November 1842 had previously been quoted in A Memoir of Baron Bunsen, edited by Frances Susan (née Waddington) Bunsen, 2 vols., London and Leipzig, 1868, vol. ii, pp. 112–13; this extract was also quoted by Marcus Lee Hansen, German Schemes of Colonization before 1860, Smith College Studies in History, vol. IX, Nos. 1 and 2 (October 1923–January 1924), p. 26, and by George P. Hammond, ‘German interest in California before 1850’ (unpublished University of California M.A. thesis, 1920; typescript in University Library, Berkeley), chap. 2, passim.


I am much gratified by the intelligence you confidentially communicated and hope this great project, of the entire feasibility of which I am convinced as thoroughly, as of its advantages to Prussia, and not only to Prussia but to the civilized world, will be carried into full effect. I have had some conversation with Baron Roenne and he enters fully into the spirit of the thing; Forbes's book (1839) the last we have seen, has exalted his ideas a good deal, but, well informed, amicable and well disposed, he is not very sanguine, for he considers the want of a protective fleet as a remedyless objection, and also fears that the king's ears will be closed by the influence of old courtiers averse to the movement of the times and fearful of enterprises, and the jealousies of England, France and Russia—he tells me also that the project has been in his mind for six years. I have suggested that the Hanse Towns would supply the commercial marine and he thinks Denmark might be subsidized for a naval marine, and that although the sovereignty ought to be Prussian, still, the colony should be open to emigrants from every part of the German Confederation who should, in the colony, become by the fact of residence Prussian subjects.

Hogan goes on to show that he is familiar with the tenor of Roenne's letter to Bunsen of two days earlier, and indeed it seems that he may have had some hand in drafting it. He had obviously been taken entirely into Roenne's confidence, as well as into that of Hebeler, acting presumably on behalf of Bunsen. Hogan expressed the opinion that 'in process of time the colony will be the cause and origin of a Prussian commercial and naval marine without cost to the crown', but then went on to express doubts as whether such a brilliant scheme would in fact be accepted in Potsdam.

I see plainly [he said] that the project is too vast and startling for many of your politicians, who measure territory by acres and population by decades and future progress by the past, while on this side of the water our scale is graduated by degrees of latitude, by thousands [of miles—or years?] by geometrical instead of arithmetical progression, and our impulses, received from that unchecked success which gives birth to brilliant hopes, cause us to anticipate the ordinary march of events and to outstrip the apparent race of time.

31 The text is here obscure. A word or two seem to have been omitted by Hogan.
Having spread-eagled himself a bit and having firmly aligned himself on the side of Manifest Destiny (even if he was a paid or unpaid agent of a foreign power), William Hogan disappears from our story.

Hogan was, of course, right. The government of Prussia did prove to be too timid—or too prudent—to take up the option so engagingly dangled before it by Bunsen, Roenne and Almonte, and there is no evidence that the matter was pursued any further. The Prussian Foreign Office file entitled ‘Documents Concerning the Project for the Acquisition of California’ [Akta betreffend das Projekt der Acquisition von Californien, 10 November 1842–10 January 1843] contains only the four papers to which I have referred—the two letters of Roenne, the one of Hogan and Bunsen’s short scribbled memorandum.

Various explanations may be offered for the Prussian government calling off the deal. That splenetic ultranationalist Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke, when he was permitted to examine the secret archives in the 1840s several decades later, brushed the whole matter aside, in a footnote, as a crazy scheme—‘a soap bubble’; Bunsen’s widow, Frances Waddington Bunsen, who was British by birth, wrote in her two-volume Memoir of his life, published in 1868 in London and Leipzig:

Whenever the curiosities of Bunsen’s diplomatic life in London see the light of publicity his plan of accepting the offer made by the rulers of Mexico in 1842 to purchase California for the King of Prussia [her italics] will be reckoned among the most original. Humboldt dissuaded his Majesty and the matter was dropped. The Prussian Envoy at Washington, Baron Rönne on the other hand, applauded the project.

It may well have been true that Alexander von Humboldt’s word was decisive, for, although he had never visited California, he was regarded on all sides as the greatest living authority in Europe on New Spain and the Mexican republic, and King Frederick William IV was almost bound to seek and listen to his advice.

Ronne always regretted Prussia's failure to purchase Upper California from Mexico in 1842, and in 1849 when he had returned to the United States and was representing the German Provisional Central Government in Washington, he wrote a succulent account of the discovery of gold in California, enclosing clippings of President Polk's famous Message and other accounts of that Eldorado, which, he did not omit to point out, could have been picked up by Prussia in 1842 for a song.

While the opposition of Alexander von Humboldt alone could have sufficed to set the Prussian government against the plan of Bunsen and Ronne for it to purchase and colonize Upper California, I am inclined to think that news of an event which had occurred there on 20 October 1842, may have been of decisive influence in Potsdam. By 14 November and even by 12 December 1842, it would have been virtually impossible for either Ronne or Almonte, leave alone Bunsen, to have heard about

---

34 James K. Polk's Message of 5 December 1848 appears in many anthologies and collections of documents, as well as in J. D. Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 19—, p. 6.

35 For Ronne's references in 1848 to the failure of Prussia to purchase Upper California in 1842 see J. A. Hawgood, 'Friedrich Von Ronne: A German Tocqueville', pp. 88–89, citing Ronne's unpublished 'Political Reports' to the Provisional German Central Government at Frankfurt am Main. See further J. A. Hawgood, *Political and economic relations between the United States of America and the German Provisional Central Government . . . 1848–1849*, Heidelberg Ph.D. dissertation; text in English, privately printed, 1928, passim. In his report of 6 December 1848 Ronne wrote: 'The purpose of the entire Message—the last one of President Polk and the swan-song of his party—is mainly to give a survey of his administration up to the present, and to make a brilliant picture of it. For this reason he expatiates on the astonishing and fabulous reports with regard to the richness in gold in California, which is the topic of the day and which he confirms up to a point. There must be something in it, anyway. It is expected that a considerable decline in the price of precious metals will necessarily follow. Seven years ago the Mexican Ambassador here, upon the instruction of his Government, offered California to me to be bought for Prussia for the sum of 6 million Dollars. Berlin declined to accept the offer.' And on 20 December he added, 'The topic of the day is still the discovery of the gold treasures in California, and this theme is not only discussed seriously but is also dealt with seriously: from all parts individuals and companies are going out to California, in every place ships are being fitted out, provisions and goods of all kinds are being shipped, the newspapers are full of advertisements relating to California, in streets and shops gold-sieves and all sorts of things suitable for California are being sold, and crowds of people are going out there, either taking the land route and going over the Rocky Mountains, or through the Isthmus of Panama or round Cape Horn.'

117
Commodore Thomas Ap Catesby Jones's descent upon Monterey, the capital of Alta California. Despite his withdrawal, and the hauling down of the Stars and Stripes two days later, amid apologies and an exchange of courtesies with General Micheltorena, the new governor recently sent to California by Santa Anna, it was now evident to all the world that the United States would never countenance the occupation and colonization of California by another, least of all by a European power. Prussia's policy-makers in Potsdam were wise enough to realize this, even without Alexander von Humboldt's help, and thus, soon after receiving Bunsen's memorandum of 10 January 1843, and the correspondence enclosed with it, would have had ample reason to close the file 'Concerning the Project for the Acquisition of California'.


37 This essay is based on a paper read at the annual conference of the Western History Association at El Paso, Texas, on 15 October 1966.
RAGNHILD HATTON

Palmerston and ‘Scandinavian Union’

The nineteenth-century movement which aimed, for various reasons, at Scandinavian political unity forced itself to the attention of European statesmen mainly in connexion with the Sleswig-Holstein problem with which it became inextricably intermingled though retaining a separate existence. Palmerston was a self-confessed specialist (even if one who ‘had forgotten it all’) on the intricacies of the relationship of the two duchies to the crown of Denmark and the German Confederation, and his handling of the Sleswig-Holstein issue in its two periods of acute crisis—from 1848 to 1852 and from 1860 to 1864—was the object of much contemporary comment and has received historical evaluation. By contrast, Palmerston

1 This spelling was used by Palmerston and most of the English statesmen and diplomats who dealt with the problem. The Danish ‘Slesvig’ was only used by sympathizers with the Danish cause or with Scandinavianism in general; the German ‘Schleswig’ was used by those who favoured the German cause. The form ‘Sleswick’, adopted by A. J. P. Taylor in *The struggle for mastery in Europe*, London, 1954, and referred to in W. Carr, *Schleswig-Holstein 1815–48*, Manchester, 1963, p. vi, as the one preferred by Palmerston, was fairly common with Foreign Office clerks when summarizing contents of dispatches.

2 There are two versions of his famous comment, one, given by A. Cecil, *Queen Victoria and her prime ministers*, London, 1953, p. 182: that ‘only three men in England had ever understood the Schleswig-Holstein question: The Prince Consort, who was dead, Mellis [R. C. Mellis, clerk in the F.O.] who was mad, and himself, who had forgotten it’; the other, quoted by L. D. Steefel, *The Schleswig-Holstein Question*, Cambridge, Mass., 1932, p. 3, fn. 1, from A. la Marmora, 1866: that ‘Uno era il principe Alberto, che disgraziamente era morto; il secondo un uomo di Stato danese, che era impazzito; il terzo, lui Lord Palmerston, che l’aveva dimenticata’.


For the later crisis see also E. Møller, ‘Det engelske kabinet og den dansktske
took care not to speculate publicly on the ‘Scandinavian question’ since (as I hope to show) he was well aware of the political dynamite it contained, and historians have not felt called upon to examine his attitude towards the movement.⁴ Echoes of contemporary criticism⁵ in circles sympathetic to Scandinavian unity alleging that Great Britain, and in particular the wicked Lord Palmerston, had by inaction during the war of 1863–64 prevented the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway from coming to Denmark’s help and thus killed all hope of political success for Scandinavianism⁶ can occasionally be found in studies of that movement. It is the object of the present essay to ascertain how well informed Palmerston was of hopes and plans for Scandinavian unity and to assess what influence this knowledge had on his policy.

The intellectual Scandinavian movement, fostered by literary conferences and students’ meetings in the 1830s had early become the object of suspicion at home and abroad. Conservative circles in Denmark, Sweden and Norway regarded the ‘Scandinavians’ as ‘wild Republicans’.⁷ Tsar Nicholas resented their scarcely veiled criticism of Russia and feared that their praise of the medieval Calmar Union of ‘the Scandinavian brothers’ presaged a revolutionary attempt to change the balance of power in the Baltic. The German nationalists, who hoped to separate Sleswig from Denmark on the expected extinction of the direct line of the Danish


⁴ Though note that E. Møller, ‘Napoleon III’s skandinaviska Planer’, Scandia, vol. xxii, 1953–54, pp. 41–71, throws light also on British reaction to the emperor’s overtures of 1856, the private papers of Russell and Cowley deposited in the Public Record Office in London enabling him to correct his assumption in Skandinavisk Stræben og svensk politik omkring 1860, Copenhagen, 1948, p. 23, that the Scandinavian union question had never been seriously considered by British statesmen.

⁵ For contemporary criticism in the press and at meetings, see e.g. Jerningham to Russell, dispatches nos. 39 and 51, 17 February and 9 March 1864, with enclosures, F.O. 73/338.

⁶ This term is as frequently used in contemporary English diplomatic correspondence as the less euphonyous ‘Scandinavianism’. The phrase ‘Pan-Scandinavian movement’ or ‘Pan-Scandinavianism’, used e.g. by Steefel, p. 26, J. P. T. Bury in New C[umbridge] M[odern] H[istory], vol. x, p. 220, and Carr, p. 311, was not in contemporary use.

⁷ Cartwright to Aberdeen, dispatch no. 42, 25 September 1842, F.O. 73/190.
reigning house of Oldenburg, suspected that the 'Scandinavians' would—if Christian VII's son Frederick should die without issue—secure the election of the ruler of the United Kingdoms also to the Danish throne: the house of Bernadotte, thus strengthened, might prove a serious obstacle to the goal of a 'Schleswig-Holstein' incorporated in a united Germany. The agitation which Russian and German dislike of the Scandinavian movement provoked in its turn made the 'Scandinavians' politically active. Men who had been content to think of union as a goal for the remote future began to advocate plans which would bring it about in their own lifetime. The British envoy in Stockholm, Sir Thomas Cartwright—a particular friend of Palmerston's who had gone to Sweden in 1838—kept the Foreign Office informed on 'the project of Union'; of the growing number of its adherents among respectable educated men; and of the speculation on the attitudes of the Swedish king and crown prince to the prospect of a Scandinavian union under the Bernadotteres. With Oscar (of reputed sympathy with the Scandinavian movement) succeeding Charles XIV in 1844, the 'Scandinavians' were assumed to have a potential ally in the highest of places and Denmark was thought to have certainty of help against German expansionism.

In the 1848 Slesvig-Holstein crisis Palmerston was faced with Scandinavism as a political force of some importance for the formation of his own policy. The Swedish government was anxious to support Frederick VII (king of Denmark since January of that year) against the 'Schleswig-Holstein revolution' of 23–24 March and raised the spectre of the Scandinavian movement in the hope of securing Palmerston's co-operation in efforts to limit the conflict, and—if this were not possible—to obtain

---

10 Cartwright's dispatches no. 42, 25 September 1842, and no. 43, confidential, of the same date, F.O. 73/190.
12 See Hjelholt, pp. 23–24, for a refutation of the German view, widely accepted in English historiography, that the revolution was provoked by Denmark. Many of the problems connected with the Slesvig-Holstein issue, e.g. the succession in Sleswig, are in need of elucidation, and the author hopes to deal with them elsewhere.
assistance for Denmark against Germany. On 27 March the Swedish under-secretary, Manderström, greatly trusted by King Oscar,\textsuperscript{13} approached Gordon, in charge of the British legation during Cartwright's illness. If the Danes were left to 'cope with the rebellious portions alone', all would be well (a prophecy which was borne out by the defeat the 'Schleswig-Holsteiners' suffered at the battle of Bov, on Sleswig soil, on 9 April); if not, the unionists would begin to press for Swedish intervention and Scandinavian union might become a reality. For himself Manderström professed a dislike of that 'hotheaded party, who loved to oratize about Scandinavia and the Union of the three Scandinavian Kingdoms'. With a hint at the troubles with Norway since 1814, he declared that Sweden had, in his opinion, had 'quite enough of Unions', and, with a backward glance at that of Calmar, he disclaimed any eagerness to see the capital moved back to Copenhagen. Great Britain, Russia and Sweden had, he urged, interests in common:

the two former Powers must be equally desirous [with Sweden] both that the two shores of the Sound shall continue in the hands of two separate Countries, and, likewise, that Denmark should remain at least as strong as she now is and should never be rendered the insignificant Power, which, if deprived of the German Duchies, she would inevitably become.\textsuperscript{14}

A desire to test Britain's attitude towards the plans for a Scandinavian union may be read into this conversation\textsuperscript{15} though its main purpose was

\textsuperscript{13} By 1851 he was called 'the most influential man in Sweden—the Oracle of the Court': Sir Edmond Lyons to Palmerston, Stockholm, 12 November 1851, Broadlands papers. I am grateful to the trustees of these papers for permission to make use of this and other documents among the Palmerston papers.

\textsuperscript{14} Gordon to Palmerston, dispatch no. 41, confidential, 28 March 1848, F.O. 73/226.

\textsuperscript{15} Manderström's attitude to Scandinavian union has been variously judged, possibly because he, to quote Jerningham in dispatch no. 1 of 6 January 1864, F.O. 73/338, 'is generally considered to be more or less given to an aptitude for variety of tone and language'. E. Hedin in 'Den skandinaviska alliansfrågan 1857–1863 inntil Ulrikssalskonferensen', Vitterhets Historie Akademiens Handlingar, vol. xxvi, Stockholm, 1953, has stressed his loyalty to the Scandinavian plans of King Oscar and King Charles. This loyalty had limits: Manderström in 1863–64 refused to condone attempts to provoke revolution in Denmark for the purpose of achieving union and by his threat of resignation forced Charles XV to abstain from giving support to such plans.
clearly to obtain Palmerston's assistance in dealing with the crisis which was rapidly gathering momentum. Prussian troops had poured into Holstein after 24 March; the day after the Danish victory at Bov they crossed the Eider into Sleswig; some days later, on 12 April, the German federal diet recognized the provisional government, admitting 'Schleswig-Holstein' deputies, and called on Prussia to secure Danish consent for the inclusion of Sleswig in the German Confederation; on 23 April Prussian and 'Schleswig-Holstein' troops defeated Danish troops on Sleswig soil; on 2 May the fortress of Fridericia surrendered and the invasion of Jutland began. As soon as the presence of German troops in Holstein gave grounds for fearing an invasion of Sleswig, the Swedish prime minister, Baron Ihre, and the foreign secretary, Count Stiernlend, through Gordon pressed for the implementation of the British guarantee (for the whole of Sleswig as a possession of the king of Denmark) given in 1720: 16 Sweden did not in the present circumstances of France expect her to honour her guarantee of the same year by more than moral support, but Sweden herself, though she had not signed a formal guarantee, was willing to use force to bring about a restoration of the peace as long as one of the great power guarantors acted. Russia, who had guaranteed Sleswig as unconditionally as Britain and France by treaties of 1767 and 1773 (but Holstein only in respect of the direct Oldenburg line), 17 was expected to come to Frederick VII's help, but would it be in Great Britain's interest to let Russia act alone? Here, it was pointed out, was a fine opportunity to efface the memory in Denmark of 'the disastrous events of 1801 and 1807'; certainly Britain might endanger her friendship with Sweden unless she took steps to fulfil her 1720 guarantee. 18

The Swedish government kept Gordon informed of their own moves: their protests to Prussia; their approaches to Russia and France; their

16 The transfer of the duke of Holstein-Gottorp's parts of the duchy of Sleswig to the king of Denmark was the only real gain of Frederick IV from the Great Northern War; for the pre-1700 position in Sleswig see P. Torntoft, 'William III and Denmark-Norway, 1697-1702', E.H.R., vol. lxxxi, 1966, pp. 2 ff.; for the extent of British guarantees see Hedemann-Heespen, p. 364 and R. M. Hatton, New C.M.H., vol. vii, pp. 345-6.

17 Note that Carr, p. 219 and Mosse, p. 719 assume that the renunciation in respect of Sleswig was not in perpetuity.

18 Gordon to Palmerston, dispatch no. 54, confidential, 11 April 1848, F.O. 73/226; no. 69, confidential, 6 May 1848, F.O. 73/227.
decision to put the army and navy into a state of preparedness; and their attempts to influence popular opinion at home by arranging on 17 April that a supplement of the official gazette, giving a historical summary of the issues at stake between Denmark and Germany, was distributed to all country subscribers of the most widely read national newspaper. Gordon himself diligently reported the 'unofficial news': the upsurge of sympathy for Denmark which found expression in volunteer corps from the universities, subscription lists and manifestoes; the arrival of Danish emissaries to test whether Scandinavism might bring about official intervention in the war. He sent copies of important newspaper articles, and even included in his cuttings a long English poem by George Stephens, the linguistic scholar then living in Stockholm, from the Dagligt Allehanda of 6 April. Stephens hoped to mobilize sympathy for the defence of Slesvig in England by stressing the common ancestry of Englishman and Dane. His verses, interspersed with a rousing chorus

Each English Thane,
Drink to the 'Royal Dane'
Hurrah, hurrah, for Denmark

probably made little impression at the Foreign Office. But Palmerston showed great interest in the rest of the news transmitted by Gordon. He asked for translated copies of the Swedish gazette supplement, and this, as well as the voluminous history of Sleswig-Holstein—published as another gazette supplement in May—he studied with profit to judge from

19 Gordon's dispatches nos. 47, 56, 58, 4, 14 and 18 April 1848, F.O. 73/226; nos. 67, 69 confidential, 71 and 76 of 4, 6, 10 and 19 May, with enclosures, F.O. 73/227.
20 Gordon's dispatches nos. 47 and 54. confidential, 4 and 11 April 1848, with enclosures, F.O. 73/226; nos. 66 and 72 confidential, of 3 and 10 May 1848, F.O. 73/227.
21 Enclosure to dispatch no. 54, confidential, 11 April, f. 313a, F.O. 73/226. For Stephens's career see article in D.N.B., though his propaganda for Scandinavism, well known to the historians of the movement, is not mentioned there.
22 Draft orders no. 11, 5 May 1848, F.O. 73/224; cf. Gordon's dispatch no. 74, confidential, of 16 May, F.O. 73/227, promising a translation which, though bound with this dispatch, was not actually transmitted till 19 May with dispatch no. 76: it was received on 29 May.
23 This was printed on 22 May as Extra-blad of Post-och Inrikes Tidningar Utdeladt öfven till Aftonbladets Abbonenter (i Landsorten). It was translated by Gordon himself (as Stephens who usually helped him was away), enclosed with dispatch no. 91, 6 June, F.O. 73/227, ff. 184–224, and received on 16 June.
echoes of them in his conversations and dispatches. (That there was a two-way traffic in ideas is quite possible: it may well have been Palmerston's reference in parliament on 19 April to it having been 'the lot of England, at no very remote period, to be thrown by circumstances, which were deemed at the time unavoidable, into acts of hostility towards Denmark'\textsuperscript{24} which inspired Swedish statesmen to use the 1801 and 1807 'guilt' with Gordon early in May.) The Danish government through their representatives in London kept Palmerston plentifully supplied with information, but so did the Prussian minister\textsuperscript{25} and the 'Kiel professors',\textsuperscript{26} and it seems as if he preferred to study the Danish case refracted through a Swedish light. Palmerston, as Bagehot pointed out, was a practical man who thought, not in abstract terms, but in 'examples' and possessed a lawyer's ability to master the subject matter of any topic given a brief;\textsuperscript{27} and the material he received from Sweden helped to convince him that the Danes had a case as well as the Germans.\textsuperscript{28} He did not adopt the Danish case in its entirety. He deduced from the histories published by the Swedish gazette that it was impossible to prove one side completely in the right.\textsuperscript{29} This impression stayed with him. He wrote to Russell, in October 1851, just before leaving the foreign office:

The connection and Relations of Denmark, Sleswig and Holstein to each other have been so various, and so complicated that you may pick out historical events to bear out any conclusion you may wish to entertain and speaking from memory I should say that the separate existence of the three, the Union of the Duchies distinct from Denmark, the Union of Sleswig with Denmark separate from Holstein, or the subjugation of Sleswig and Holstein to Denmark might all and

\textsuperscript{24} Hansard's Parliamentary debates, House of Commons, third series, vol. xciv, col. 524.
\textsuperscript{25} Hjelholt, pp. 75–90, for Danish efforts and pp. 73–74, 80–83, for Bunsen's work in London.
\textsuperscript{26} For their rôle see B. Lundquist, Sverige och den slesvig-holsteinska frågan 1849–50, Uppsala, 1934, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{27} Bagehot's historical essays, Anchor ed., 1965, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{28} Hjelholt, pp. 79, 167, doubts whether Palmerston ever seriously studied or grasped the Danish case but the evidence permits a different conclusion.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Gordon's comment, dispatch no. 97, 6 June 1848, F.O. 73/227, that the second gazette supplement is not as 'good as expected' since it states the case of both parties and does not give one as more 'right' than the other.
each of them be established by transactions which have taken place at
different times.30

Some specific points at issue got equally firmly embedded in his mind
at an early stage of the crisis: that the trouble was not started by Denmark
‘but by the violent proceedings of a knot of Agitators who got possession
of Power in Holstein’;31 that neither the Germanic Confederation nor any
of its members had any right to interfere in Sleswig32 (though in politics it
was necessary to ‘take things as they were’33); that the Scandinavian
movement and Swedish policy, either influenced by or making use of the
unionists, was a factor to be reckoned with. The effects of the first two
mentioned convictions can be illustrated from the studies of the Sleswig-
Holstein crises already in print; the last one can be shown by the following.
On 2 June Gordon, having communicated to Manderström Palmerston’s
suggestion that in the given circumstances it might be sensible to let
Sleswig be partitioned between the German Confederation and Den-
mark,34 reported that Manderström had shown ‘apprehension at the term
partition of Sleswig’: if Denmark were not maintained as an independent
kingdom with the whole of Sleswig, a ‘Revolution would take place in the
country with the object of carrying into effect the Union of Denmark with
Sweden’. Influential Danes in favour of such a union were named;
Frederick VII, it was argued, would not oppose the plan; and, though
neither King Oscar nor the Swedish government were in favour of the
union, they would not be able to oppose it ‘from various reasons con-

30 Palmerston to Russell, 30 October 1851, printed in The later correspondence of
31 Ibid., p. 43; cf. ibid., p. 28, letter of 23 September 1850: ‘The Holsteiners being
in insurrection against their Duke.’
32 Palmerston to Russell, 23 September 1850, ibid., p. 28, correcting the queen’s
misapprehensions: ‘First there is no such State as Sleswig-Holstein in existence. There
is a Duchy of Sleswig and a Duchy of Holstein, separate in their origin, history and
political condition, the one being a member of the German Confederation, the other
not, the one entirely German as to its population, the other chiefly Danish; the
former (Sleswig) guaranteed to the Crown of Denmark by Foreign Powers, the other
(Holstein) not being so.’ Cf. Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 11 August 1863, Letters of
Queen Victoria, second series, vol. iii, p. 104.
33 A favourite saying of his, used e.g. 2 May 1848 to Reventlow: ‘Il faut prendre
les choses telles qu’elles sont’, cited by Hjel Holt, p. 102.
34 On the ideas for partition see A. Scharff, Die Europäischen Grossmächte und die
Deutsche Revolution 1848–1851, Leipzig, 1942, pp. 40 ff., summarized by Mosse,
p. 20, fn. 3.
connected with Swedish Home as well as Foreign Policy’. Manderström concluded the conversation by asking pointedly whether the probability of a Scandinavian union was realized in London. Palmerston after this not only dropped the partition plan, but kept Gordon’s dispatch among his private papers and at a later stage of the crisis penned a note (still left between the leaves of the dispatch) to the effect that its contents—as given above—should be conveyed to Cowley, accredited to the German Confederation, since it touched upon ‘Views and Feelings still existing and which have an important Bearing upon pending Negotiations’. An endorsement testifies that this was done on 24 October 1848. At this stage, Palmerston obviously wanted to put pressure on the Germans as he was convinced that it was they who had failed to coerce their army to observe the armistices arranged at Malmö in July and August, but the argument he used proves that he was equally convinced of the force of the Scandinavian movement in 1848. Gordon had been assiduous in gathering information about opposition to the movement and to King Oscar’s policy of intervention in favour of Denmark so that Palmerston should be enabled to make his own estimate of the situation, but his own assessment of ‘the incontrovertibly large amount of Scandinavianism’ and its growing effect on policy had been justified when 15,000 troops were collected in Scania and 4,000 of them transferred to Funen in June to exert pressure on Prussia.

35 Gordon’s private letter to Palmerston, Stockholm, 2 June 1848, Broadlands papers; a copy is in F.O. 73/227, folios 167–77. The italicized passages are underlined in the original.

36 It was replaced by his acceptance of a Danish suggestion that Sleswig might form a buffer state between Denmark and the German Confederation, a proposal refused by the latter.

37 The note is in Palmerston’s handwriting, the endorsement in another hand.


39 Cf. Hjelholt, p. 135, that Palmerston on 20 May showed Bunsen a dispatch of Gordon’s dealing with Swedish and Norwegian sympathy for Denmark.

40 Gordon’s dispatches nos. 54, confidential, and 58, 11 and 18 April, F.O. 73/226; nos. 75, 93, confidential, and 104, confidential, of 16 May, 6 and 27 June 1848, F.O. 73/227.


42 For the policy of the United Kingdoms in the crisis of 1848–52 see, apart from Lundquist, H. Haralds, Sveriges utrikespolitik 1848, Stockholm, 1912; E. O. Löfgren, Sverige-Norge och danska frågan 1848–49, Uppsala, 1921; Å. Holmberg, Skandinavismen
It is fashionable to ascribe Prussian willingness to open negotiations for an armistice with Frederick VII in 1848 to Russian diplomatic threats rather than to the Swedish-Norwegian military support, but the prolonged troop concentration in Scania, the cruising of Swedish and Norwegian naval vessels off the coasts of Holstein and Mecklenburg, and the firmness with which Stockholm declined to stop their armaments even after the Jutland peninsula had been evacuated must be given at least equal weight. It may have been Russian diplomatic support which emboldened the Swedes to go ahead with their military preparations, but it was also Swedish action which stiffened Russian diplomacy. Palmerston’s firmness with the pro-Germans in Britain (and he had as tough a fight with the court in 1848-52 as during his more publicized struggle with queen and cabinet in 1863-64) was an important contributory factor in the situation which led to the armistices of Malmö. If Palmerston did not have the ‘complete success’ attributed to his handling of the 1848 crisis, he was yet able to hold the pro-German forces at bay at home and permit negotiations for peace to be carried on in Sweden. The firmness which enabled him to do so rested in the last analysis on his estimate of the strength of the Scandinavian movement and on the military and naval demonstrations of the Swedish government which the unionists had helped to bring about. His need to prevent Russia acting too independently in an area where Great Britain would not like to see the tsar increase his power and prestige contributed to his decision to avail himself of Sweden’s offices as a mediator; but he was throughout the crisis impressed not only with the firmness showed by the Swedish government but also with the wise moderation with which it acted in a situation fraught with difficulties.

---

43 See e.g. Holmberg, pp. 139 ff.
44 Gordon’s dispatch no. 94, 6 June; copy of private and confidential letter of the same date, folios 264–271 and no. 100, confidential, of 20 June 1848, all in F.O. 73/227.
45 For Russia’s early caution, see Taylor, p. 14 and Mosse, pp. 19 and 34.
46 It is common to find this ‘success’ contrasted with the ‘failure’ of 1863-4: see e.g. B. Connell, Regina v. Palmerston, London, 1962, pp. 70 and 338.
47 Gordon was no admirer of the Swedes, see e.g. dispatch no. 104, confidential, 27 June 1848, F.O. 73/227: ‘So far as meaningless fraternization, public chorus-singing and Toast drinking or penny-a-line Poetry may commit him, the Swede
There had been those in Stockholm who feared that King Oscar's policy would lead to defeat in battle and his own deposition—a repetition of the fate of Gustavus IV; but the Swedish king came out of the Sleswig-Holstein crisis of 1848–52 with increased prestige both among the Scandinavians and the great powers. He had helped to bring about the Malmö armistices; his troops had managed to enforce the terms of the August armistice in that part of Sleswig which had been allocated to them (in contrast to what happened in other parts of the duchies); his diplomatic help to Frederick VII had remained staunch during the agonizing second stage of the crisis when the Danes felt obliged to reopen the fighting since the terms of the armistice of 1848 had been flouted by the Germans. Russia played the most important role in the 1849–50 negotiations for a Dano-Prussian peace, but Sweden, through the naval demonstration of the United Kingdoms, had a significant auxiliary part. She was one of the signatories with Britain, Russia and France to the protocol of London which on 8 May 1850 declared the integrity of all the king of Denmark's dominions, including Holstein and Lauenburg, to be a matter of 'European interest'; and to that treaty of 1852 which arranged for the succession of the Holstat, should Frederick VII die without a son, to go to the house of Glücksburg which these powers as well as Austria and Prussia signed. The duke of Augustenburg, the 1848 ruler of 'Schleswig-Holstein', abandoned and renounced the rights of himself and his heirs, against a money compensation, in favour of the Glücksburgs.

This settlement—under the aegis of the European counter-revolution—did not solve the problem which had caused the conflict. Britain had refused to renew the 1720 guarantee as suggested by Russia; the protocol would probably in general be ready to express his Scandinavian sympathy. But, beyond this, the cold and calculating and selfish national character would scarcely I think lead the majority of the nation were they consulted to approve of so generous, as well as essentially sound a Policy'; but in his confidential dispatch no. 100, 20 June 1848, he expressed 'high admiration for the dignified tone, and firm attitude assumed by the Swedish Government in pursuance of the bold, generous and at the same time judicious Policy by which they appear to be directed in this question so deeply and especially interesting to the Scandinavian nations'.

50 The treaty of London of 8 May 1852 is printed by Steefel, pp. 265 ff.
of 1850 had not been signed by Austria and Prussia, and in the addition to it of 23 August the powers (though without Prussia) only witnessed that they had been present at Austria’s declaration that no diminution of the rights of the German Confederation was implied in the protocol and at Denmark’s counter-declaration emphasizing that such rights existed only in Holstein and Lauenburg. But if the Germans hoped to fight another day, so did the Scandinavian unionists. The Russians had poured cold water over suggestions that ‘a Swedish Prince’ might be considered as Frederick’s heir (‘they surely cannot meditate on another union of Calmar?’), and their opposition had ended any discussion of the issue; but times might change and Prince Christian of Glücksburg, a German by birth and upbringing, could, it was hoped, be persuaded on Frederick’s death to accept Holstein and Lauenburg as a state of his own, leaving Denmark and Sleswig to move into the Scandinavian union.

One variant of ‘Scandinavian Union’—which was to have some influence on the 1863–64 situation—came to the fore during the Crimean War. It was suggested that, as a reward for King Oscar joining France and Great Britain against Russia, Finland might be reunited with Sweden. Palmerston was in favour of this; he was always anxious lest Russia—by crossing from Finland into the north of Norway—should become an Atlantic power and argued that a strengthening of Sweden would suit his policy of containing Russia in the north as well as in the south. The reports he received from J. Crowe, British consul in Norway, made him believe that such a ‘Scandinavian’ state would be generally welcomed in that country. In this Crowe was mistaken, but there is no doubt that King Oscar and Crown Prince Charles were very keen on the reconquest of Finland, though the king’s demand for a wording, similar to that of the London protocol of 1850 for the Danish state, that Finland’s reunion with Sweden (were it achieved) should be declared ‘a matter of European interest’ caused difficulties and delays. The November treaty of 1855

51 Lundquist, pp. 315, 358–61.
52 Bloomfield, St Petersburg, to Palmerston, 8 March 1850, quoting Nesselrode: Correspondence respecting the affairs of Denmark 1850–53, London, 1864 (Accounts and Papers, vol. lxv, no. 13).
53 See Jansson, pp. 97–98, for Norwegian fears that Sweden would become too powerful if she reabsorbed Finland.
54 For Anglo-Swedish relations during the Crimean War see S. Eriksson, Svensk diplomati och tidningspress under Krinriget, Uppsala, 1939; for Palmerston’s Baltic
between France and Britain on the one hand and the United Kingdoms on the other (which bound Sweden–Norway never to cede territory to Russia against an Allied guarantee of military help should they suffer attack from Russia) was Palmerston's substitute, and admirably suited his purpose of safeguarding northern Norway. From King Oscar's point of view the November treaty was meant as a first step leading to the goal of Finland, and when Russia came to terms with the Allies (partly because the November treaty was assumed, erroneously, to have secret clauses stipulating Sweden's speedy entry into the war), the king was grievously disappointed. His son and namesake noted that he 'aged ten years in one day'. Sir Arthur Magenis, the British envoy at this time, also commented on the deep disappointment of the royal family and the people at large, though many well-informed men had expressed to him their doubts whether Finland really desired reunion with Sweden. Such a reunion remained on the 'agenda' of both Napoleon III and Crown Prince Charles and was not forgotten by Palmerston; but circumstances after 1856 made the union of the Scandinavian movement the more burning topic.

Prince Jerome Napoleon visited all the Scandinavian countries in the summer of 1856. He had talks with Crown Prince Charles (then viceroy of Norway) in Christiania, with King Oscar in Stockholm and with sympathizers of Scandinavianism in Copenhagen, and took it upon himself to explain the Scandinavian movement to Napoleon III on his return to France. Napoleon in his turn decided to test the reaction of English statesmen and a good deal of correspondence developed between Cowley (now ambassador in Paris), Clarendon and Palmerston on the issue. The idea of Scandinavian union appealed to Palmerston, since a strong northern state would be a bulwark against Russia, but he foresaw a great many complications: what would happen to Sleswig, to Jutland, to Holstein—

---


55 Cited by Jansson, p. 110.
56 Magenis's dispatch no. 30, confidential, 5 April 1856, F.O. 73/278.
57 For the visit see Holmberg, pp. 269 ff.
Ragnhild Hatton

and what would the reaction of Germany be? Politically influential circles in Denmark were averse to union according to reports from Buchanan, the British representative in Copenhagen; and the Swedish ministers tended to be cautious. Manderström (who had been sent by Oscar to Paris in 1856 and remained there till 1858) played down Napoleon III’s interest, and in Sweden Magenis found it hard to discover anyone at the centre of things expressing himself ‘warmly’ in favour of the union. Only the crown prince was eager to tell him that the Scandinavian question ‘was much nearer solution than was generally supposed’. King Oscar did not broach the subject and the ministers he sounded tended to take refuge behind the phrase that if the union came in the future, ‘that future was not likely to arrive in their own time’. Magenis summed up his impressions in February 1857: ‘On the whole then I am inclined to believe that this question is much more dynastic than popular’, and orders were sent him in return ‘cautiously to abstain from expressing any opinion on the part of Her Majesty’s Government in the Scandinavian question’. Palmerston and Clarendon were, however, more open in Paris. Cowley was told that Great Britain would not be against ‘Denmark proper’ going into a union with Sweden, though care must be taken of ‘the mad nationalities’.

The idea of a partitioning of Sleswig, letting the southernmost German-speaking part go with Holstein, was clearly as much in the air in London as it was in some Scandinavian circles. Palmerston had been told of this trend of thought among union sympathizers through Crowe in Christiania:


59 Copy of Buchanan’s dispatch of 6 January 1857, reporting negative response in Copenhagen to the ‘question raised in certain quarters of a Union of Denmark, Sweden and Norway’, was sent to Magenis on 15 January, draft no. 1, confidential, F.O. 73/286.

60 Magenis to Clarendon, dispatch no. 8, confidential, 11 February 1857, F.O. 73/287.

61 Draft no. 5, 28 February 1857, F.O. 73/286.

62 Clarendon to Cowley, 27 March 1857, cited by Møller, ‘Napoleon III’s planer’, p. 47. Note Møller’s finding the British attitude inexplicable in view of Buchanan’s unfavourable reports from Copenhagen for the prospects of Scandinavian union: the Swedish and Norwegian correspondence are necessary for the evaluation of British policy at this time.
They argue [the consul wrote in December 1856], Denmark must lose Holstein and Lauenburg, and the question is whether the southern part of Sleswig which had undoubtedly become German should not follow; although the duchy of Sleswig historically and equitably is Danish territory. 63

This information formed part of a memorandum, more than a hundred pages long, setting forth the practical plans of the unionists after the big student conference held in Uppsala in the summer of that year. Domestic reform would be necessary in Sweden (where the old-fashioned Diet of Estates still existed) as a preliminary to any closer union with the more democratically governed Norway and Denmark. 64 It was essential to proceed slowly with the complete union envisaged by the Scandinavians before 1848. The union now discussed was in the first place to be one 'of perfect independence'; each country would keep its own name and national flag (though with a union symbol in one corner), but in all foreign transaction 'Scandinavia must act as one'. The ruler would be styled 'king of Scandinavia' and there would be one foreign office. A state council, to be elected from each assembly but to meet at times which did not clash with their sessions, would control joint affairs immediately and prepare for the closer union which would follow once the professional classes of the three countries had become integrated. Defence was the first priority, not only in view of Russian enmity to Sweden after the Crimean War, but also because of current suggestions that Denmark should be totally absorbed by the Germans, becoming 'marine Germany'. The German-speaking inhabitants of the Danish dominions would have to go; all the Danish ones would become part of a strong Scandinavia whose military needs and assets happily complemented each other: 'The object therefore

63 In F.O. 73/228, separate no. 1: the memorandum, headed 'Scandinavian Unity', is signed 31 December 1856, but was sent ('by Opportunity') on 14 January 1857 and received on 2 February 1857: see draft no. 4, F.O. 73/288. It is of considerable interest for its analysis of the political, social and intellectual relations between the three northern kingdoms after 1814 and the major part of it will be published, with an introduction by the present writer, in (Norwegian) H.T., vol. xlv, 1967.

64 There is a great deal of information in F.O. 73 from 1842 onwards about the need of and plans for reform. Crowe writes in his memorandum of 'the antiquated political and social immunities' of the Swedish aristocracy; Jerningham called the House of Nobility 'a titled Beargarden' in his dispatch no. 83 to Russell, 9 December 1862, F.O. 73/323.
in the first instance ought to be, to concentrate the endeavours, with a view to give the Union as permanent a coherent military and disposable force as possible.'

The plans of the Scandinavians also came to the notice of the Foreign Office in other ways. The 1856 articles of Charles Edmond, a Pole who had accompanied Prince Jerome on his trip, and the book he published in the following year, were not taken seriously because the author was a Pole; but the Danish nobleman Blixen-Finecke's pamphlet on *Scandinavismen practisk* was noted because he was the brother-in-law of Prince Christian of Glücksburg: it was assumed that he might be able to help realize the plan of contending Prince Christian with a 'less distinguished but more stable position in the Duchies' which he could take into Germany, leaving the road open for Denmark to enter the Scandinavian union. Conservative circles both in Sweden and Denmark took steps (which were always reported to London) to stem the movement which now seemed in flood; but between 1856 and 1858 the impression was growing at the Foreign Office that moderate opinion in all three northern countries was becoming increasingly pro-Scandinavian and that the Swedish royal family was eager to use a suitable opportunity to achieve Scandinavian union.

When King Oscar became ill enough in September 1857 to have Crown Prince Charles appointed regent, it was assumed that 'dynastic Scandinavian' would be the order of the day. At the same time European attention was becoming focused on the Sleswig-Holstein problem once more. There had long been friction between the German Confederation and Denmark over the interpretation of promises given by Frederick VII

---

65 Magen's dispatch no. 8, confidential, 11 February 1857, F.O. 73/287, with enclosure (bound after no. 11) classing Edmond with those Poles who 'generally are ready to advocate any measure . . . in the hope,—perhaps,—that something may turn up for their own country'.

66 Draft no. 2, 11 February 1857, F.O. 73/286; Magen's dispatch no. 13, 7 March 1857, with enclosure, F.O. 73/287.

67 For such plans see drafts nos. 6 and 8, of 11 and 13 March, F.O. 73/286 and Magen's dispatches nos. 19 and 20, 18 April, F.O. 73/287; Jerningham's dispatch no. 83 of 9 December 1862, F.O. 73/323.

68 Magen's dispatches nos. 8, confidential, and 13, 11 February and 7 March 1857, F.O. 73/287; enclosures to drafts nos. 23 and 24, 29 May and 16 June 1857, F.O. 73/286.

69 See e.g. Magen's dispatch no. 14 of 8 May 1858, F.O. 73/293 for the belief that the prince regent was using his position as protector of a masonic lodge to achieve 'a rallying point for propaganda and a means of Scandinavianism in Denmark'.

---

134
between 1850 and 1852, with threats of federal execution against the Danish king in February 1858 the situation was assuming crisis proportions. Sweden consistently used her influence to bring Denmark to conciliate and satisfy the Federation. The repeal of the Helstat constitution of 1855, to which the Federation objected, in so far as it affected Holstein and Lauenburg, was urged by Manderström (now foreign minister) 'as the only possible means for the Danish government to extricate themselves from their difficulties'; and there was great joy in Stockholm at the news telegraphed from Copenhagen in July 1858 that Frederick had agreed to do so. But this step, intended as a recognition of Holstein's special position and rights, only served to enflame German feeling in respect of Sleswig and revived the 'Schleswig-Holstein' agitation. In this crisis Denmark insisted on retaining the whole of Sleswig and Sweden had no choice but to support this course, since those who were concerned with the country's strategic position as well as those who were intent on the future of 'Scandinavia' agreed on the impossibility of leaving Frederick VII in the lurch. From July 1858, King Charles and Manderström went out of their way to stress to British diplomats in Stockholm, first, that Denmark could not go on making concessions to a German Confederation intent on stepping up its demands and, secondly, that were the Germans to cross the Eider, Sweden would feel bound to come to the assistance of Denmark, in the last resort because she could not contemplate being hemmed in by Russia on one side and 'marine Germany' on the other. The 'Scandinavian' argument was prominent in Manderström's discussions with Jerningham, the newly arrived British envoy, in January and February 1861. The Swede emphasized, as he had to Gordon in 1848, that he was not of the Scandinavian party, though he had now progressed far enough on the road to union to

70 The 'Agreements of 1851-2' are printed in Steefel, pp. 267-73. The linguistic issue at stake in Sleswig has been well treated by Carr, pp. 300 ff. and H. Hjelholt, *Den danske Sprogordning og det danske Sprogstyre i Slesvig mellem Krige 1852-1864*, Copenhagen, 1923. The financial and other complications of Holstein's relationship with Denmark (in which Sleswig also became involved) were obscure enough to baffle even interested statesmen: see e.g. Jerningham's dispatch no. 41, 1 April 1861, F.O. 73/314, quoting Manderström on 'the apparent impossibility of attaining to a full comprehension of what is understood by the Danish Question'—he claimed no pretension to it and did not believe it was grasped 'either in London, Paris, or elsewhere'.

71 W. Grey's dispatch no. 16, 12 July 1858, F.O. 73/293, widely circulated on receipt, copies going to Paris, Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg.
state that he was not against the goal of the party, provided unity ‘might come gradually and naturally’, and he was mindful enough of the eventual recipient of his confidences to stress that such a union ‘would strengthen Europe against Russian preponderance’. As in 1848 he pointed to the danger that, were Denmark to lose territory beyond Holstein and Lauenburg, the unionists would bring Scandinavia into being with or without the help of the Swedish government. Again he appealed for co-operation with Britain. British support was indeed Manderström’s only hope for a solution of the crisis without war. Prussian designs were generally suspect in Sweden, but Manderström was also wary of Napoleon III (any German infringement of Danish territory, he told Jerningham, might bring French encroachment in Germany) and his sigh that only England and Sweden were ‘sincere’ in the Danish question was genuine enough.

Co-operation between Manderström and Palmerston in the crucial stage of the second Sleswig-Holstein crisis, however, was made impossible not only by Palmerston’s own distrust of Napoleon III’s motives and the opposition of the queen and the majority of the cabinet to any measure that could be interpreted as anti-German, but also by the undermining of Manderström’s sensible and moderate policies by the behaviour of Charles XV (king from 1859) and, most of all, by a rather accidental

72 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 5, 16 January 1861, F.O. 73/314.
73 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 17, 6 March 1861, F.O. 73/314.
74 Jerningham’s dispatches nos. 5 and 17, 16 January and 6 March 1861, F.O. 73/314, and no. 109 and no. 112, 4 and 6 September 1861, F.O. 73/315.
75 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 5, 16 January 1861, F.O. 73/314.
76 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 63, 16 May 1861, F.O. 73/314.
77 This distrust was strengthened rather than weakened by the special emissaries whom Napoleon sent to Palmerston in July and August 1863, though little is known of their negotiations, see S. Böbr-Tylingo, Napoléon III, L’Europe et la Pologne en 1863–4, Rome, 1963, pp. 292–3.
Pamierston and 'Scandinavian Union'

revelation to Palmerston in 1863 of the whole range of Charles’s plans involving co-operation with Napoleon far beyond Scandinavian union into a large scale reshaping of the map of Europe. King Charles did not share Manderström’s distrust of the emperor of the French, and the visit which he and his younger brother Oscar paid to France and to England in the summer of 1861 had as its purpose the sounding of the courts of both countries on Scandinavian union and on the question of Sweden’s regaining Finland. Little evidence has survived of the talks with Napoleon (though Charles said that the emperor, who ‘sympathized with his own Scandinavian thoughts’, had advised him to work for the constitutional reform in Sweden which the unionists demanded); but Palmerston deduced from his own conversation with the royal brothers that they had been flattered by Napoleon’s willingness to see Finland restored to Sweden, Denmark retaining Slesvig if she let Holstein go, and by the prospect that ‘when the proper time comes Denmark, so constituted ought to form one Union with Sweden and Norway’. On him, Palmerston reported to Queen Victoria, they had merely pressed the need for Britain to show the flag in the Baltic every summer, if only to the extent of ‘a single gunboat’. King Charles for his part assumed that he would meet


Note 79 For the visit as well as the preparatory work of Charles XV’s private diplomat, G. C. Hebbe, in London and that of F. v. Dardel in Paris, see Eriksson, Carl XV, pp. 333 ff.; Holmberg, pp. 368 ff.; cf. the document edited by F. Møller, ‘P. Vedel om Karl XV og hans Reise i 1861’, Scandia, vol. xxxiii, 1954-55, pp. 115-30. That the visit was connected ‘with the Danish question’ was openly admitted in the Swedish press; see enclosure to Jerningham’s dispatch no. 94, 9 August, F.O. 73/315.

Note 80 To Louis de Geer, see his Miniën, vol. i, Stockholm, 1892, p. 226, the implication being that the king would gain for Scandinavian union also those in Sweden who were principally concerned with constitutional reform at home. Charles’s attempts to capitalize on reform were, however, frustrated by those who, determined to limit royal initiative and power, took charge of the change to a modern constitution between 1863 and 1865.

Note 81 For Palmerston’s report to Queen Victoria of 14 August 1861, see Letters of Queen Victoria, first series, vol. iii, pp. 572-6. It is possible that the prime minister was being less than frank in his report—asked for by the queen—hiding behind the language barriers of the occasion: the king and his brother insisted on speaking English and were difficult to understand because of their ‘indistinct utterance of the voice’ and for reasons of etiquette he himself could not change to French.
no opposition from Britain’s side in respect of Scandinavian union. Queen Victoria, who had entertained the royal brothers at Osborne, formed the opinion that ‘there is a dream of a Scandinavian kingdom floating before them’. She did not think such enlargement of Sweden ‘very dangerous’, but preferred it not to take place under Napoleon III’s aegis. Later, she embraced the idea (which was much talked about in Sweden, but, well-informed diplomats concluded, only ‘to annoy Prince Oscar’) that Charles XV’s daughter Louise, then twelve years old, might marry the heir of Prince Christian of Glücksburg; in this way the Scandinavian kingdom might come, but with a dynasty more acceptable to Queen Victoria than the Bernadottes.

Palmerston had not been alarmed at King Charles’s talk in 1861; the Swedish king realized, the prime minister wrote in his report to the queen, that there were ‘great if not insuperable obstacles’ to Scandinavian union; nor did the way in which growing Anglo-French tension was utilized in unionist propaganda worry him. The evidence of great attention paid by Napoleon III to Sweden (the emperor’s aide-de-camp was among the officers who attended manoeuvres in Scania in the summer of 1862 and by Charles to France (it was on Swedish initiative that negotiations for a commercial treaty between the two countries were reopened) was, how-

---

82 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, 13 August 1861, Letters, first series, vol. III, pp. 571–2; Queen Victoria to Palmerston, 18 August 1861, ibid., pp. 574–6. Note the difference between Charles XV’s private conclusions as to Britain’s power, Eriksson, Carl XV, p. 334, and his conversations with Jerningham reported in dispatches nos. 107 and 111, 4 and 6 September 1861, F.O. 73/315. Cf. Prince Oscar’s conclusion from the visit, written down when he was Oscar III, Mine Memoarer, vol. III, ed. N. F. Holm, Stockholm, 1962, p. 30, that England would not have opposed him if he had persisted in his Scandinavian plans.


85 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 146, 2 December 1861, with enclosures, F.O. 73/316.

86 Jerningham’s dispatch no. 44, 13 May 1862, F.O. 73/322; dispatch no. 60, 30 June 1862, with endorsement, F.O. 73/323.
ever, duly noted.\textsuperscript{87} So was the growing anti-Russian feeling in Sweden (fanned by Polish refugees, and by the tsar’s decision to abolish the celebration of all military anniversaries bar that of Poltava\textsuperscript{88}) which found expression in a vast public meeting in Stockholm in 1862 on the anniversary of that battle where the flags of Finland, Italy, Hungary, and Poland flew beside that of Sweden and where 11,000 riksdaler were collected to raise a statue to Charles XII.\textsuperscript{89} Manderström’s insistence that Sweden be allowed a share in the settlement of the Dano-German conflict—strongly urged after Russell’s Gotha dispatch\textsuperscript{90}—was not in itself unwelcome to Palmerston, who used it in his policy of attempting (as did Manderström) to put pressure on Prussia and the German Confederation to think hard before embarking on a new invasion of Sleswig. Palmerston’s famous speech of 23 July 1863 in the house of commons is more easily grasped when seen against the contents of the diplomatic bag from Sweden in the first six months of 1863. That Palmerston had Swedish military intervention in mind is clear from a note of his penned on 12 July:

These Germans might have it suggested for their consideration that if they enter into contest with Denmark, they may find the Danes tougher antagonists than they expect them to be and that it is just possible that they might find Denmark not destitute of support from other Quarters. Sweden would probably be too happy to give her Troops an opportunity of Practice.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{87} Jerningham’s dispatch no. 61, 1 July 1862, F.O. 73/323; dispatch no. 149, 30 October 1863, with endorsement, F.O. 73/333.

\textsuperscript{88} Jerningham’s dispatch no. 44, 13 May 1862, F.O. 73/323; dispatch no. 63, 5 July 1862, F.O. 73/323, both with press cuttings and other enclosures.

\textsuperscript{89} E. Corbett’s dispatch no. 5, 14 July 1862, F.O. 73/323, with report of meeting on 8 July, enclosing, a.o., a copy of the telegram received from Czartoryski. The strong sympathy for Italy in Sweden and the various Italian missions to Sweden was much commented on, see, e.g., Jerningham’s dispatch no. 90, 29 July 1862, F.O. 73/315.

\textsuperscript{90} Jerningham’s dispatches nos. 93 and 94, both of 29 December 1862, F.O. 73/323.

\textsuperscript{91} This note, in Palmerston’s handwriting and signed P., was found by Moller when working on his study of the English cabinet in 1863–64 and printed (though note that the word ‘possible’ was inadvertently left out, thus altering the sense) on p. 241 of his article in (Danish) H.T. It is in one of the many badly sorted bundles of Russell papers in P.R.O. 30/22/97 and carries an endorsement in Russell’s hand that ‘This has been already said in general terms’. Moller realized that it confirmed Palmerston’s statement to the attorney-general, Roundell Palmer, that he had Sweden in mind in his speech, but—not knowing the Stockholm correspondence to the F.O.—found the
The next few weeks, however, brought Palmerston fear of Swedish intervention and its consequences. The Hon. William Grey had been secretary of legation in Stockholm in the 1850s and was now at the Paris embassy in the same capacity. He knew King Charles well, both through negotiations in the Crimean War (when he had been chargé d'affaires at a time when King Oscar and his son were actively engaged in secret diplomacy) and through his marriage into a Swedish noble family with close connexions at court. During a private holiday in Sweden in 1863 Grey was invited to visit the king and on 13 August had a conversation with him lasting more than an hour and a half. It was with some pangs of conscience that he brought himself to report to his superior, Lord Cowley, what Charles XV had said, but he felt it his duty to do so since Jermingham was away on leave. Copies of his two letters to Cowley, dated 14 and 16 August respectively, are in the Palmerston papers. They reveal a king carried away by what he believed to be a firm offer of alliance from Napoleon III, received on 11 August, at a time when Charles was already on the point of concluding a treaty with Denmark for an offensive and defensive alliance in case of a federal execution. The emperor had taken up an earlier suggestion of Charles’s for joint Franco-Swedish collaboration in the Polish question: he now suggested an attack on Samogitia in the spring of 1864 and promised that Finland would be Sweden’s reward for joining 100,000 troops (subsidized by himself) to those of France. Charles was determined to accept the offer. He had bitterly resented lost opportunities during the Crimean War and now seemed to desire war ‘at any price’. He left Grey in no doubt ‘that his object is to establish the Kingdom of Scandinavia: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland’, and made it clear that he was willing to give Napoleon a free hand in Europe, col-

---

note inexplicable. Cf. Steefel, p. 61, fn. 2, printing a Palmerston memorandum of 27 June 1863, from which he deduced that France was hinted at in the speech of 23 July.

92 They are briefly endorsed in Palmerston’s hand, and more fully in another hand. The originals are in the Cowley papers, F.O. 519/201, in a bundle of letters from Grey. The letters are printed at the end of my article ‘Charles XV in 1863’ in (Swedish) H.T., 2nd series, vol. xxxix, 1966, pp. 312–27, where information about Grey is given pp. 318–19.

laborating with him to the best of his ability, in order to achieve his own goal. When Grey begged him 'not to be deluded by the promises of France' and warned him of the dangers of persisting in 'wild visions', he was answered with a laconic 'If I fail, I will abdicate'. Grey concluded his second letter: 'The King believes he has the power to create war in Europe. He seems determined to do so if he can, for he believes his own greatness will be the result. This appears to me to be, as I said before, a dangerous temper, and I consequently lose no time in telling you.'

The effects of this information on Palmerston can hardly be exaggerated. There is a distinct change in the tone of the instructions to Paris—where the Sleswig-Holstein issue was under consideration—once the Grey letters had been read. These letters thus help explain the English non-committal answer, conveyed also to Napoleon III, in response to Manderström's appeal of 11 September for great power support for Denmark. The information conveyed in them coloured Palmerston's attitude to Sweden during the autumn of 1863. He disbelieved Manderström's assurances to Hamilton, the chargé d'affaires during Jerningham's absence, and to

91 Palmerston might have read, but we have no proof that he did so, the unsigned fuller (but in some ways less revealing) memorandum which Grey wrote of the conversations of 14 August and sent, with later additions, to Russell from Paris on 11 September. It was found among the Russell papers in G. & D. 22/78 (now reclassified as P.R.O. 30/22/78) by E. Hedin and printed in V.H.A.A.H., vol. lxxxi, pp. 193-7. It has also been printed by S. Böhr-Tylding in Tekt Historye, vol. xv, as an appendix, though note that this editor does not distinguish, as does Hedin, between the text of 14 August and the later additions, and does not realize Grey's authorship. Moller, 'Napoleon III's planer', p. 291, fn. 4, mentions a copy of the memorandum in the Royal Archives, Windsor, but none has come to light in the Palmerston papers, nor does the original carry an endorsement of copies being made for the prime minister. A dispatch from F. Hamilton, in charge in Stockholm during Jerningham's absence, no. 4 of 3 September 1863, F.O. 73/333, which was copied both for the queen and for Palmerston must, however, have deepened the impression of the Grey letters: 'I have been informed by a Person in whom I have every confidence that whilst at Copenhagen, Count Manderström signed a Treaty of Alliance, Offensive and Defensive, between Sweden and Denmark, to come into operation in the event of the Troops of the German Confederation crossing the Eider.'

95 That Palmerston took an active part in formulating these instructions to Grey is clear from the three drafts in F.O. 27/1481, for dispatch no. 21 sent on 16 September 1863. A comparison of these instructions with earlier ones from Russell to Lowther which Cowley showed to Droyon (see Cowley's dispatch no. 987, Paris, 6 September 1863, F.O. 27/1495) is instructive; so is a comparison of the tone of the dispatches to and from Sweden before Jerningham went on leave early in August with those after his return in October.
Jerningham when he returned to his post at the end of October, that no Dano-Swedish treaty had been signed\(^96\) (assurances which were honest since the Swedish ministers, in a famous confrontation of 8 September, had forced Charles XV to stay his hand\(^97\)), and refused for some considerable time to reckon Sweden among the neutral powers fit to take part in mediation efforts. Jerningham was mystified since he knew nothing of the Grey letters and was convinced that Manderström was telling the truth.\(^98\) Even when confidence in the Swedish foreign minister was restored, the new knowledge of Charles XV's willingness to go to any lengths to achieve his goals prevented a co-operation along the lines Palmerston and Manderström desired. It paralysed their diplomacy in the critical weeks after Frederick VII's death on 15 November when Frederick of Augustenburg's proclaiming himself 'duke of Schleswig-Holstein' further complicated and deepened the issues at stake in the crisis. Whether Bismarck\(^99\) had not in the end been too clever for Palmerston and Manderström combined is another matter,\(^100\) but both believed that firmness could have averted the war. Manderström differed from his cabinet colleagues in the summer of 1863 in that he wished them to sanction a firm promise to the Danes of 20,000 men; the prospect alone, he argued, would have been enough to halt the crisis.\(^101\) Palmerston in his letter to King Leopold in August 1864 expressed himself convinced that 'words' from Britain, France and Russia would have been sufficient to solve the crisis 'without

---

\(^96\) For such denials see Hamilton's dispatches nos. 5 and 6, confidential, 7 and 14 September 1863, F.O. 73/333; cf. Jerningham's dispatch no. 154, 9 November 1863, F.O. 73/333.

\(^97\) See R. M. Hatton, (Swedish) H.T., 1966, pp. 323–4, for the possibility of Grey influencing this confrontation.

\(^98\) Jerningham's dispatch no. 178, 15 December 1863, F.O. 73/333.

\(^99\) The gaps which Steefel, p. 357, pointed to in our knowledge of Bismarck's negotiations with Sweden, have been filled by E. Hedin, 'Sverige-Norge och Preussen 1860–63', V.H.A.A.H., vol. lxxx, Stockholm, 1952, pp. 151 ff. with German summary pp. 207–8.


\(^101\) C. F. H. Palmstierna, the under-secretary, on 6 November 1863 in his journal, extracts of which have been published by C. F. Palmstierna, 'Ett Bidrag till historien om den politiska Skandinavismens sammanbrott 1863', (Swedish) H.T., 2nd series, vol. x, 1947, p. 64.
recourse to blows'. Russia, as recent research has shown, was not during the crisis so much in Prussia’s hands as is often assumed, and was at times willing to act with Britain. The Swedish cabinet was willing to act with any of the three great powers, but felt too weak to act alone. France was willing, at a price, to co-operate with Britain and Sweden. It can be argued that, in the last analysis, it was Palmerston’s knowledge of Charles XV’s sweeping plans and hopes which made him unwilling to risk strong words since any diplomatic démarche which involved Charles XV could get out of hand. If Britain acted with Sweden, Charles might succeed in bringing in Napoleon III to further the plans revealed in the king’s conversations with Grey. If Britain acted with Russia, Sweden could not, in view of her special interests in Denmark—freely acknowledged by London—he kept outside the magic circle and Charles XV might once more engineer an opportunity for Napoleon to act. Grey had stressed that Charles and Napoleon planned for war in the spring of 1864 and fears were reiterated from Paris by Cowley and Grey throughout the autumn and winter of 1863–64 that the emperor had not given up his hopes of a Polish campaign in the spring of 1864. On reflection it seemed to

105 This price has been discussed by all the authorities of the period; the Bernadotte attitude can be deduced from Jerminham’s dispatch no. 204, confidential, 21 December 1864, F.O. 73/340: ‘I have reason to believe that one of the opinions of Prince Oscar is, that an acquisition on the Rhine may be requisite for the consolidation of the Napoleonie Dynasty, and that England have done wrong to decline joint intervention with France in defence of Denmark, at the price of such acquisition.’
106 Draft by Russell, endorsed ‘seen by Lord Palmerston and the Queen’, no. 30, 29 February 1864, F.O. 37/337, informing Jerminham that he had ‘admitted that Sweden has peculiar interests and closer sympathies than any of the other countries with Denmark’ to the Swedish envoy, Count Wachtmeister.
Palmerston more statesmanlike to accept the loss of Sleswig to Denmark than to risk the possibility of such upheavals as Napoleon III, aided by Charles XV, might bring about. Dynastic Scandinavism survived the Sleswig-Holstein crisis of 1863–64 less battered than the more general movement for Scandinavian union; but for Palmerston both had become dangerous by August 1863.

Napoleon had already on 9 November 1863 informed Charles (letter in the Bernadotte archive, cited by Eriksson, Carl XV, p. 348, fn. 25) that he would not go to war with the German powers to save Denmark or promote union.

108 See his letters to Russell, 11 and 13 September 1865, printed in Ashley, vol. ii, pp. 438 and 445–46. Expressions here and in Palmerston’s letter to King Leopold of 28 August 1864, ibid., p. 437, make it abundantly clear that Palmerston was not, as sometimes assumed in Scandinavian works, unsympathetic to the Danish cause. Cf. a letter of 9 May 1864 in the Broadlands papers, from Delane, editor of The Times, which blames his ‘temporary Germanism’ on Palmerston’s absence from affairs through illness and promises renewed support for the Danish cause.

109 Plans to bring about a union by encouraging revolution in Copenhagen were assumed to have the support of Prince Oscar after the king had been checked by his ministers, see Jerningham’s dispatch no. 37, 16 February 1864, F.O. 73/338; dispatch no. 136, 6 June 1864, F.O. 73/339 and dispatch no. 197, confidential, 8 December 1864, F.O. 73/340; but they lacked even the precondition of success in view of the non-arrival of Swedish military help. In the post-1864 years the house of Bernadotte persisted in energetic, if unfruitful, diplomacy for dynastic Scandinavism until Oscar I’s rapprochement with Germany in 1875.

110 There is much material in F.O. 73, vols. 338 and 339, for the first half of 1864 which illustrates the hopes Sweden built on British naval help to save the duchies, or at least Sleswig, for Denmark; but nothing which alters the story of this period as told by British and Scandinavian historians. The opposition to Scandinavian union expressed by Russia and the German states during the negotiations for peace is well known, and Møller, ‘Napoleon III’s planer’, p. 61, has quoted the answer of the Danish plenipotentiaries to Clarendon who asked them whether anyone in Denmark or Sweden wanted a ‘Scandinavian’ king: “C’est une question au-dessus de nos fines.” Such an answer was well suited to checkmate both Napoleon III and Charles XV.
At the end of January 1855 the misfortunes of the Crimean War brought down Aberdeen’s coalition government on Roebuck’s motion for a committee of inquiry, and February saw Lord Palmerston installed at last as prime minister. At the beginning, however, he did not altogether impress, and from his first night in the House of Commons it seemed to some that the ‘whiskered wonder of over seventy years’, might now be feeling his age. On 2 February Disraeli, embittered by his own leader’s failure to seize the opportunity of power, wrote of the incoming prime minister:

... though he is really an impostor, utterly exhausted, and at the best only ginger-beer, and not champagne, and now an old painted pantaloon, very deaf, very blind, and with false teeth, which would fall out of his mouth when speaking, if he did not hesitate and halt so in his talk, here is a man which the country resolves to associate with energy, wisdom and eloquence, and will until he has tried and failed.¹

In the summer the news from the Crimea improved and in September Sebastopol fell at last. But Napoleon III, tired of this war and already looking about for other opportunities, compelled Palmerston to forego all hopes of further triumphs against Russia and the end of March 1856 brought only the disappointing peace of Paris. In the following October a new war broke out with China after the lorcha Arrow incident. This time, however, it was Palmerston who on 3 March 1857 was defeated in the House of Commons by a vote on Cobden’s motion for a committee of inquiry into relations with China. Instead of meekly surrendering office, as had his predecessor with more justification, Palmerston scorned the 'un-

principled combination' that had brought him down—in the Commons it included Russell, Gladstone, Disraeli, and Graham, as well as Cobden and Roebuck—and appealed over their heads to the electorate. In the event he won a great personal victory. The Peelite rump was finally chewed up; the radicals were smashed, with Cobden, Bright, Milner Gibson, and Layard all losing their seats; and Palmerston returned to power with a majority of seventy. Of this result the duke of Argyll wrote that not since 1832 had there been such triumph for any minister. Less celebrated but at least as effective was the battle which nine months before Palmerston had won against a similar ‘unprincipled combination’ in the Commons but lost in the country at large—the fight over relations with the United States of America.

Ten years before, in the early 1840s, Anglo-American relations had passed through a period of crisis more serious and threatening than anything since the peace of Ghent. As foreign secretaries first Palmerston and then Aberdeen had had to face the many incidents arising out of the Canadian rebellion, the Maine and Oregon boundary disputes, and the threat of the United States’ annexation of Texas. At length the peace was saved and Britain even secured a not dishonourable share of the disputed territories in the north-east and north-west. But the government was well aware that while Canada had for the time being been preserved, elsewhere the policy of containing the expansion of the United States had utterly failed. In the end Texas and California met their Manifest Destiny with barely a murmur of protest from the sulking British. However, this most certainly did not imply for British foreign policy a headlong flight from any area to which American ambition might then reach out. Instead British statesmen sought by timely negotiation and compromise to blunt the force of American expansion and avert the constant dangers of the recent past. It was this attitude which had led to the Clayton–Bulwer treaty in April 1850. In the treaty both sides had sought to avoid a growing clash in Central America by disavowing colonial ambitions and agreeing instead to co-operate in the promotion of an isthmian canal. But the plan had failed. Contrived only by the skill with which the diplomats concealed fundamental disagreements in ambiguous terminology the treaty was quite unable to meet the problems of its application and instead of co-operation

---

it introduced a decade of constant bickering and ill will. It was not that the British believed the Americans were utterly unjustified in arguing that the non-colonization agreement was retrospective and in demanding therefore the evacuation of the Bay Islands and the surrender of their protectorate over the Mosquito Indians. On the contrary, they were quite sure that the protectorate at least contravened the spirit if not the letter of the treaty. But they resented the manner and the persistence of the American complaints and the further evidence that these produced of the impossibility of making any reasonable agreement with the United States. Then, when the more aggressive Democrats returned under President Pierce in March 1853, things threatened to get very black indeed. Before long American ambition was reaching out once more to Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Hawaii, as well as into Central America and Mexico. At the same time Britain’s preoccupations were centred firmly on the Near East and when the Crimean War commenced in March 1854 it hardly seemed likely that she would be able to continue her resistance in the west. But over Oregon in 1846 even Aberdeen had shown a surprising disinclination to retreat in the face of what he considered to be American insolence, and as prime minister now he was firmly convinced that it would be unwise to do so while engaged in the war with Russia. Conciliation, even over the Mosquito protectorate, would be taken for weakness—by Russia as much as by the Americans—and for that reason it would be better to wait.

Palmerston, as home secretary in the Aberdeen coalition government, had been party to this temporizing policy and he continued it when he succeeded Aberdeen as prime minister in February 1855. But unlike Aberdeen he was not any longer looking forward to a peaceful accommodation of the American demands. The new course represented by the Clayton-Bulwer treaty had been his invention and he too had admitted the tainted quality of Britain’s involvement with the Mosquito Indians.

---


5 Williams, p. 111.
But the apparent failure of the new policy appears to have returned him to his former attitude of utter hostility to the United States. Possibly he hoped to reverse the precedent of 1841–42 when, after replacing him at the foreign office, Aberdeen had led Britain and America from the brink of war to what Palmerston considered to be ‘one of the worst and most disgraceful Treaties that England ever concluded’. In any case, he had probably only turned to the Central American experiment in the pessimistic conclusion from the clashes of the 1840s that the British parliament and people would not sustain him in a more aggressive policy towards the United States. But during the Crimean War, and even before the outburst of popular enthusiasm for him early in 1855, he had begun to suspect that public opinion might well allow him to resume a tougher line. And not least was the fact that if the war had forced a distraction of strength from the American continent, it had also brought a formal alliance which in any future conflict with the United States would remove the old fear of trouble from France. Clarendon, who continued at the foreign office after Palmerston had taken over as prime minister, had even dreamed and spoken of a more positive gain from the Crimean alliance. In a speech on 25 February 1854, before the alliance had been signed or the war formally begun, he had told the House of Lords that Anglo-French co-operation would not be confined to the eastern question, but that ‘on the question of policy there is no part of the world in either hemisphere with regard to which we are not entirely in accord’. And though he afterwards made reassuring noises to the American minister in London, they were far from happy on the other side of the Atlantic. There were angry letters in The Times warning that after humbling Russia, Britain and France would turn on the United States, Louis Napoleon in turn publicly confirmed Clarendon’s statement, and, most important of all, the allies moved in most discomfiting co-operation to frustrate American ambitions in the Caribbean and Pacific. But as was to become clear even before the war had ended the alliance was fragile in Europe, let alone America. While Clarendon enthused, Palmerston was more inclined to express the eternal suspicions of Anglo-French relations. Nevertheless, he too appreciated the opportunity the war might present. In July 1854 the Americans had finally

---

6 Palmerston to Russell, 24 September 1842, Russell papers, Public Record Office 30/214/4C.
resorted to violence in their attempts to undermine Mosquito authority, and through it British control over Greytown, the Atlantic terminus of the favourite isthmian route. Exploiting a local incident the U.S.S. Cyane had first bombarded the town and then landed a party of marines to destroy by fire what little remained. Following as it did upon the news of American activities in Hawaii and Santo Domingo Clarendon saw the incident as yet further confirmation that the Americans were ‘becoming a universal nuisance’. On 31 August he wrote to John Crampton, the minister in Washington, describing the incident as an outrage ‘without a parallel in the annals of modern times’. This was strong stuff from the guardian of British gunboat diplomacy but within a few days he was wisely seeking to found his protests upon some more solid basis, such as the damage done to the British consulate and property. It was here that the home secretary thought he saw Great Britain’s opportunity. On 10 September he looked over the draft of the dispatch Clarendon proposed to send to Crampton and suggested it should be strengthened by demanding an apology and compensation:

A quarrel with the United States is at all times undesirable, and is especially so when we are engaged in War with another power but though at War, we are crippling effectually the naval means of the power with which we are at War, and what is of great Importance we are sure at present of not having France against us, as an ally of the United States.

In dealing with Vulgar minded Bullies, and such unfortunately the people of the United States are, nothing is gained by submission to Insult and wrong; on the contrary the submission to an Outrage only encourages the commission of another and a greater one—such People are always trying how far they can venture to go; and they generally pull up when they find they can go no further without encountering resistance of a formidable Character.

In the present Instance we have many advantages on our side.

We are successful in our War against Russia, which the United States Govt. when it sent the Cyane to Grey Town thought would

---

9 Clarendon to Crampton, no. 191, 31 August 1854, Williams, p. 180.
hamper & embarrass us, and when we have taken Sebastopol and have
knocked down Sweaborg & Cronstadt as we shall do with the
Lancaster Guns our naval force will be to a great Degree let free. We
have France so bound up with us that she cannot join the United
States against us, we have our N. American Provinces now united &
loyal, and dissatisfied with the United States, we have public opinion
in the United States on our side, we have the United States Govt.
itself ashamed of what it has done & not daring to avow its act,
though hesitating to disavow & atone for it.

The U.S. have no navy of which we need be afraid, & they might
be told that if they were to resort to privateering, we should however
reluctantly be obliged to retaliate by burning all their Sea Coast
Towns.

If we are not firm on this occasion I don't see on what occasion we
could ever take our stand. If the Parts had been reversed we should
long before this Time have seen Buchanan [American minister in
London] take his Passage Home unless we had yielded to an im-
perative Demand for the most ample satisfaction.10

Perhaps because neither Sebastopol nor the Baltic forts had yet fallen
after all, or more probably because the cabinet was not in complete agree-
ment on the line they should adopt with the United States, the dispatch
which Clarendon sent to Crampton on 21 September was nothing like so
tough as Palmerston had suggested. It expressed disappointment that the
American government had not yet disavowed the Cyane's action and
merely hinted at compensation.11 But at the same time it was decided to
back up the dispatch with a little display of force.

Nothing can be worse [Clarendon wrote to the ambassador in Paris]
than the doings of the United States and they think to make political
capital against us in the belief that our hands are full but we mean to
dispel that delusion and in order to prevent another attack on Grey-
town or Ruatan [one of the Bay Islands] which we hear is likely a

10 'Memorandum on a Draft of Despatch from Lord Clarendon to Mr Crampton
at Washington', 10 September 1854, Broadlands papers. I am grateful to the late
Countess Mountbatten of Burma for permission to see these papers. They are now
temporarily in the offices of the National Register of Archives, London.
11 Clarendon to Crampton, no. 198, 21 September 1854, Williams, p. 182.
90 gun Screw sails shortly to reinforce the West Indian Station, another powerful frigate will follow in a fortnight and if necessary some of the Baltic Screws when the winter sets in. . . . These bullies must be shown that we are not afraid of them or they will be hustled into war with us by some of the mob to whose passions they pander. 12

In the autumn of 1854 relations with the United States worsened with rumours that they might attempt to buy the principality of Monaco from its bankrupt ruler, and with their expansionist plans blundering into the limelight with the Ostend Manifesto on Cuba. With the Ostend fiasco so ludicrously exposing the ineptitude of American diplomacy Palmerston quite possibly felt when he took over as prime minister in February 1855 that there was no need yet to adopt the firm stand he had advocated a few months before. Certainly he must have been utterly preoccupied with bringing the war in the Crimea to a triumphant conclusion. Sebastopol, after all, still remained unconquered, and in October Admiral Napier had returned from the Baltic after failing to make any impression upon Sweaborg and Cronstadt. A second expedition against the Baltic forts in the summer of 1855 met with no better fortune. In the meantime in his annual message of 4 December 1854 President Pierce had retorted to Clarendon’s mild dispatch on Greytown with a highly distorted version of the affair and conveying hardly any sign of regret. Clarendon severely criticized this message in conversation with Buchanan, but since about the same time Marcy, the secretary of state, did hold out some hope that the innocent victims of the bombardment might well be compensated, he was content to bide his time. 13

But while Clarendon waited his resolution failed. When agreeing to the naval demonstration off the Central American coast in the previous October Aberdeen had already commented to him that he would ‘greatly regret any extreme measures on account of Grey Town or Mosquitia, where our right is very questionable, and the importance of which has been much exaggerated.’ 14 By the following spring the same view was being taken up in the press. Any grounds of quarrel with the Americans,

12 Clarendon to Cowley, private, 22 September 1854, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/170.
13 Williams, pp. 182–6.
K. Bourne commented the Globe, 'should not be mixed up with the assertion of anything quite so aboriginal as the ill-defined rights, titles, and dominions of the tawny—and to confess the truth—somewhat trumpery majesty of Mosquito.' Then, in the summer, the law officers told the foreign secretary that they could not claim compensation as the United States government had recognized the action of their naval commander.

I am at my wit's end about the Grey Town outrage [Clarendon wrote to Palmerston at the end of July] . . . John Bull would never stand a quarrel with the United States at this moment for such a cause. On the other hand the feeling against us throughout the United States is so bitterly hostile that the Government knows it can do nothing so popular as to resist any demand of ours, and the more just the demand the more popular would be the resistance to it. . . . Perhaps the least degrading course would be to let the matter drop, at least till we have taken Sebastopol, but we are made to feel our non-success there in every corner of the world.

Shortly afterwards Crampton was simply told to drop the whole affair.

Whether the case was a good one or not Palmerston had let slip in the Greytown affair the last real opportunity of seizing the moral advantage in Central America. Frustrated in Hawaii and in the Caribbean by the combined opposition of France and Britain, the Americans were more than holding their own on the isthmus. Anxious not to compromise their reputation in their own country the Pierce administration spurned Britain's hints at arbitration and in the meantime allowed some of their citizens by ' filibuster' expeditions to establish a useful foothold in Central America. Early in 1855 a Colonel Kinney of Philadelphia was proposing to establish independent colonies in Central America; but he got no financial support from Commodore Vanderbilt's powerful Accessory Transit company and the project soon collapsed. Much more serious was William Walker's adventure in Nicaragua. Walker, the self-styled 'grey-eyed man of destiny', had already alarmed the British with an unsuccessful descent upon Lower California in 1853. In the summer of 1855 he intervened in a revolution in Nicaragua and with Vanderbilt's support ended the year in

---

15 3 March 1855, quoted by Williams, p. 183, n. 76.
16 Clarendon to Palmerston, 31 July 1855, Broadlands papers.
17 Williams, p. 186.
almost absolute control of the country. Clarendon, always inclined to think the worst of the United States, and in this case not entirely without some justification, was naturally convinced that the expeditions were a covert attempt to circumvent the restrictions of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. Kinney, he suggested to the prime minister, 'is of course acting under secret instructions from the United States government.' In the late summer too came rumours of Russian privateers being fitted out in New York to highlight the myth of a Russian-American combination to counter the Crimean alliance. Then, on 24 September 1855, Clarendon heard from his minister in Washington that on yet another matter 'the United States for electioneering purposes are wanting a quarrel.' But in the meantime the news had arrived at last of the fall of Sebastopol on 11 September and so, in the autumn of 1855, Palmerston now prepared for the showdown he had advocated almost exactly a year before. Unfortunately the excuse this time too turned out to be at least as weak.

The alarming news which Clarendon had received from Crampton on 24 September concerned American complaints about British recruiting for the Crimea. Worried by the drain of manpower in the Crimea, the British had begun to turn to the United States as a possible field for the recruitment of British subjects as early as November 1854. Then, in December, had come a new Foreign Enlistment Act to enlist 10,000 foreigners and in February 1855 recruiting instructions went out to North America. Probably the government in London had no intention of infringing the letter of the American neutrality laws, but whether carelessly or not Crampton and other agents soon managed to offend the Americans. Warned that they were unhappy, Clarendon had brushed aside their suspicions in July and announced that he had shortly before cancelled the recruiting instructions. Thinking that this must have settled the matter Buchanan no longer passed on his government's protests, in

---

18 Clarendon to Palmerston, 25 October 1855, Broadlands papers.
19 Clarendon to Cowley, private, 24 September 1855, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/172.
particular a dispatch from Marcy of 15 July demanding redress and already hinting at the dismissal of the guilty British agents. Clarendon and his colleagues were consequently astonished when they heard that on 5 September Crampton had received yet another strongly worded note from Marcy. For his part Palmerston was clearly only too willing to seize the opportunity which victory in the east appeared at last to offer for a check to American insolence in the west. He at once suggested that they should reinforce the North American squadron and send out two battalions to Canada where the war had recently reduced the garrison to less than two thousand infantry. A day later he was suggesting to Clarendon that they should answer Marcy by some well-aimed references to the quality of the Americans' neutrality in the Russian war. Thus they might say that hitherto they had not on their part protested at such unfriendly activities, partly because they considered that they would have little effect on the course of the war, but partly too because:

Her Majesty's Government... looked upon those Proceedings as the Acts of a few private Individuals greedy for gain, and by no means as Indications of the general feeling of the American People. For remembering the many ties and sympathies which connect the People of the United States with the two Powerful Nations which are engaged in the present contest with Russia, and convinced that a free, enlightened and Generous Race such as the Citizens of the great North American Union must entertain on the important questions at issue sentiments in harmony with those which animate not only the British and French nations but the great mass of the nations of Western Europe, H.M. Gvt. would have passed over in silence the exceptional course thus pursued by a small number of Individuals if it had not been for the... statements in Mr Marcy's note.

The correspondence will of course be published [he concluded], and it may be worth considering whether some little Flourish of this kind as an appeal to what is probably the dormant sympathy of a large portion of the Americans may not be a set off against the Bunkum vapouring of Marcy.22

22 Palmerston to Clarendon, 25 September 1855, ibid.
Lord Palmerston’s ‘Ginger-Beer’ Triumph, 1 July 1856

On 27 September a note went off accordingly to Buchanan. It repeated that the British government had thought sufficient the explanations and assurances they had already given, and added, almost verbatim, the ‘flourish’ Palmerston had suggested.\textsuperscript{23}

With his suggestion about troop reinforcements for Canada Palmerston however had no success. On a letter from General Sir John Burgoyne, the inspector-general of fortifications, he had commented:

My impression as to our ability to defend Canada against the United States entirely differs from his. But I am quite convinced that we ought not to put our tail between our legs, as he proposes we should do. . . . If we are weak in Canada, as he assumes, the Americans are still more vulnerable by us in their Slave States, and a British Force landed in the southern part of the Union, proclaiming freedom to the Blacks, would shake many of the stars from their banner.\textsuperscript{24}

But no regiments went out to Canada, perhaps because the generals in the Crimea were not sure that the fall of Sebastopol would really allow them to relax, and perhaps because they could not be got to Canada before the winter froze their route by the St Lawrence. But it was naturally rather different with the North American squadron. Ships could more easily be spared and it was important to keep a close watch on the filibusters in the Caribbean. On 28 September Sir Charles Wood, the first lord of the admiralty, advised Admiral Fanshawe that in two or three days an additional battleship would be going out to Bermuda and that more might be sent in the autumn. They had had ‘a very impudent message’ from the Americans he said, and though their ‘bullying’ would probably subside when they heard the news from Sebastopol, ‘Brother Jonathan is never worse for seeing that we are ready.’\textsuperscript{25} A few days later he was taking steps to assemble an appropriate force in home waters and ready to cross the Atlantic ‘if Brother Jonathan becomes saucy.’\textsuperscript{26} By the end of October a

\textsuperscript{23} Clarendon to Buchanan, 27 September 1855, *British parliamentary papers, 1856*, vol. Ix, [2080], *Papers relative to recruiting in the United States*, pp. 387–8.


\textsuperscript{25} Wood to Fanshawe, private, 28 September 1855, *Halifax papers, B.M. Add. MS. 49564*.

\textsuperscript{26} Wood to Adm. Lyons, c.-in-c. Mediterranean, private, 1 October 1955, *ibid.*
steam sloop and two blockships—old sailing vessels converted to powerfully armed steam batteries—had also gone out, and more were promised for the winter. 'I mean to make a parade of it,' Wood told Fanshawe, 'the object being to show the world, and the people of the United States principally, that we have a spare force after all.'

This 'parade' first seems to have come to Buchanan's attention through a newspaper report on 19 October, and still unaware how seriously his government was treating the recruitment affair, he was inclined to attribute it merely to Kinney's descent on Greytown. But a few days later, on 25 October, The Times commenced a series of editorials which made the position unmistakably clear. The British were alarmed, the American minister now perceived, by a whole parcel of incidents. There were the various filibuster expeditions, and the threat of one against Ireland; there was the recruiting affair and the very offensive language being used on that account by the American attorney-general, Caleb Cushing; there was the suspicious investigation being made into British bases in the West Indies by the U.S.S. Fulton; and not least were the rumours of the Russian privateers fitting out in New York. About the same time Buchanan received another dispatch from Marcy on the recruitment question, and when he read it to Clarendon on 1 November he took the opportunity to mention also this 'unwarranted' display of force. The interview, apparently, was really quite a friendly one; but on the naval reinforcements Clarendon appeared to remain quite firm. Warned by Buchanan that they had better not 'poke their noses into the American ports', but keep 'a respectful distance from our coasts', the foreign secretary retorted that they 'meant only to take care of [themselves] and not attack or menace others without cause.'

All this was done in a fine Palmerstonian spirit of menace mixed with mirth; but really Clarendon was feeling far from happy. On 25 September he had already confided to the prime minister that he did not 'feel quite easy about the conduct of our agents, Crampton inclusive. I am afraid that rather more zeal than prudence has been displayed in procuring recruits,

27 Wood to Fanshawe, private, 11 October 1855, ibid.
28 Buchanan to Marcy, private, 19 October 1855, Marcy papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
29 Buchanan to Marcy, private, 2 November, ibid., and Clarendon to Palmerston, 1 November 1855, Broadlands papers.
and that they did not bear sufficiently in mind that they were in a hostile country and surrounded by spies.\textsuperscript{30} The next day he had admitted that he was on that account afraid of an impartial inquiry. Nor did he think that Palmerston was treading on firm ground when he sought to add the complaints about American neutrality.

The opportunity is a good one for saying a word about the pseudo-neutrality of the United States [he admitted] but I doubt if we have any real ground of complaint against the Government on that score, for nothing that I am aware of has taken place which the government has the means of preventing. They can't stop shipments of revolvers to Hamburg or steam engines to Baltic ports, nor can they prevent public meetings of Irishmen; but they can prevent the sailing of an expedition to Ireland and that they will of course say they did if the improbable attempt were made. We may therefore perhaps expose ourselves to an insolent rejoinder.\textsuperscript{31}

In the event he thought that in the reply Buchanan had just read Marcy had 'somewhat come down in his tone'. But at the same time he felt that Marcy 'rather has us' in alluding to 'all the guns, swords and pistols we have obtained from the United States and the American ships that have been transporting troops for us and the French—also to the Irish in America not doing more against us than the refugees here do against the countries of their birth in Europe.' Nor was he any more confident about the recruiting business. 'I am half afraid of taking a very confident line tone about all our agents as some of them I have no doubt have infringed the law by falling into the traps which were set for them.'\textsuperscript{32} Even before the interview with Buchanan he had begun to hesitate about the wisdom of the naval parade. 'I am to see Buchanan on Monday', he had written to the prime minister, '—how far do you think it would be prudent to admit that our reinforcements of the West Indies fleet are to the address of the United States?'\textsuperscript{33} Buchanan, on his part, was anxious to round off his mission by dispelling the war clouds in London. On 8 November and again on the 15th he called on the foreign secretary to convey assurances

\textsuperscript{30} Clarendon to Palmerston, 25 September 1855, \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{31} Clarendon to Palmerston, 26 September 1855, \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{32} Clarendon to Palmerston, 1 November 1855, \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{33} Clarendon to Palmerston, 27 October 1855, \textit{ibid.}
about the Russian privateers and the Irish filibuster and to suggest that as a gesture of conciliation before the president’s annual message they should supply him with a written statement of their intention to withdraw the naval reinforcements. Buchanan got the impression that this would indeed be done, but in spite of all his doubts Clarendon was extremely cautious in his consultations with the prime minister and the letter that Buchanan got on 16 November was utterly disappointing. It made no mention of any withdrawal and merely reiterated that the ships had been sent out as a precaution ‘against all dangers which may appear in any part of the horizon’, and had not been ‘prompted by any hostile feeling or menacing intention . . . towards the United States.’ Such hypocrisy, as Buchanan politely inferred, was hardly likely to restore good relations. No better was the official reply about the recruiting affair which Clarendon sent out on the same day. Unable even now to convince the prime minister how weak their position was, on this matter too Clarendon could still only make an evasive and unsatisfactory reply. In spite of Buchanan’s patent dissatisfaction Clarendon yet professed to hope that ‘things are getting right in the United States.’ Late in November it was decided after all not to send out another battleship to the West Indies. But soon Clarendon was getting excited all over again about Central America and particularly about William Walker’s doings in Nicaragua. Once again he felt sure the United States government was behind it all, but he scarcely knew what to do about it. If they protested they would only get another ‘insolent reply . . . and we must not talk too big unless we are prepared for a quarrel.’ He was not thinking of war; only of a suspension of diplomatic relations and forcible intervention against the filibusters. Even so, he feared, they would get ‘no backing at home if we frightened the Cotton Lords on account of Nicaragua.’

34 Clarendon to Palmerston, 8 and 15 November 1855, ibid.
36 Buchanan to Clarendon, private, 16 November 1855, ibid., vol. ix, p. 459.
37 Clarendon to Crampton, 16 November 1855, Learned, pp. 256–7.
38 Clarendon to Palmerston, 3 December 1855, Broadlands papers.
39 Wood to Fanshawe, private, 23 November 1855, Halifax papers, B.M. Add. MS. 49565.
40 Clarendon to Palmerston, 23 December 1855, Broadlands papers.
stances the cabinet evidently decided to rest content with the resistance of the Central Americans themselves and in December they agreed to sell weapons to Costa Rica. In the meantime, with Clarendon himself preoccupied with the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Russian war’s final stages and with the dying illness of his mother, they waited in comparative calm for Marcy’s reply on the recruiting question and for the president’s long-delayed message about the Clayton–Bulwer treaty. The message, delivered to Congress belatedly on 31 December, did not arrive in England until 15 or 16 January. It was only moderately hostile about Central America, not recommending the unilateral abrogation of the 1850 treaty, but pressing rather for Great Britain to fulfil its terms as the Americans saw them. Much more alarming was Marcy’s reply of 28 December about the recruiting question. This arrived in London on 18 January and, after reviewing the case at great length, ended by demanding Crampton’s recall and the removal of three consuls. Clarendon could not understand why the Americans were not satisfied with the stopping of the recruiting and with the assurances they had already received. When Buchanan showed him Marcy’s note he cursed Cushing and warned that they would refuse to withdraw their minister and, if he were dismissed, give Buchanan his passports too. In the meantime he would make no official reply to Marcy’s ‘pamphlet of a note’, but wait to see what Crampton had to say about it.

What worried Clarendon most of course was that on the Crampton and Mosquito affairs alike he knew his government had none too strong a case. So far as the protectorate was concerned this was nothing new. But the whole point of Palmerston’s tactics was to exploit the supposed weakness of the American attack upon Crampton to serve the ends of British policy in both affairs. Thus in some simple way the prime minister hoped for once to arouse the patriotic vigour of the nation in support of a firm resistance to American insolence and encroachment. It was not really a matter of substance. Inevitably the Mosquito protectorate and perhaps even the ‘British’ inhabitants of the Bay Islands would still be abandoned. But pride would be salved at last and by this display of firmness the

41 Williams, p. 211.

ambitions of the United States might effectively be checked. But Clarendon
could already see that they would probably not be backed up in parlia-
ment. He was particularly concerned that on 30 January 1856, the day
before the reassembly of parliament, a sensational article had appeared in
the Morning Post, denouncing the United States and threatening them with
what Buchanan called the ‘most atrocious suggestions’ about possible
military operations. Since this article seemed to be based on privy knowl-
edge of the interview Clarendon had had with the American minister only
the day before, and since the paper was notoriously under Palmerston’s
influence, Clarendon must have had his tongue in his cheek when he
blandly remarked to the prime minister that it would be attributed to him.
What worried him most, however, was the prospect of it stirring up a fuss
in parliament. 43

Sure enough, when the new parliament met to hear and debate the
queen’s speech the next day, the matter did come up. In the Lords Derby,
the leader of the opposition, made particular note of the absence of any
reference to the United States. ‘I could almost have forgiven the noble
Lords opposite for not having introduced any allusion to [the quarrel with
Persia]. But the case is far different as regards the United States. There is no
country in the world with which we are bound by such ties of intimate
and close relations . . . none with which a war would be so mutually
suicidal.’ On the Central American question he was inclined to agree with
the government’s point of view but about Crampton and the foreign
enlistment business he could not speak so confidently: ‘Her Majesty’s
Government would have acted more wisely, with a view to soothe any
angry feeling, and to pave the way to more friendly relations, if they had
inserted in Her Majesty’s speech a conciliatory paragraph applying to the
people of that great country [the United States], instead of passing over
the subject in a contemptuous way, as though it were unworthy a moment’s
consideration.’ These criticisms Clarendon shrugged off very easily. Cri-
ticism of the government’s Central American policy he was able to con-
found by revealing that they had twice recently made an offer of arbitration.
About Crampton he argued that it would be unwise to bring the ‘details of
pending negotiations’ under discussion. ‘A correspondence of not very

43 Buchanan to Marcy, no. 117, 1 February 1856, Moore, vol. x, pp. 23–28, and
Clarendon to Palmerston, 30 January, Broadlands papers.
amicable character' had taken place, he admitted, but the most recent American demand had arrived only a couple of days ago and to lay an uncompleted correspondence on the table 'would be only to disturb the public mind without any necessity.' On the contrary he could not believe that 'such a question was not capable of a speedy and amicable solution.' For, he had the rashness to assert still, 'with the judgment and tact and straightforward conduct of the British Minister at Washington . . . the Government had every reason to be satisfied.' In the Commons the American questions were not even mentioned. Instead both Disraeli and Roebuck concentrated their attack on the government's silence about the peace negotiations with Russia. That night Clarendon wrote to congratulate the prime minister on 'the sober demeanour of the House'. He wished, however that 'somebody would tread upon that viper Roebuck till he died.'

Clarendon spoke with such bitterness about Roebuck because he had after all been a member of the government brought down the year before by the radical member's motion for a committee of inquiry into the conduct of the Russian war. Now Roebuck was pressing the new government uncomfortably on the peace and Clarendon knew too that the Radicals were most unlikely to keep silent for long on the American questions. Sooner or later the government would have to produce the correspondence for parliament's scrutiny and when it appeared there was bound to be more serious trouble. The brunt of the attack, however, would fall on the prime minister in the Commons; in any case Clarendon soon escaped from London. On 25 February the great congress met in Paris, with Clarendon himself as the representative of Great Britain. With him, apparently, he took most of the cares of the foreign office, but from the pressure of the American questions, he was carefully protected by Palmerston's manoeuvres in the House of Commons. There that 'sort of Parliamentary grandpapa', as he had been called, played once again the game that he played over the conduct of the war during the previous summer. The pressure for the production of papers he adroitly turned aside with chiding references to the burden of the foreign secretary's great endeavours in Paris and to the importance of not unwisely interrupting

44 Hansard's parliamentary debates, 3rd series, vol. cxl. 1856, cols. 35–42 and 67–82.
45 Clarendon to Palmerston, 31 January 1856, Broadlands papers.
46 Quoted by Monypenny and Buckle, vol. iv, p. 15.
the progress of negotiations with the United States. The truth is that there were no negotiations going on. Buchanan had been relieved at last by the arrival of a new minister from the United States, George Mifflin Dallas; but Palmerston was careful not to 'uncork him upon questions', leaving those for the foreign secretary's return. From Paris Clarendon urged on the cookery being performed by the under-secretary on the Central American correspondence: 'I am anxious to smash that rascal Clayton', he wrote, 'for that will go far to smash discussion on the question in the United States.'

The game began in parliament on 5 February with Cobden calling for the papers on both the Central American and enlistment questions. He was told, simply, that in neither case was negotiation yet 'completed'. Three days later he rose again to ask for explanations since, as he said, Palmerston's earlier reply did 'not appear . . . founded exactly in fact.' The United States government had already laid their Central American correspondence before the Senate, and in pamphlet form it could be bought in England for a shilling. From it it appeared that Clarendon had closed the correspondence on 28 September last. And further proof that discussion had ended lay in Clarendon's own statement in the Lords that the government had recently offered arbitration. On the enlistment question it appeared that the correspondence had not ended. But since he suspected that it had 'assumed very much of a personal character, that it [had] been envenomed and embittered in the course of the protracted correspondence', he concluded that it would be better 'if it were taken away from the Foreign Office, and discussed in the country or in this House' where 'there would be displayed such a magnanimous feeling . . . that the quarrel be at once put a stop to.' 'At all event', he was 'quite sure that nothing will be gained by allowing these matters to remain veiled in the secrecy of the Foreign Office. We have drifted into one war by the system of secret diplomacy, and we may get into another in the same way.' In reply Palmerston could only admit that the Central American correspondence, though 'not, perhaps, technically closed', seemed after all on his referring

48 Clarendon to Edmund Hammond, 5 March 1856, Hammond papers, P.R.O., F.O. 391/4.
49 Hansard, 3rd series, vol. cxl, col. 221.
to it sufficiently so for it to be produced 'at once'. On the enlistment question, however, they still awaited Crampton's comments about Marcy's 'exceedingly voluminous despatch' of 28 December. Ten days later, on 15 February, the 'viper' himself rose to flourish a pamphlet of American evidence against Crampton and to press again for the government's papers. Palmerston could only repeat his former reply to Cobden and complain of Roebuck's taking a 'course unbecoming any man who belongs to a great National Assembly': 'He rushes with hasty impatience to interpose between the two Governments, and, if it be possible, to prevent that amicable arrangement which on matters of so delicate a nature cannot be come to unless both Governments are left to their own action without being swayed one way or the other, either by popular clamour or by the expression of national feeling.' This was rather odd coming from such a one as Palmerston, and Disraeli, abandoning his earlier decision to keep silent for a bit, rose to rebuke the prime minister for calling in question the motives of an independent member and for taunting him 'with holding a brief from the enemy.'

At the end of this parliamentary joust on 15 February Palmerston had been pressed again for the Central American papers and had promised them 'in a very short time'. Seven weeks later, on 4 April, he begged the pressure of other business and said they would nevertheless be ready 'in a very few days.' Ten days after that, on 14 April, he said they were 'in print' and he 'hoped that in a very few days—certainly in the course of the week—they would be laid on the table.' They did not appear until 24 April. With the enlistment affair he was no less evasive. Pressed for these papers too on 14 April he replied that the government had only just received the necessary documents—they had got Crampton's retort to Marcy's note on 18 March—and they contained a 'mass of detail' to be digested. Clarendon, after all, was still in Paris, and though his 'powers of work are . . . very remarkable, . . . the answer to be made to the United States Government necessarily requires very careful preparation—that, on the one hand, it may contain nothing which can at all events envenom the discussion that unfortunately has already gone too far; while, on the other

50 Ibid., cols. 462–73.
51 Ibid., cols. 837–54.
52 Ibid., vol. CXL, col. 478.
53 Ibid., col. 1001.
hand, nothing may be omitted essential to the case of the British Government.\textsuperscript{54}

What was worrying some of the government’s critics was that already Palmerston might not have omitted enough of what he customarily tended to think was ‘essential’ to any British case. On 4 April Gladstone had asked about the Central American papers because of ugly rumours of warlike preparations and in particular the dispatch of troops to Canada.\textsuperscript{55} Questioned in the Lords on the same day the secretary for war, Lord Panmure, had insisted that they were merely replacing what had been removed at the beginning of the war with Russia.\textsuperscript{56} On 27 May he had to admit that five regiments were rather more than that: ‘I have to state that it did seem expedient to the Government to add to the force at present in the British American provinces, and that not only on colonial but on Imperial grounds.’\textsuperscript{57} Before leaving for Paris Clarendon had conceded that ‘affairs with the United States [were] not exactly in a pleasant state’, but he did not think war was imminent. In the delay that must now take place, he hoped, both sides would consider their position and perhaps ‘the good sense or rather self interest of the [American] people will put a check upon their reckless Government who are ready for anything in order to avert public attention from their despised position.’\textsuperscript{58} Palmerston said later that he felt sure the progress of Clarendon’s peace negotiations in Paris would ‘lower the political barometer at Washington.’\textsuperscript{59} In fact they served rather to raise it in London. All along the cabinet had thought they might as well strengthen the Americans’ pacific disposition by a little martial display. In any case they still had to keep a jealous watch on American activities and to guard against the effects of an accidental collision. With this in mind, therefore, Wood took care to keep up the naval force in the Pacific and the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{60} Then, convinced, as Clarendon put it, that ‘Cushing & Co.’ would otherwise seize the chance ‘to say that we had made him offer it in

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., col. 1000.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., cols. 475–8.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., cols. 1142–3.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., vol. cxlii, col. 692.
\textsuperscript{58} Clarendon to Cowley, private, 5 February 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.
\textsuperscript{60} Wood to Fanshawe, private, 1 and 16 February 1856, and Wood to Adm. Bruce (Pacific), private, 16 February, Halifax papers, B.M. Add. MS. 49565.
order to save ourselves from being “whipped by the greatest nation on earth”, at the end of March the government refused Crampton’s offer to resign and simultaneously with the signature of peace with Russia, got ready to send a large reinforcement of troops to Canada. ‘This American dispute may, and most likely will, end in smoke’, wrote Palmerston, ‘but we must be prepared for the case of its ending in gunpowder smoke.’ By the beginning of May over four thousand men and large supplies of arms and equipment were on their way to North America.

Comforted by such a display of force after his return from Paris, Clarendon at last formally rejected Marcy’s demands in a conciliatory but firm note on 30 April. A month later he thought it was time they prepared for an offensive reply from the Americans. Hitherto, he claimed, he had ‘never believed in a rupture with the United States’; but now, after all that Dallas had told him of ‘the recklessness of the President and his competitors for the Democratic ticket’, he thought it ‘probable’ and that they ought at least to be prepared for Crampton’s dismissal. What upset him in particular was that while the Americans were denouncing Crampton, they were themselves far from scrupulous about the filibusters. In June came the news that they had even recognized Walker’s government. Walker’s followers, Clarendon understood from Dallas, were the ‘very scum of the earth’, and mostly not Americans at all but ‘Germans, French, English, and Irish, and scoundrels attracted by the hope of plunder like any other buccaneers’. Padre Vijal, his representative in Washington, now made a member of the corps diplomatique, was not at all the ‘venerable ecclesiastic’ described in some of the American newspapers, but a ‘more fitting representative of Walker’, ‘one of the greatest rascals unhung, a disfrocked priest who has committed all manner of enormities.’ Clarendon now gave himself up to an absolute orgy of vituperation of the Americans. He talked wildly and almost incoherently of the ‘rascals who call themselves the Government of the mob which governs them’, and warned Cowley, the ambassador in Paris, of the need to keep the French

61 Clarendon to Palmerston, 21 March 1856, Broadlands papers.
64 Learned, p. 258.
65 Clarendon to Palmerston, 1 June 1856, Broadlands papers.
K. Bourne

up to the mark for that nation of Pirates . . . is every day becoming a more formidable nuisance and there is no country which will not in its turn be exposed to American insolence and encroachment unless the commercial and dollar-making classes there are made to feel that their government will end by turning all mankind against them and that there will be a universal league to compel them to observe the usages of civilized nations.66

Unfortunately he was at least as uncertain of the commercial and guinea-making classes in England. Earlier, at a safe distance in Paris, he had thought that Crampton's own defence would bring British opinion firmly round to the support of the government: 'It will satisfy all lovers of fair play and haters of low malignant dodges and of such happily the great majority of Englishmen is composed.'67 But no sooner had he returned to London than he began to suspect that he had been wrong. 'The questions with the United States', he wrote back to Cowley on 22 April, 'are now occupying public attention and Parliament more even than the peace [with Russia] and as there is no party and political capital to be made out of them it is impossible to say what turn they will take.'68 Thus when at the very beginning of June Palmerston proposed another show of force in the confident belief that the Americans would then back down, Clarendon felt they should first secure the backing of the cabinet before risking public censure.

I quite agree with you [he wrote to the prime minister on 4 June] that the conduct of the United States Government renders it necessary to take a decision and that half measures will be both dangerous and undignified. I should not hesitate therefore about sending such a fleet to central America as would render collision impossible if we could be sure of support at home, but the cowardly feeling with respect to war with the United States is so general that I believe as soon as the orders for sending the ships were given we should have undignified meetings throughout Lancashire, and an expression of

66 Clarendon to Cowley, private, 4 and 6 June 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.
67 Clarendon to Palmerston, 21 March 1856, Broadlands papers.
68 Clarendon to Cowley, private, 22 April 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.
opinion in the House of Commons that would upset the Government.\textsuperscript{60}

That Palmerston was also unhappy about parliamentary opinion is equally clear. He had already admitted to Clarendon that he was anxious to avoid a debate.\textsuperscript{70} Perhaps he deliberately held up the American correspondence for this purpose; certainly he appealed to members to refrain from ‘premature discussion’, and to postpone all debate ‘with a view to national interests’.\textsuperscript{71} What he wanted, no doubt, was an unfettered opportunity to frighten the Americans into a retreat before any debate revealed the weakness of support in Britain. ‘Gladstonian speeches would be sure to encourage the Americans’, Clarendon had warned him early in May.\textsuperscript{72} Once success had been achieved—and, in spite of his critics, achieved without war—opinion would soon come round and parliament could have as many debates as it liked. On 5 June Clarendon bowed to him as the ‘better judge’ of public opinion, and admitted that his earlier conclusion had ‘perhaps been drawn unfairly from the base and low minded communications which I have so often received respecting the danger of war with the United States and the unlimited amount of dirt which we ought to eat in order to avert that danger’.\textsuperscript{73} That same day the rumour spread that Crampton had been given his passports. Questioned in the House of Commons Palmerston merely stated what was true: he had heard only ‘indirectly’ that the rumour was true and had had no confirmation yet from Crampton.\textsuperscript{74} The next day, however, he wrote to Clarendon that if Crampton were dismissed then Dallas should go too; anything else would be ‘dirt-eating’.\textsuperscript{75} At the same time Clarendon even professed to see that ‘the tone of the people here is improving and that the real animus and objects of Messrs Pierce & Co. are beginning to be appreciated and the result is an indisposition to eat dirt.’\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{60} Clarendon to Palmerston, 4 June 1856, Broadlands papers.

\textsuperscript{70} Palmerston to Clarendon, 7 May 1856, cited by Bell, vol. ii, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{71} Hansard, vol. cxlix, col. 2034 (5 May), and vol. cxlix, col. 1090 (6 June).

\textsuperscript{72} Clarendon to Palmerston, 5 May 1856, Broadlands papers.

\textsuperscript{73} Clarendon to Palmerston, 5 June 1856, ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Hansard, vol. cxlix, col. 979.

\textsuperscript{75} Palmerston to Clarendon, 6 June 1856, quoted by Bell, vol. ii, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{76} Clarendon to Cowley, private, 6 June 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.
Clarendon’s optimism was an extraordinary tribute to the spell that Palmerston could cast upon him. For far from the ‘tone’ improving, the evidence of the press was all the other way. On 2 June *The Times* asked at least that a war with the United States—‘this greatest of human calamities’—should not be ‘precipitated by any undue sensitiveness or any avoidable interference’ in Central American affairs. The next day it suggested they might even be better off for the loss of a minister at such a critical point: it might ‘in some degree diminish the apprehension of danger.’ 77 Most other leading papers adopted a similar line, and if Clarendon was blind to them it is clear that his colleagues were not. On 7 June the cabinet met to consider what action should be taken, and two days later substantial naval reinforcements were ordered out to the West Indies. But the intention was not really menacing. Palmerston had urged the dispatch of a ‘powerful fleet’ to Greytown but the lord privy seal, the duke of Argyll, had strenuously opposed such a move and, to his surprise, had won Clarendon’s support by arousing again his doubts about public opinion. ‘Honour’, however, insisted that something should be done. By way of compromise, therefore, it was agreed that reinforcements should go out, but that the naval commanders should be given strict orders to use force only for ‘the defence of British life and property, and to leave all other matters for the Diplomatists to settle as they best can.’ 78 Nor did the cabinet decide what to do if Crampton were dismissed.

Then, on 11 June, Dallas read to Clarendon two dispatches from Marcy dated 24 and 27 May. The first, on the Crampton affair, accepted the British government’s disavowals of evil intentions, but dismissed the minister and three consuls with effect from the following day. The second was a very temperate dispatch on the Central American question, suggesting that they might accept arbitration on questions of fact though not on the meaning of the Clayton–Bulwer treaty. 79 At once the government’s resolution weakened further still. On 12 June Wood managed to put off an awkward question in parliament about the naval reinforcements. But the next day he was tackled privately in the House by what he called ‘a sort of deputation in some fright at the naval preparations’ announced in

77 For the opinions of the press see Williams, pp. 214–15.
78 Wood to Fanshawe, private, 10 June 1856, Halifax papers, B.M. Add. MS. 49566. For the cabinet discussions see Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 47.
Lord Palmerston's 'Ginger-Beer' Triumph, 1 July 1856

The Times. He managed to soothe the fears of these four Lancashire members by demonstrating the gross exaggeration of the account. But he at once approached the prime minister with the suggestion that they might go further still to tone down the alarm by representing the force as a perfectly normal relief.\textsuperscript{80} Clarendon too now came right out of his spell. Marcy's two dispatches, he wrote to Cowley, were both 'very friendly and conciliatory in tone.' Indeed he had to concede that the one on the enlistment question had probably struck precisely the right note: 'The whole is so skilfully done and will so exactly fit the temper of the House of Commons and of the public out of doors that I doubt the possibility of sending Dallas away—at least I have an instinctive feeling that a vote of censure upon such a proceeding would be carried almost unanimously.'\textsuperscript{81} Evidently Palmerston too was at last convinced of the futility of further prevarication. Perhaps what most impressed him was the feeling about what Clarendon had called 'the temper of the public out of doors.' Clearly it had been the prime minister and not the House of Commons which had been out of step with public opinion at large. On 14 June the cabinet met again and with his agreement decided quietly to drop the Mosquito protectorate and by taking advantage of Marcy's making the dismissal personal to Crampton, not to retaliate upon Dallas. 'I have seen Crampton for an hour today,' wrote Clarendon on 16 June, 'he is very happy at having left that hell upon earth and agrees that under the circumstances we could not very well send Dallas away.'\textsuperscript{82} That night, having given Russell his chance to make an epigram—'there is room for us both on the globe'—Palmerston calmly announced the government's determination to avoid a breach and to keep Dallas.\textsuperscript{83} All that was done to convey a hint of injured pride was to delay the appointment of Crampton's successor for ten months.

Palmerston's policy of toughness towards the United States in 1855–56 had failed all along the line. For once he could not even blame the failure on the distractions or dangers of affairs in Europe. He had hoped instead to exploit success in Europe to promote a triumph in America. Yet when, at

\textsuperscript{80} Wood to Palmerston, 13 June 1856, Broadlands papers.

\textsuperscript{81} Clarendon to Cowley, private, 13 June 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.

\textsuperscript{82} Clarendon to Cowley, private, 16 June 1856, Cowley papers, P.R.O., F.O. 519/173.

\textsuperscript{83} Hansard, vol. cxxvii, cols. 1507–08.
the end of June and the beginning of July, the House of Commons at last secured the debate which had so long been put off, the ministry defeated a motion of disapproval handsomely by two hundred and seventy-four votes to eighty. Although, as one member put it, ‘the House was naturally impatient of any debate likely to degenerate into a legal discussion’, yet on such a question as foreign enlistment and neutrality laws much of the argument was bound to take that course. As a result it was not easy for the ordinary member to distinguish right from wrong; even Gladstone confessed he could not ‘recollect a question more difficult as pressing upon [his] own understanding and conscience.’ Still he did not hesitate to assert his better understanding of the blue-books, or even to suggest that others had not read them: ‘there are many things that the English people will do. They will sign petitions; they will attend meetings; they will get up agitations; they will pay taxes, and double taxes if need be. But Blue-books they will not read.’ Long and tedious examinations from the correspondence, therefore, followed from him and from others. Over these the prime minister could only skate all too lightly, rejecting the ‘calumnies’ and ‘tissues of personalities and invective’, but reference to ‘pride and honour’, ‘fair-dealing and open speaking’, ‘outrageous insults’ and the importance of peace with the United States had also abounded and these Palmerston was able in the end to turn to good advantage. Throwing consistency to the winds he turned the tables on his critics:

These Gentlemen, then, so anxious for peace, tell you that England has been insulted, treated with contumely, contempt, and indignity. What is the effect likely to be produced? Why, to excite in the people of England a spirit of resentment towards their neighbours and kindred in the United States. Anybody who is acquainted with the character of Englishmen must know, to tell them they have been insulted, treated with contempt, exposed to indignity, will naturally exasperate them.

The day after the vote Clarendon wrote to congratulate his chief:

What a capital, most capital speech you made and what a glorious division, and what utter discomfiture of the Tories! I congratulate you upon it all, but no man ever so well deserved success as you do.

Lord Palmerston’s ‘Ginger-Beer’ Triumph, 1 July 1856

The majority will do good in the United States and will teach the Cushing gang there and here not to be quite certain of overthrowing your administration whenever they please.85

But really the majority was not as impressive as it looked. Many members voted with the government so as not to disturb the practical application to negotiations with the United States of the victory they had already won at the cabinet meeting of 14 June. Others, like Gladstone, also did so because they could see no prospect of an alternative government if the present one were brought down. Still more important the Palmerston government itself had at last absorbed a salutary lesson for its American policy. Unexpected difficulties and customary distrust still intervened to impede the final settlement of the Central American question. Palmerston occasionally burst out in his habitual, impatient condemnation of those ‘vulgar-minded bullies’, the Americans. But he had learned his lesson and when, shortly before his administration went out of office in February 1858, he and Clarendon were being forced to reconsider their whole Central American policy, he finally made up his mind to accommodate it to what he called ‘the Indifference of the Nation as to the Question discussed, and [the] strong commercial Interest in maintaining peace with the United States.’86 When he returned to the premiership in 1859 it was with Russell as foreign secretary, and he did not in the least interfere with the settlement that soon followed. Dallas may have exaggerated when he said in May 1856 that ‘a conflict with the United States [was] the only thing he could not stand for six months, or even half the time. His power is immense, but that is a rock on which, if he touch, he founders.’87 But Gladstone had had the better measure of Palmerston’s ‘glorious division’ of July when he echoed Distraeli’s remarks on his introduction to the premiership and said: ‘He not only made the House of Commons drunk, but made them drunk on ginger-beer.’88

85 Clarendon to Palmerston, 2 July 1856, Broadlands papers.
In making his famous statement that "the sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn," Walter Bagehot believed that he was accurately assessing current practice, as well as defining what the functions of the monarch should be ideally. Writing in the 1860s, Bagehot could have no intimate knowledge of Queen Victoria's share in the day-to-day policies of her ministers. As soon as the first series of the queen's letters was published, in 1907, it became clear that in the period 1848 to 1861 the court was going far beyond the rights mentioned by Bagehot. Subsequent publications, and more recently the opening to historians of the Royal Archives at Windsor, have made it evident that at the time when Bagehot was writing, and for twenty years before that time—in other words both before and after the death of the prince consort—the queen believed that she had a right to control foreign policy within certain ill-defined limits. Everyone would have agreed that she had the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn. Victoria herself believed that if her encouragements or warnings were disregarded by the foreign secretary, she had the further right of appealing above his head to the prime minister, and through the prime minister to the cabinet. Finally she believed that in certain circumstances she could insist that a foreign secretary be dismissed. When Lord Palmerston resigned from the foreign office in 1851 he did so ostensibly because the prime minister, Lord John Russell, could no longer work with him. Russell could no longer work with him mainly because of the endless complaints made by the queen concerning the foreign secretary, but Russell also had his own disagree-

ments with Palmerston and in the end was fully prepared to take the responsibility of demanding Palmerston's resignation. The queen, however, had been prepared to go to great lengths to get rid of Palmerston. On the evening of the day on which she heard from Russell that Palmerston was to go—20 December 1851—she made the interesting comment in her journal: 'It is a great and unexpected mercy, for I really was on the point of declaring on my part that I could no longer retain Lord Palmerston, which would have been a most disagreeable task, and not unattended with a small amount of danger, inasmuch as it would have put me too prominently forward'.

The passage suggests that the queen had been considering dismissing her foreign secretary by the use of something very like the royal prerogative. Never again was she to think in quite these terms in her dealings with a foreign secretary. The fear that she would be 'put too prominently forward' discouraged her from open breaches with her ministers, but it was one which they shared, so that it restrained them also in their quarrels with the crown. Both the court and the cabinets of Victorian England had a mutual interest in, and a desire for, the continued popularity of the constitutional monarchy, and they were all therefore equally concerned that disagreements over policy should be kept from the public gaze. The effect was that the queen's influence on policy fluctuated from one crisis to another, depending upon the extent to which she was prepared to go, and the extent to which her ministers were prepared to accept what they often regarded as unconstitutional interference. In the years of revolutionary turmoil in Europe from 1848 to 1851 the queen had argued every point of foreign policy, and had finally succeeded in dislodging her foreign secretary from power. In the Italian crisis of 1859–60 she again fought every dispatch to the last sentence, and effectively limited the policy of her prime minister and foreign secretary.

In considering the question of royal intervention in government policy at any time between the queen's marriage to Prince Albert in 1840 and Albert's death in 1861, the historian must accept one limitation: he can rarely know finally whether the queen or the prince was the original author of any specific idea or opinion. He can note which of the queen's


3 Frank Hardie in his lively study *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria 1861–1901*, Oxford, 1935, gives this as the reason for his starting date, but historians obviously cannot continue indefinitely, on this ground alone, to abdicate their right to study the influence of the crown on policy in the years 1840–61.
letters were in fact drafted by the prince consort, or he can detect different shades of opinion between entries in the queen's journal or memoranda written by the prince; but he cannot ultimately distinguish one set of political actions as being the work of the prince, and another as being the work of the queen herself. Nor would such a distinction have great historical significance, though it would obviously be of interest in human terms. It would have no importance in constitutional history, since constitutionally the prince did not exist. In constitutional terms any intervention by the court in the formulation of policy was intervention by the queen, and the prince saw himself as merely the secretary or informal adviser of the queen. In a study of this kind, therefore, too much time need not be spent in an attempt to distinguish the activity of the prince from that of the queen. The two acted in close unison. That the prince was an informed, conscientious and intelligent man was a happy coincidence, but of no constitutional significance. That he had grown up in the very different atmosphere of a small German state, and that he had many close personal contacts abroad was, however, not without importance for its bearing on the clash between the court on the one hand and those very English ministers, Palmerston and Russell, on the other.

For neither Palmerston nor Russell had the queen ever felt much affection, but her distrust of Palmerston had not always existed. In 1852 Albert had noted that Palmerston had been 'rather a favourite of the Queen during the first years of her reign.'4 After his bitter struggle with the court in the years 1848–51, Palmerston did not stay out of office for long. Returning to the government as home secretary in the last days of 1852, he found the queen correct in her manner towards him, if a little chilling. As prime minister after 1855 his relations with her seemed to be appreciably improving. Their correspondence during the later stages of the Crimean War was not unfriendly; at times it was even cordial. The queen approved of Palmerston's conduct of the war. The relations between the two deteriorated again only when the Italian question became the predominant issue in European politics. Thereafter the queen continued to regard Palmerston as a personal enemy and an untrustworthy minister until his death in 1865. In the last international crisis of his life, the Sleswig-Holstein affair and German-Danish war, the queen added her weight to

Queen Victoria and Foreign Policy

that of the cabinet in preventing Palmerston from intervening on the side of Denmark.\textsuperscript{5}

Except during the first few years of her reign the queen had happier relations with Conservative than with Whig or Liberal ministers. When the culminating phase of the Italian question opened early in 1859 Lord Derby's Conservative government was in office. The queen never challenged the Italian policy of Derby's government in 1858 and 1859 as she was to challenge that of Palmerston's in 1859 and 1860, but she had little affection or even respect for Derby personally. She viewed his passion for the turf with great distaste, and she had always doubted the ability of his foreign secretary, Lord Malmesbury.\textsuperscript{6} Derby on his side felt insecure in his dealings with the queen. He no doubt felt relieved that she happened to accept the general trend of his government's Italian policy, for on a question concerning the army in India, in February 1859, there was a nasty clash, and Derby threatened resignation.\textsuperscript{7}

So far as foreign policy was concerned the court and the Conservative government were in basic agreement when, in the winter of 1858–59, it became clear that Napoleon III and Cavour were planning action against Austria in Italy. Derby, Disraeli and most of the Conservative cabinet shared the queen's sympathies for Austria. Malmesbury, however, had spent an impressionable period of his youth in Italy and had for long been a personal friend of Napoleon III. He was therefore emotionally involved in the question of Italian independence—in contrast with the queen, for whom the Italian question was a somewhat remote and alien one—and there was an unstable love-hate element in Malmesbury's attitude to Napoleon. Nevertheless, Malmesbury and the queen were in broad agreement that Britain should aim to keep the peace in Italy by posing as a friendly mediating power to both France and Austria.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} W. E. Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and her ministers in the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis 1863–64', \textit{English Historical Review}, vol. lxxviii, 1963, pp. 263–83.

\textsuperscript{6} Eyck, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{7} A. C. Benson and Viscount Esher, editors, \textit{The letters of Queen Victoria}, 1st series, 1837–61, vol. iii, pp. 316–19. Subsequent references will always be to this volume, which will be abbreviated as \textit{Letters}.

\textsuperscript{8} For a detailed account of Malmesbury's policy in 1859, see: H. Hearder, 'La politica di Lord Malmesbury verso l'Italia nella primavera del 1859', \textit{Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento}, vol. xliii, 1956, pp. 35–58. For an admirable discussion of British policy during the whole period covered by this article there is: Derek Beales,
H. Header

Malmesbury put all his efforts into an attempt to organize a congress to settle the Italian question, the queen had grave doubts about the value of such a congress. She feared that Austria would not be able to keep her army on a war footing throughout the congress, and would so become a prey to French aggression, that the Russians would use a congress to avenge themselves on Austria for her rôle during the Crimean War, and that before the congress could meet Palmerston and Russell might be back in office, thus completely isolating Austria. But though the queen expressed these fears privately to Malmesbury, she did nothing to prevent him from trying to organize a congress. The queen and Prince Albert limited their action to keeping Austrian interests and the Austrian case before the eyes of their ministers throughout the negotiations. Albert on one occasion made the valid point: 'We all have nothing to lose in the Congress. Austria is the Power which may have to smart in different ways ...' It was left for Malmesbury to remind the prince that as well as preventing a war or a total surrender to French policy at the congress the British government also had 'to take care that Austria does not evade the great questions of Reform and improvement in the political and administrative state of Italy.'

The Austrian ultimatum to Turin on 19 April ended the prospects of a congress and temporarily exasperated even Queen Victoria, though without making her any better disposed towards France.

The affection and respect which she had acquired for Napoleon III since he had become her ally in the Crimean War had now all drained away: '... the Queen must say, she thinks it absurd to speak any more, as Lord Cowley does, of the "Alliance" ...' She tried, with only partial success, to change the wording of Malmesbury's correspondence with France after the outbreak of war. She wanted a stronger condemna-

---


9 The queen to Malmesbury, draft letter, 18 March 1859, [royal] A[rchives] J. 16/65. I would like to express my thanks for the gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen to use material from the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle.
12 The queen to Malmesbury, 28 April 1859, R.A. J. 18/133.
tion of French policy than her foreign secretary was prepared to make, and she disputed with Derby the phrasing of her speech opening the new Parliament, along the same lines. While she approved of her government’s severe judgements on Cavour’s rôle, she felt that Napoleon should be given a greater share of the blame. When Malmesbury politely refused to make all the alterations demanded in his dispatches she reluctantly acquiesced in his refusal, but added bitterly: ‘The Queen must say that it is repugnant to her feelings to bear severely upon the smaller state and treat with a forbearance at most acquitting her of any participation in the condemned policy the large and powerful one, whom we may have reason to be afraid of.’

On two last points the court differed from Derby’s government before its fall from office. In informing Prussia and the German states of the British determination to remain neutral in the war, Malmesbury added strong advice that the German states should remain neutral also. Albert promptly told Malmesbury that the queen regarded it as ‘very imprudent’ to advise the German states ‘to remain passive spectators while one of their confederates should be overpowered and destroyed by France.’ Two or three weeks later Gorchakov, the Russian chancellor, proposed an Anglo-Russian agreement to localize and, if possible, end the war. Malmesbury drafted a telegram accepting the proposal, to which the queen strongly objected. Although both Malmesbury and Derby assured the queen that ‘no new or separate “Alliance”’ had been intended, they eventually agreed not to send the telegram. It was their last encounter with the queen. Losing a significant vote in the House of Commons, the Conservatives resigned, and the queen was faced with the task of finding new ministers.

Her hope of excluding both Palmerston and Russell from the control of foreign policy by the appointment of Granville as prime minister and Clarendon as foreign secretary proved impracticable. To her great regret Palmerston had to be allowed to form a government and Russell to be

13 Beales, pp. 70–71, 80–81.
entrusted with the Foreign Office. The two elder statesmen had already quarrelled with the court over the Italian question in 1848–49. They believed with some justification that the British public was fully in sympathy with Italian nationalism in its struggle against Austria, and they assumed—without too much discussion or consideration of the matter—that an independent Italy, whether united into one or several states, would do no harm to British strategic and economic interests in the Mediterranean. Judging from the press of the period, the British public certainly supported the cause of Italian independence. The Times alone before the war of 1859 had doubts, but after the Peace of Villafranca even The Times professed to believe that Italians should now be left to manage their own affairs. The queen was thus almost certainly mistaken in thinking, as she had told Malmesbury in April, that, except for a brief period after the sending of the ultimatum to Turin, Austria had the sympathy of British public opinion.

From the formation of the Palmerston government in June 1859 until the proclamation of Victor Emmanuel II as king of Italy in March 1861 an intermittent conflict raged between the queen and Albert on the one hand and Palmerston and Russell—for once in full agreement—on the other. In this conflict the court quickly built up within the cabinet a fifth column of which the principal figure was Lord Granville. Russell’s first venture on taking office was to attempt to mediate in the war between France and Austria. On 12 July, when the peace of Villafranca had in fact just rendered the question an obsolete one, Prince Albert wrote to Granville asking for information on Russell’s moves in cabinet concerning the proposed mediation. Granville’s reply showed that he was at once flattered and embarrassed by the royal request. He pointed out that if Palmerston or Russell knew that he was passing on such information to the court ‘they would consider it as a want of confidence in them on the part of Her Majesty, and an improper interference on the part of a colleague.’ Nevertheless, Granville agreed to perform the service for the court, but added: ‘It is however very desirable that no one should know that I make any written communications to Your Royal Highness on this subject.’ His letter, of no

---

17 The best account of this quarrel is in Eyck, pp. 110–20.
small importance in the history of the crown, was printed in the standard life of Granville by Lord Fitzmaurice, but with many inaccuracies and two or three polite modifications. For example, in discussing Russell’s tendency to ignore the decisions of the cabinet, Granville noted, according to Fitzmaurice’s version: ‘Lord John does so from a loose way of doing business, and from a dislike of submitting himself to any criticism.’  

Granville really wrote, more amusingly: ‘Lord John does so from indolence, from a loose way of doing business, and from a childish dislike of submitting himself to any criticism.’

The immediate disagreement between the court and the foreign office centred upon that part of the peace of Villafranca which concerned the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the duchies of Parma and Modena. The three rulers of the duchies had been expelled by almost bloodless revolutions during the war. By Villafranca the grand duke of Tuscany and the duke of Modena were to be restored, while the future of the duchess of Parma was left in doubt. Victoria approved of the restorations, while Palmerston and Russell regarded the restorations as the most objectionable part of a generally objectionable agreement. At first Palmerston and Russell merely declared that the rulers of the duchies should not be restored by force, but by August they had definitely decided that the duchies should be ceded to Sardinia. Drafts drawn up by Russell recommending Sardinian annexation of the duchies were rejected by the queen, who insisted that the cabinet should consider any such drafts before they were sent. Throughout August the majority in the cabinet restrained Russell from playing too active a rôle in the Italian question. Early in September dispatches from Cowley revealed to the queen that Palmerston had been conveying in conversation with Persigny, the French ambassador in London, and by private correspondence with Lord Cowley, the British ambassador in Paris, precisely the advice which she and the cabinet had decided should not be given. The revelation, the queen told Russell, gave her ‘much pain’, and she asked: ‘What protection has the Queen against this practice?’

Russell was obliged to warn Walewski, the French foreign minister, against treating private correspondence as having official status. 

---

20 Fitzmaurice, vol. 1, p. 351.
21 Granville to Prince Albert, 13 July 1859, R.A. J. 21/42.
22 Letters, p. 368.
23 Beales, p. 108.
By October the position in Italy had appreciably changed. The revolutionary, but eminently respectable, assemblies in Tuscany, Parma and Modena had voted in favour of union with Sardinia, where the timid government of Alfonso La Marmora, with General Dabormida at the foreign ministry, had not dared to take advantage of the votes. It seemed increasingly unlikely that the terms of Villafranca would ever be enforced, or even that Napoleon III had ever seriously imagined that they would be. The idea of a congress of the powers to settle the Italian question had been revived, and on 28 October the British cabinet decided to take part in the congress.24 The drafting of Russell’s dispatches concerning the projected congress was the occasion for a polemic with the queen on a somewhat abstract point of political philosophy. Russell held faithfully to the Whig interpretation of English history according to which the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was a central event. He now made the analogy between the rulers of the central Italian duchies and James II—all of them disowned by their subjects—on the one hand, and Victor Emmanuel II and William III, on the other. The queen objected, and disapprovingly quoted from a draft in which Russell had said that the rulers of the central duchies had ‘lost their rights of Sovereignty by their own acts, and by the votes of Assemblies representing the whole of their former subjects.’ ‘The Queen thinks the position thus cruelly set forth in the Draft dangerous. She well understands that this is based upon the declaration of the British Parliament, “that the Crown was vacant”, when James II left the country, but in all such cases it is more a question of fact than of right.’

The queen’s argument was that the people of the duchies may have gained rights, but that the princes had not lost theirs; the congress was to meet precisely to decide which rights were valid. She further objected to the phrase ‘independence of Italy’ being cited as an objective of Britain at the congress.25 Meanwhile France and Austria were drawing up the treaty of Zurich, which was somewhat unrealistically to confirm the terms of Villafranca. Russell informed the queen that, from a copy he had confidentially obtained of the treaty of Zurich, it could be seen that the preamble declared ‘the independence of Italy, internal and external . . . to be the object of the Treaty.’26 But he agreed to omit from his dispatch

26 Russell to the queen, 30 October 1859, R.A. J. 23/92.
the statement concerning the loss of rights by the princes, and to treat the question rather as one of fact than of abstract justice.\textsuperscript{27}

In spite of the signature by France and Austria of the treaty of Zurich on 10 November, Palmerston and Russell had by that time decided—rightly—that Napoleon III had abandoned those obnoxious clauses of Villafranca by which the rulers of the duchies were to be restored, papal rule was to return to the revolted Romagna, and an Italian confederation—in which the Austrians as the rulers of Venice would have a seat—to be established. Palmerston and Russell however still feared that Austria might intervene again in Italy to enforce the treaties of Villafranca and Zurich. To prevent this the British ministers decided that the alliance with France must be re-established, and Sardinia included in a triple agreement against Austria. The immediate object of such an alliance would be the annexation by Sardinia not only of the central duchies, but also of the papal Romagna. When Albert asked Russell why he assumed that Napoleon would be prepared to break with the pope to this extent, Russell replied that ‘the English Alliance was a sufficient compensation’, which the prince told him was ‘absurd’.\textsuperscript{28} It was in fact already becoming less absurd. A few days before Albert’s conversation with Russell an anonymous pamphlet, known to be inspired by Napoleon, had been published in Paris. Called \textit{Le pape et le congrès}, it recommended that the pope should abandon most of the papal states. The Austrian government reacted to the pamphlet by refusing to continue with the plans for a congress. At the same time Napoleon decided to replace his foreign minister, Walewski, by the less conservative Thouvenel, and contemplated a commercial treaty with Britain. An Anglo-French alignment in Italy would be a natural complement to Napoleon’s new outlook.

On 3 January 1860 the British cabinet met. Russell brought forward his proposal ‘that we should act in concert with the Emperor of the French, to resist foreign intervention by force in Central Italy.’ It was evidently a moment of considerable crisis for Russell. After the meeting he reported in a very shaky hand to the queen that his proposal had been discussed, but that no decision had been reached and the cabinet was to meet again a week later.\textsuperscript{29} Granville, as the queen’s watchdog, spent the night after the cabinet

\textsuperscript{27} Russell to Cowley, 31 October 1859, R.A. J. 23/93.
\textsuperscript{28} Memorandum by Prince Albert, 30 December 1859, R.A. J. 24/77.
\textsuperscript{29} Russell to the queen, 3 January 1860, R.A. J. 24/85.
meeting at Brighton, and sent the prince consort a detailed report, including a fact which Russell had not himself mentioned, that 'Lord John gave hints of not being able to continue to carry on the business of the Foreign Office' if his proposal were not accepted.30 Another member of the cabinet, Gladstone, spent the night of 3 January at Windsor Castle, where he sat up until 2 a.m. writing to Russell a letter, long even by his standards, explaining his standpoint in immensely pedantic detail.31 Gladstone supported Russell in wishing an alliance with France and a threat of force against Austria to deter her from further intervention in Italy, but differed from Russell in believing that Sardinia also should be encouraged not to move from the status quo in Italy.32 While at Windsor Gladstone had a three-hour conversation with Albert, with whom his only point of agreement was 'that in case of the Sardinians moving we would not oppose Austria's doing so also.' The prince and the queen suspected that Palmerston and Emanuele d'Azeglio, the Sardinian minister in London, were at the root of the trouble, though the prime minister preferred to leave argument in the cabinet to Russell. Prince Albert commented bitterly in a memorandum: '... Azeglio's constant presence in Ld Palmerston's house where he is all powerful and is supposed to make love both to the wife and to the daughter (Ldy Shaftesbury) makes the proceeding disgusting.'33

In the week between the cabinet meetings of 3 and 10 January, Palmerston took active measures to secure a majority in support of what he persisted in calling 'Russell's' proposal. He wrote a note to Granville while the latter was still at Brighton, saying: 'There is a rock ahead on Tuesday next upon which it would be a pity that the Govt should split. Pray help us.'34 And he prepared a long memorandum to be circulated to each member of the cabinet, most of whom had time to reply with counter-arguments before the meeting.35

Queen Victoria could meanwhile depend upon the support of her point

30 Granville to Prince Albert, 3 January 1860, R.A. J. 24/86.
32 This letter has been printed by Derek Beales, 'Gladstone on the Italian Question', Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento, vol. xii, 1954, pp. 99–104.
34 Granville to Prince Albert, 10 January 1860, R.A. J. 25/5.
35 Beales, pp. 119–23.
of view in the cabinet not only by Granville, but by several other members, among them Sir Charles Wood and Sir George Grey. Granville believed that even 'Gladstone's views were modified by a conversation he had at Windsor.'\textsuperscript{36} Gladstone's own reference to his conversation with Albert, however, was: 'I thought he admitted so much as to leave him no standing ground.'\textsuperscript{37} Clarendon, who was not a member of the cabinet but was keeping in touch, commented privately that the queen 'in the event of the Cabinet agreeing to Pam's policy and requiring that it should be indicated in the speech from the throne ... would refuse point blank to do so, let the consequences be what they might.'\textsuperscript{38}

By the time the cabinet met on 10 January Palmerston and Russell already knew that they would have to modify their plan. Instead of threatening Austria with force they now merely proposed that both Austria and France should be invited to agree not to intervene again with force in Italy. The cabinet accepted the more cautious proposal, and according to Granville 'looked foolishly relieved.'\textsuperscript{39} The crisis had dissolved, partly through the influence of the crown. Three days later Clarendon was writing from Windsor that the cabinet decision 'seems to have been a prodigious relief here as "it saved the Queen from coming into play which would have been unfortunate but unavoidable".'\textsuperscript{40}

When, early in March 1860, Napoleon III announced that France intended to annex Savoy and Nice the queen's reaction was more angry and belligerent than that of Palmerston or Russell, whose attitudes tended to vacillate. They were eager that the Cobden Commercial Treaty should not be lost, since Gladstone's domestic economic policy and probably his continued support for the government hinged upon it. But when later in March the populations of the central duchies returned a vote in plebiscites overwhelmingly approving union with Sardinia, Palmerston and Russell were convinced that Cavour, who had returned to office in January, did not need to bribe Napoleon with Savoy and Nice. The queen had lost interest in the central duchies, and throughout March and April was pre-

\textsuperscript{36} Granville to Prince Albert, 10 January 1860, R.A. J. 25/5.
\textsuperscript{38} Beales, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{39} Granville to Prince Albert, 10 January 1860, R.A. J. 25/5.
\textsuperscript{40} Clarendon to Cowley, private, 13 January 1860, Cowley Papers, Public Record Office, F.O. 519/178.
occupied only with her bitter conviction that Napoleon was about to fight a great war of aggression, probably on the Rhine.

Interest in Italy for its own sake and not simply as a factor in Anglo-French relations returned with the expedition of Garibaldi to Sicily in May; but throughout the dramatic events of the summer of 1860 there was no further clash between Russell or Palmerston and the court, simply because the British government did not settle on a fixed policy but were inclined to let events take their course. The queen and prince remained deeply distrustful both of Cavour and Napoleon III and deeply shocked at Garibaldi’s success, but there was nothing they could do about it. An unknown informant sent Prince Albert a copy of the voting paper used for the plebiscite by which the population of southern Italy chose union with Sardinia. The paper, preserved in the Royal Archives at Windsor, carries the arms of Savoy, and simply the words:

SI
Italia Una
Vittorio Emmanuele

It is accompanied with a note in Albert’s hand: ‘This is a polling paper of Naples. The People are brought before the Officiale [sic] who gives them this paper and no other, then they are marched to the poll to deposit it as their vote.’ The voting paper is evidently authentic. The ballot was an open one, and Albert was probably justified in his sceptical view of the election.

Russell’s most famous dispatch, that of 27 October 1860, which is noticed in all the standard histories and biographies dealing in any detail with the Italian question, was not challenged by the queen. Declaring that Britain would not follow France, Russia and Austria in breaking off diplomatic relations with Sardinia, it referred instead to ‘the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties, and consolidating the work of their independence’. Because the dispatch was ‘less bad than what they had been led to expect’, Victoria and Albert allowed it to be sent, with Palmerston’s approval, but without even the sanction of the cabinet. A few days later Russell followed up this triumph by sending the queen

41 R.A. J. 31/14, undated.
42 Beales, p. 156.
the draft of a dispatch to be circulated to all the powers. Reiterating the doctrine of non-intervention in Italian affairs, it commented in passing on Rome and Venice: 'It is to be hoped that these two Cities, so thoroughly Italian in their character, may finally enjoy as great a degree of well-being and good government as the rest of Italy.' With regard to the rest of Italy, Russell concluded, the British government '... now deem it right to declare that if any other Power should attempt such forcible interference, Her Majesty's Government will hold themselves free to act in such manner as the rights of nations, the independence of Italy, and the interests of Europe may seem to them to require.'

This was more than the queen could take. She objected particularly to the reference to Rome and Venice, which seemed to her to be a direct encouragement of Sardinian aggression. But Russell was unrepentant. He even wanted to add to the dispatch 'a proposal to recognize Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy, as soon as he shall assume that title.' As might have been expected, the queen found this proposal still more objectionable. 'It could only be viewed by Europe as a further proof of partisanship in the Italian Revolution.' She politely assumed that the draft would be brought before the cabinet. Russell's courage deserted him, and he contented himself with discussing the subject in cabinet as an academic one, without recommending 'any dispatch on the affairs of Italy for the present.' The queen had won her last battle before the creation of the kingdom of Italy.

In considering the rôle of the crown in the formulation of foreign policy in the mid-nineteenth century, it must be remembered that none of the queen's ministers expected the neutral and negative rôle which the crown has apparently assumed with regard to foreign policy since, at least, 1919. If the clash with Russell in 1859 and 1860 was a particularly sharp one, this was because Russell regarded the Italian question as his special preserve, the reason for his insistence on having the foreign office in the first place.

44 The queen to Russell, 3 November 1860, Letters, p. 411.
45 Russell to the queen, 10 November 1860, R.A. J. 31/60.
46 The queen to Russell, 10 November 1860, R.A. J. 31/61.
47 Russell to the queen, 13 November 1860, R.A. J. 31/65.
On Germany he was far more prepared to listen to advice from the court, and would sometimes even seek out the opinions of Prince Albert. Noting, in a letter to the prince in March 1860, that 'it is impossible to say how soon we may have to deal with the state of Germany', Russell went on, with surprising modesty and vagueness, to say that he would regard it as 'a great favour, if Your Royal Highness, who is so well acquainted with Germany, would furnish me with some clue to our future policy in regard to that country.' But while he was prepared to ask Albert, as a well-informed consultant, for advice on Germany, Russell had deeply resented the queen's attempts to sway cabinet decisions against his policy in Italy. He professed to believe that the queen had the right to reject the policy advised by her ministers, but that they might then resign, leaving her with a crisis which would be difficult to resolve. He further believed that while the queen could—at her peril—reject advice submitted to her by the cabinet, she should not interfere beforehand while the process of policy-making was going on. Soon after Villafranca he stated his case with surprising firmness:

Lord John Russell will read Your Majesty's letters to the Cabinet. After a draft has been submitted to Your Majesty it is quite right to do so. But Lord John Russell must be permitted to express his opinion that to communicate Your Majesty's opinion to the Cabinet before their deliberations begin is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.

It is for Your Majesty's Ministers to submit such advice as they deem best suited for the honour of Your Majesty's Crown, and the welfare of the Nation.

If such advice is not approved they may withdraw it, or resign.

But if Your Majesty interferes beforehand, Lord John Russell cannot hope to be of any benefit to Your Majesty's service...

Not even at the height of the crisis of 1851 had Palmerston delivered quite so explicit a lecture to the queen.

In conclusion two general questions can be asked, even though only tentative answers can be given: did the queen have any considerable influence on British policy with regard to the Italian question in 1859 and

50 Russell to the queen, 22 July 1859, Russell papers, Public Record Office, 30/22/13.
Queen Victoria and Foreign Policy

1860? And, if so, what form did it take, and did it materially affect the course of European history?

On the day-to-day conduct of British policy in the period it is clear that the crown exerted a marked influence. Without the opinions held and efforts exerted by the crown, British ambassadors—and especially Cowley in Paris—would have been receiving very different instructions from the British government from those which they in the event received. Without the intervention of the crown the British cabinet in the winter of 1859–60 might well have reached different decisions from those which it in fact reached. But did these different instructions and decisions amount to a basically different policy? Here the answer must be that the policy differed in stress rather than direction. The queen and all members of the cabinet believed, or professed to believe, in a policy of non-intervention in Italian affairs, but whereas the queen interpreted non-intervention as meaning complete diplomatic inactivity on the part of Britain, Palmerston and Russell were eager to threaten Austria, and if necessary even France, with force, in order to prevent either of them from intervening. To the idea of making such a threat the queen, and the majority in the cabinet—some members of which were influenced by the queen—were strongly opposed. Nevertheless, the attitudes of Palmerston and Russell were well known in Vienna and Paris, so that the queen’s veto of specific dispatches could not be total in its effect.

In the event, neither the Austrian nor the French government intervened in Italy in 1860, so that the terms of Villafranca and Zurich were never enforced. It could therefore be argued that the proposed threats of Palmerston and Russell were not needed anyhow. In particular Austria, after Count Rechberg came to power, was far less inclined to pursue an active Italian policy than she had been when Count Buol dictated Austrian policy. Against this argument, however, it must be remembered that Cavour felt obliged to surrender Savoy and Nice to France, in so doing ignoring the advice of the British government. It is at least worth speculating whether the surrender of Savoy and Nice would have been necessary if the policy of Palmerston and Russell had not been blunted by the queen’s basic antipathy to the Italian nationalist movement. If Cavour could have been more sure of the active support of Britain he might have disregarded the requests of Napoleon. But to this the queen would almost certainly have replied that, much as she resented the French annexation of Savoy
and Nice, nothing would have justified the threat of British armed intervention as an ally of Sardinia against either Austria or France. The most admirable aspect of her policy was her determination to prevent war between the Powers, and to ensure that British blood and money would not be spent in a 'war of ideas'.
British naval policy in the Victorian era falls naturally into three parts. Between 1835 and 1861 naval expenditure roughly trebled as naval and invasion scares followed each other in quick succession. A similar increase took place from the mid-1880s, a period dominated by naval rivalry with France and Russia, and by the British reassertion of the Two Power Standard. The years between provide a sharp contrast; naval expenditure began to fall in 1862, and in less than ten years a saving of some twenty-five per cent had been achieved. Not until 1885 were the estimates of 1861 to be equalled, despite a number of international crises, and a sharp rise in prices in the early 1870s. The navy was not affected by the overall rise in government expenditure from 1874; the national income grew—if somewhat erratically—over the same period, so that by the early 1880s the navy represented much less of a burden upon the national economy than in 1861. It is doubtful whether Britain was able at any other time to purchase security at so cheap a price. This agreeable state of affairs was largely a result of the preoccupation of potential naval rivals with other problems, but it was encouraged and facilitated by the growing caution in British foreign policy following the death of Palmerston. The principle of non-intervention was being increasingly applied to Britain’s relations with the European powers, while gunboat diplomacy was no longer employed with Palmerstonian self-confidence as a panacea for British difficulties with weaker and less civilized countries. Richard Cobden exercised some influence on British foreign policy in his own lifetime, but after his death in 1865 both parties, and especially their new leading figures, Gladstone and Disraeli, actually entered into competition to implement several of his basic arguments concerning foreign policy, imperial defence, and government retrenchment.
Gladstone’s struggles to keep arms expenditure within bounds under Palmerston from 1859 to 1865 are well known. Yet he himself confessed to Cobden in 1861 that he doubted whether a Derby ministry would have spent less, so great was the public demand. Such a thought provided little consolation, and Gladstone believed it unlikely that he would have accepted Palmerston’s offer of the Treasury in 1859 had he known that within a year he would have been driven to double the income tax to 10d in the pound. As it was, his thoughts turned frequently to resignation. Disraeli, though less consistently than Gladstone, was also a critic of the heavy arms expenditure, but found that this was an issue on which Palmerston could normally carry opinion with him. In any case, all were agreed that British naval supremacy must be maintained; even Cobden admitted that Britain must spend £100 million if necessary to that end. Consequently, apart from obvious absurdities such as Palmerston’s landward defences for the dockyards, the critics were more interested in the possibility of a détente with France, and the establishment of some form of agreed naval ratio. Gladstone also sought proof that the French threat was not being exaggerated; he endeavoured to ensure that the nation secured good value for its money, and he was particularly anxious lest ships, hastily built in response to the panic, should prove expensive museum pieces in the near future.

Until 1863, however, the pressures in favour of naval expansion were too considerable to be resisted with more than minimal success. The speed-up in naval evolution in the mid-nineteenth century, with the emergence of the large steam ironclad, was a major stimulant to alarm and expenditure. British suspicions of French foreign and naval policy were easily aroused, and certainly the French were proving uncomfortably active in both departments at this time. From the Board of Admiralty in 1860 came the gloomy warning, ‘we should now commence a war with

---

France at a greater disadvantage than at former times.\(^3\) Major naval ambitions were still attributed to Russia, and much was made of the growing cordiality between that power and France. Although Anglo-American relations were at last beginning to ease over Central America, it was still believed that the United States would be quick to exploit any British embarrassments in Europe. Franco-Russian opportunism was similarly feared should Britain become embroiled in the New World. A Two, or even Three Power Standard thus seemed to remain a necessity.\(^4\) In practice, the ironclad challenge came from France alone, and the early 1860s found the admiralty and cabinet anxiously poring over statistics of French construction, actual and projected. Not until 1864 did the naval race in ironclad building begin to ease, by which time the admiralty felt reasonably confident that they had gained an adequate lead in fighting strength over France. Nevertheless, Palmerston was still on hand to issue a warning in October 1864 that ‘we must keep pace with France, America and Russia, and we must not forget that the Fleets numerically smaller of the larger Maritime Powers will tell more effectively than in the olden times, because of their modern construction.’\(^5\)

At the same time, the climax was being reached in the steady growth of naval responsibilities in non-European waters. Whereas in 1835 about seventy ships had been serving on non-European stations, a generation later twice as many ships (bearing more than one-third of the total establishment of seamen and marines) were thus employed. The first lord of the admiralty, the duke of Somerset, complained in October 1859:

At the present there is an unusual, and I hope, never to be repeated demand upon our naval force; from Vancouver’s isle to the river Plate, from the West Indies to China the Admiralty is called upon by Secretaries of State to send ships . . . . The undeniable fact is that we are doing or endeavouring to do much more than our force is suffi-

---


cient for. It is fortunate the world is not larger, for there is no other limit to the service of the fleets.  

Two years later he noted that he was employing more men in the service than had been voted for 1861–62, and he feared that a supplementary estimate might be necessary in a year when the estimates had already reached a record peacetime level. Even the ending in 1860 of the second China War, which had imposed a particularly heavy strain on the resources of the navy, brought less relief than had been anticipated. The Taiping rebellion persisted until 1864, and this, with the endemic Chinese piracy, necessitated the presence of a large number of British warships to protect British subjects. Already the foreign office was displaying acute anxiety to limit British involvement in Chinese affairs. Stories of the vast potential trade of China were being treated with growing scepticism; the fear of creating a second India in China was very real, but it was not always easy to control the prejudices of local consuls and naval officers in favour of gunboat diplomacy. A similar British moderation towards Japan began to weaken in the early 1860s as the authority of the Shogunate declined, and the assertiveness of the xenophobic Chōshū and Satsuma clans mounted. Somerset himself showed uncharacteristic enthusiasm for the subsequent punitive expeditions, surely among the most effective of all acts of gunboat diplomacy. But the cost of all this naval activity in the Far East was an East Indies squadron of fifty ships and 6,500 men as late as 1864, a reduction of only about one-fifth since 1860–61.  

Still more costly than the East Indies station from 1862 until 1864 was the North American and West Indies squadron. The American Civil War was responsible for the increases here, especially in the winter of 1861–2 when the Trent case appeared to bring Britain and the Northern States to the verge of war. The Mexican debt-collecting expedition in 1861, and a

---

6 See the correspondence of Somerset and Gladstone, 27 September–15 October 1859, Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 44304, folios 7–18.
8 N. A. Pelcovits, Old China hands and the Foreign Office, New York, 1948, pp. 25 ff. Somerset to Russell, 5 December 1862, Russell papers, P.R.O. 30/22/24. Details of naval distribution are to be found in the Appendix at the end of this essay.
9 K. Bourne, 'British preparations for war with the North, 1861–2', English Historical Review, vol. lxxvi, 1961, pp. 600–32. On 1 March 1862, forty-one ships and nearly 14,000 men were stationed in North American waters. In 1865 there were
dispute with Monte Video added to Somerset’s American embarrassments, while the withdrawal of the United States anti-slave trade patrol during the Civil War necessitated a small increase to the British squadron in West African waters. The admiralty had never willingly committed ships and men to that unhealthy region, but Palmerston and Russell were unrelenting in their demand for action both against the slave trade itself and on behalf of British trade. The admiralty protested vainly against the occasional use of small warships on the Niger to secure passage for British traders. It is true that the discretionary powers of the governor of Lagos to dispatch punitive expeditions against the Egbas was reduced, but on the whole the response of the British government in the early 1860s to local requests for gunboat assistance was favourable. The local British faith in the navy was well expressed by a governor in 1869: ‘It is difficult to convey . . . a full comprehension of the moral effect which a visit from a Gun Boat has upon the African mind.’ Somerset, for his part, found it difficult to persuade Russell that the reliance of British traders in many parts of the world upon naval protection encouraged incidents, and sometimes led to wars ‘which we afterwards regret’.10 These West African services employed about twenty ships and 2,000 men in the early 1860s.11

The calls upon the navy at this time were indeed remarkable in their variety and extent. Several colonial governors were demanding naval assistance in the maintenance of law and order; the navy was obliged to take over some of the duties of the old Indian marine in the 1860s, and this gave added employment to three or four warships, especially in the confused politics of the Red Sea area. It was several years before the Indian government agreed to contribute to the cost of this work. Nor did the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865, which permitted colonies to develop navies of their own, secure the Royal Navy much relief. Religious disturbances in the Lebanon in 1860–61 drew both French and British forces still twenty-nine ships and 6,500 men, British parliamentary papers, 1867–68 [167] vol. xliv, pp. 638–9.


to the scene, and Somerset was very soon protesting against the indiscriminate employment of British marines ashore to the detriment of the efficiency of the Mediterranean fleet. Piracy in Malay waters, wreckers in the Bahamas, incidents in Greece and Brazil all gave additional employment. Among many miscellaneous requests for assistance the admiralty received one from the archbishop of Canterbury to protect missionaries in Borneo, and another from the British Museum to send a ship to Mersa Louza near Cyrene to assist in the search for antiquities. Not surprisingly, admiralty reviews of the strength of each station in the early 1860s all reached the same reluctant conclusion; large reductions were impossible, some squadrons were over-extended, and there existed the danger that these miscellaneous duties were reducing the fighting efficiency of the navy as a whole. Somerset went further, and regretted the British tendency to ‘bluster’ more than was ‘decorous’ in Europe. Despite the restraint being displayed by the foreign office towards China, he felt that far more could be done there and elsewhere to diminish British reliance on gunboats.

Somerset was not only under fire from the foreign and colonial offices; he had also to face the powerful broadsides of Gladstone and the treasury in favour of economy. To some extent, Somerset could play off these contrary pressures one against the other. He pointed out to Gladstone that naval economy on a large scale was impossible until and unless Britain was prepared to revise the principles of her foreign policy. He reminded the advocates of intervention and gunboat diplomacy of the dangers of supplementary estimates. As it happened, a partial easing of the naval and war scares with France and the United States enabled useful reductions to be made in the naval estimates in both 1862 and 1863, but these had reached their limit according to Somerset at the end of 1863. To the insistent Gladstone he replied that no further economies in the ironclad programme were possible, and if savings were to be effected elsewhere fundamental changes in British foreign and naval policy would be essential.

13 Somerset to Gladstone, 28 October 1861 and 23 November 1863, Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 44304, ff. 104–7, 156–61; Somerset to Russell, 16 November 1861, Russell Papers, P.R.O. 30/22/24; 22 August 1863, P.R.O. 30/22/26.
14 Somerset to Gladstone, 5 January 1861, Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 44304; Somerset to Russell, 9 May 1865, Russell Papers, P.R.O. 30/22/26.
If any great diminution of the navy estimates be still demanded, the only practical way to attain this object will be by abandoning the present system of dividing the whole world into stations with the present practice of keeping a naval force on each station . . . in the present political state of affairs throughout the world, [this] could not be seriously contemplated.\textsuperscript{15}

This was a form of economy in which Gladstone, like Cobden and his Manchester friends, had long been interested, and it was one to which Somerset was disposed to make concessions in some circumstances. Somerset insisted, however, that this could not be arranged at short notice, and in January 1864 Gladstone agreed to waive his demand for major naval economies for another year.

The end of 1864 found Gladstone in a most determined mood. From October he fought fiercely for retrenchment, pointing out that 1865 would be an election year, and that the government must expect a close scrutiny of its expenditure from the opposition, and from the more independent of its own supporters. He made much of the failure since 1863 to implement fully a Commons' resolution in 1862 in favour of 'gradual reductions subject to circumstances.' Indeed, the proposed naval estimates for 1865-66 seemed almost a renunciation of that policy. His own aim was modest enough: 'Say in round numbers [a reduction of] £ 1 million.' But he also felt obliged to raise several matters of general principle. Both the cabinet and the chancellor of the exchequer were at a disadvantage when pressing for economy under specific heads of expenditure against the service chiefs and other interested parties. To prevail in arguments of this type the chancellor had to be an experienced war and naval minister in addition to his existing responsibilities. This was impossible. Economy could only prevail if it were supported as a general principle. The principle of British naval policy which interested him most at this time was that of permanent naval squadrons all over the world. In a perceptive and penetrating letter of 13 December 1864, he argued:

It is surely time that we should prepare, however gently and circum-
spectly, for modifying our system of armaments all over the world; a system which, apart from special services requiring to be performed

\textsuperscript{16} Somerset to Gladstone, 23 November 1863, Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 44304, ff. 156-61.
in particular quarters, seems to me, even [if] it cost nothing, disadvantageous from a tendency to multiply causes of quarrel and dispute: a system which was intelligible in the age of canvas, and of slow and uncertain posts, but which is wholly antiquated in the age of steam, of mail packets, of telegraphs, of rapid, certain continuous communications all over the world.

You [Somerset] have often justly referred to the requisitions you receive from the Foreign Office as obstacles to the reduction of naval force. But these requisitions are after all indications of the temper of the country with respect to foreign politics; and the very marked intimation of a turn in that temper which was given by and at that period of the debates of last July, will and must have its effect upon the requisitions of the Foreign Office.¹⁶

Gladstone envisaged that by such a revision of foreign and naval policy a saving of 5–6,000 men might be achieved. This proved an underestimate in the long run. Although Somerset in a letter to Palmerston on 1 December 1864 had strongly opposed further reductions,¹⁷ he apparently permitted his political secretary, Lord Clarence Paget, an admiral but also an enthusiast for economy, to prepare a memorandum on the subject. Paget believed that the telegraph, with the current international calm in Europe, would make reductions in European waters possible. He also favoured the abolition of the South American station, but doubted if reductions were yet possible in North American, Chinese or Australian waters. He added, 'In recommending these large reductions I by no means advance the idea of abandoning our prestige in Foreign and distant countries. On the contrary I would occasionally show a compact squadron at all the principal Foreign ports . . .'. He even envisaged the inclusion of an ironclad in a squadron of three or four powerful ships. The flag might be shown less frequently, but more impressively.¹⁸ This was not exactly in accordance with Gladstone's hopes, but the feeling was widespread in Britain that many parts of the world still required regular reminders of Britain's naval potential.

¹⁷ Somerset to Palmerston, 1 December 1864, Broadlands Papers.
Little could be achieved in time for the 1865–66 estimates, and Gladstone's aggressive bid for economy was supported by only two members of the cabinet, Somerset not being one of them. Even so, the estimates for 1865 were the lowest since 1838, and both in 1865 and 1866 some small reductions on the foreign stations were achieved. Yet the number of men employed in non-European waters still stood at over 18,000 in March 1866, a reduction of only some 4,000 since the early 1860s. In introducing the 1866–67 estimates in February 1866, Paget was obliged to refer to the enormous pressure for ships, and it was not until the Liberals were themselves in opposition that Gladstone and his supporters were able to make public their belief that a change of policy had become practicable. They were assisted by a growing feeling among the public in favour of economy, encouraged by a trade recession, and by a decline in the aggressive self-assertiveness of the Palmerstonian era, so that British traders in China, for instance, could no longer rely on public support for their efforts to break down the obstacles to commerce.

The Conservatives took office in June 1866, with Disraeli as chancellor of the exchequer. He at once proved himself as intent on economy as his predecessor, though with rather less success. Notwithstanding his warnings of possible tax increases and the political disadvantages attendant upon rising naval expenditure, modest additions were made to the estimates in both 1867 and 1868.

At first the increases arose mainly from the need to build new cruisers for the foreign stations, an indication of the contrary pressures to which this portion of the navy had been subjected by the treasury and foreign office in the early 1860s. Initially Disraeli was successful in resisting admiralty pressure for more ironclads, but brief naval scares concerning the United States and France undermined his position. Threats of resignation by two members of the board forced his hand in March 1867. Already, a month earlier, Disraeli had complained to the prime minister, Lord Derby, 'The Admiralty is beyond the control of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, or any other subordinate Minister. It is the Prime Minister

that can alone deal with that department.\textsuperscript{21} When the battle was resumed at the beginning of 1868, Disraeli concentrated his fire—like Gladstone before him—on the world police squadrons. ‘This is the keystone of the position.’ He insisted that the admiralty economize on unarmoured wooden vessels, and rely on a flying squadron to maintain British prestige wherever and whenever reduced foreign stations proved inadequate. The admiralty was indeed moving cautiously in this direction, and small reductions continued to be effected on most stations. Disraeli professed great satisfaction in February 1868 that Britain’s European fleets were being greatly strengthened at little additional cost by this redistribution.\textsuperscript{22} With the international scene as a whole becoming more peaceful in the course of 1868, the Admiralty was able to consider an overall reduction in the estimates for 1869. Corry, the first lord, was planning a reduction of about £600,000 at the time of the government’s fall in December 1868,\textsuperscript{23} so that although his Liberal successor was able to surpass this figure, it is clear that both parties were approaching naval problems from a similar standpoint.

Gladstone, in the election campaign of 1868, had placed government economy second only to the question of Ireland. Public opinion was moving strongly in the same direction, and there were many criticisms of the condition of naval administration at this time. \textit{The Times} had recently complained,

\begin{quote}
The cost of the Navy is not created by fighting ships or fighting men, but by non-combatants and ships unfit for fighting. . . . Abroad we have foreign squadrons composed mainly of vessels no longer to be regarded as men-of-war yet costing the country a heavy annual charge. At home we have old ships by the score encumbering our
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{22} Buckle, \textit{Disraeli}, vol. iv, pp. 578–82. Much useful detail on the cabinet consideration of naval problems is to be found in R. Millman, \textit{British foreign policy and the coming of the Franco-Prussian war}, Oxford, 1965, pp. 148–53, but I am not persuaded that Britain’s naval position was quite so weak as he suggests.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Hansard}, 3rd series, vol. cxciv, cols. 900 ff. Corry himself was a strong advocate of the old policy of naval distribution, but Disraeli was forcing him closer to the new school of thought in practice.
harbours and rivers, and counting all the while for vast sums on our Estimates. Of any such system as would measure our resources against our wants we have not a vestige. No Minister has yet risen in Parliament to say, without reference to our existing forces, how many ships we really want, for what purpose, and of what character.24

Under the new Gladstone administration such a minister was to be forthcoming, and was to show a degree of ruthlessness in favour of economy which was to dismay even some of the advocates of retrenchment. The new first lord of the admiralty, Hugh Childers, had had brief experience of naval matters under Somerset, and he now proceeded to grapple with naval problems with a singleness of purpose and mind unknown since Sir James Graham in the early 1830s. He closed Woolwich and Deptford dockyards, closures which had been planned in 1864 but which had been reversed by the Conservatives. He tried to introduce a regular shipbuilding programme to end the recent abrupt fluctuations in dockyard labour forces. More controversially, he even tried to revise the structure of the Admiralty itself. Of most relevance to the present essay, however, is the fact that he attacked the task of redistribution with more vigour than any of his predecessors, and in general he was able to bring the estimates below £10 million for the first time since 1858. Apart from minor changes, his administration set the pattern of British naval policy until the mid 1880s.25

A favourable international setting was essential, and here Childers was generously assisted. France was now preoccupied with the rise of Bismarck’s Prussia; French naval spending fell sharply after 1867, and though France still possessed more ironclads than Britain, the superiority of the latter in the largest sea-going classes was clear. The French defeat in the war of 1870–71 reinforced these trends, so that by 1874 the British navy appeared at least twice as powerful as its old opponent. Not until 1878 were the French free to devote much attention to their navy.26 Britain


25 For a brief account, see Childers, vol. I, pp. 163 ff. The achievements of Childers, however, failed to satisfy John Bright; for his criticism see Southgate, p. 549.

continued to watch American naval preparations with interest, but the latter's neglect of their ironclad fleet of the Civil War era was soon apparent, and the main American threat in the event of war seemed to arise from commerce raiding. The settlement of the *Alabama* question in 1872, together with American restraint in the current crisis in Cuba, promised well for the future, and British interest in the American navy declined. The Russian navy was the other main source of concern, especially following the revocation of the Black Sea Clauses in 1870, but here, too, apart from a naval scare in 1872, there was little to cause alarm. A possible Russian naval threat in the Pacific had likewise failed to materialize, and indeed the Russians possessed no dockyard facilities there until 1886. Consequently British ironclad construction fell away sharply after 1870, though with smaller savings in shipbuilding expenditure than might have been expected owing to rising costs and to the continuing need for replacements to the cruising fleet. Had it not been for the reductions made to the foreign squadrons, the saving in shipbuilding expenditure of some half million each year in comparison with the Conservative estimates of 1867–68 would have been impossible.

Between the mid-1860s and early 1870s the number of ships serving on non-European stations was reduced by about forty per cent, the biggest reduction being achieved by Childers between 1868 and 1871. The saving in men was even greater, some 11,000 or 12,000 sufficing where as many as 22,000 had once been employed. A total establishment of 60,000 or so seamen, boys and marines sufficed in the 1870s compared with 75,000 and more in the early 1860s. Much of the remaining saving in manpower arose from the smaller crews required by the new ironclads compared with the old ships of the line. In November 1863 the admiralty estimated that every man afloat cost £10 per year for the repair and fitting out of ships alone, so that it is not surprising that so much attention was paid to the foreign stations as a major source of saving. But redistribution could only be

---

MS. 44185, folios 111–14, 'I believe that we are more than equal to meet any force which can in any probable (I had almost said possible) circumstances be brought against us.' See also Buckle, *Letters of Victoria*, vol. ii, pp. 37–41.

achieved if world conditions permitted and Britain herself agreed to make less use of gunboat diplomacy. A change in the British attitude towards China has already been noted, and this was encouraged and developed by Russell’s successors at the Foreign Office, both Conservative and Liberal. In practice it proved easier to formulate a policy of restraint than to secure its observance by British consular and naval officers in China. Consequently in December 1868 Lord Clarendon attacked the problem in unequivocal terms. He forbade the use of means ‘inconsistent with the independence and safety of China’, and permitted the use of force only ‘to protect life and property immediately exposed’ so long as China herself observed her treaty obligations. He added that ‘the Board of Admiralty will take care that the policy of Her Majesty’s government shall not be thwarted or overborne by excessive zeal on the part of Her Majesty’s navy.’ Orders were issued on the China station that acts of hostility could be committed only with the permission of the commander-in-chief, and that he should refer to the admiralty for prior instructions whenever possible.28 British warships continued to be active in Chinese waters, but a change of policy had undoubtedly occurred, and one which was thoroughly approved by most opinion in Britain.

As early as January 1869 Childers was able to write warmly of Clarendon’s assistance in the redistribution of the fleet. A radical reduction was not possible at the stroke of a pen, but over the next few years it was possible to reduce by about one-half the squadrons in the Pacific and off the south-east coast of South America. The China station lost more than one-third of its strength; the North American and West Indian the same. The East Indian and West African each lost about one-quarter; the reduction of the Australian station, however, proved no more than temporary, and ended in 1871. There was some criticism as well as much praise for these moves, and the difficulties of carrying the reductions beyond a certain point began to make themselves felt at an early stage. Clarendon was exposed to some criticism from December 1868 when he failed to take so strong a line as his predecessor over some shipping incidents with Spain. As recently as April 1867 The Times had noted that the Mediterranean fleet was proceeding to Cadiz to obtain ‘a plain answer to a plain question’ following the Spanish seizure of a British merchantman.

Incidents continued with Spain in the 1870s, aided by the disturbed condition of that country following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1868 and again in 1873, and more than once officials in the British foreign office, grappling with Spanish procrastination and circumlocution, looked back nostalgically to the more pugnacious days of old. British restraint perhaps also contributed to an unfortunate incident in Greece in 1870, when three British subjects, who had been captured by brigands, were murdered as the climax to a series of misunderstandings and mistakes. It seems that the brigands expected the British government to coerce the Greek ministry into acceptance of their demands, and the British failure to do so may have contributed to the tragic chain of mischance. In protest against this retreat from Palmerstonian methods Sir Robert Morier, a British diplomat, spoke scathingly of 'the strange mania for eating dirt', and of the 'absolute inertia' in the conduct of British foreign policy.

But gunboats still had their part to play. The defeat of the South in the American Civil War brought to an end the Atlantic slave trade, including that to Cuba, but contrary to the hopes of the admiralty the foreign office could still find employment for several ships on the west coast of Africa. In March 1869 the head of the slave trade department in the foreign office pointed out,

It must be borne in mind that the valuable and rapidly increasing trade on the West Coast has been brought into existence and developed entirely by the protection afforded by our Cruisers, and it is only the constant pressure, or the knowledge on the part of the Native Chiefs that a ship of war is within reach, that prevents them from engaging in petty wars among themselves, or getting into disputes with European traders, the effects of which are to put a stop for a time to a profitable trade.

Clarendon himself intervened in the following month to try to prevent too great a reduction following the abolition of the anti-slave trade patrol, and the admiralty finally conceded an extra ship, a squadron of six being maintained instead of the nine demanded by the Foreign Office. In the

30 Hansard's parliamentary debates, 3rd series, vol. CC, cols. 2109–33. Tenterden to Layard, 4 May and 15 June 1874, Layard Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 39135.
32 Anstey, p. 27.
early 1870s the navy was to be employed in several operations in the Niger Delta, and against pirates in the Congo river. Only at the sixth attempt, in 1875, were the latter crushed. But in contrast to the 1830s and 1860s the squadron had been too much weakened for it to remain the chief defence of British interests in the area. Official policy was more restrained and less decisive than it had been, and this, with changing international and local circumstances, was ultimately to compel the development of new instruments and policies to protect British West African interests.

Meanwhile the concurrent reduction of British colonial garrisons threatened to impede reductions on some stations, a point which Childers was quick to develop as early as October 1869. He complained to Granville that the colonial office appeared to be expecting naval support for the New Zealand colonists against the Maoris at a time when British troops were being recalled. ‘I am the more bound to call your attention to this because the tenor of Colonial Office letters recently has been in the direction of an increase in our squadrons abroad in relief of military expenditure. If that is to be the policy of the Government I think it should be considered as a whole by the Cabinet.’ Granville hastened to assure him that he had no such thought in mind. Nevertheless, he feared that the withdrawal of troops from New Zealand might encourage hostile natives, and discourage those who were friendly. Without using the navy as a substitute for troops, he hoped to impress its power upon all in that colony as far as possible. It was finally agreed that one of the first missions of the newly formed flying squadron should be to visit Auckland for ‘moral effect’ during the final departure of the troops. In practice the Australian squadron suffered no permanent diminution, and in 1875 it was in fact larger than in 1868. The Maori wars had ended in 1872, but humanitarian sentiment in Britain was insisting upon action against the exploitation and forced movement of Pacific islanders on behalf of western enterprise in Australasia and Fiji.

Nor could the admiralty expect to escape a recurrence of those occasions when it found itself with several crises and incidents on its hands at

---

34 Childers to Granville, 27 October 1869 and Granville to Childers, 27 October 1869, Granville Papers, P.R.O. 30/29/54.
the same time. Thus the Franco-Prussian war tied several British warships to French ports for the protection of British interests. In addition, in December 1870 Childers informed Granville, now foreign secretary: 'We are pressed on all sides. Our relations with Russia, the United States, China, even Greece and the Pope, bear on the strength and disposition of the Fleet. You have also been pressing about the Eastern Slave Squadron, the River Plate Squadron etc.' The foreign office was still liable to feel acute uneasiness at any sign of British naval weakness in Chinese waters, despite its determination to keep British political involvement to a minimum. As Granville put it in January 1872: 'Our interests are so enormous, and they may so easily be put in jeopardy either by the Chinese themselves, by the French, or by our merchants or missionaries, that I am sure it would be bad economy to have an insufficient force.' On the other hand, Goschen, who succeeded Childers at the admiralty in 1871, was relieved to find that Granville did not share the feeling of at least one influential member of the foreign office that a large naval force was needed to overawe the United States. Even so, Granville was perhaps a little too easy going in his resort to the admiralty—at least in their eyes—for he was driven by their complaints to protest that 'the only demands for ships which I really make are those accompanied with a recommendation. But there are many which I forward because I think the request may be granted supposing the Ships in that part of the world have nothing better to do.'

III

Despite occasional alarms and periods when there seemed more demands than ships to meet them, the reappraisal of British naval policy since the mid-1860s had achieved a level of expenditure and a distribution of the fleet which broadly safeguarded British interests as interpreted at that time. Economy and security did not seem incompatible. But Gladstone was

36 Childers to Granville, 9 December 1870, Granville Papers, P.R.O. 30/29/54.
37 Granville to Goschen, 10 January 1872, Granville Papers, P.R.O. 30/29/54.
not yet content, and from September 1871 he strove to do far more than eliminate the small increase in naval spending which the Franco-Prussian war had provoked. Gladstone hoped to save two or three times this sum, and now tried to push the estimates below £9 million, a pre-Crimean war figure. Goschen replied that his predecessor had secured such considerable savings in stores, administration and such matters that he could see no hope of further economies from that quarter. It was true that he could promise a pause in the construction of the largest ironclads, but savings here would be needed for new cruisers. The cruising fleet had suffered badly while so much effort in recent years had been expended upon the ironclads. Despite the recent reductions on the non-European stations the demand for small ships continued to outrun the supply, and old ships were being re-employed which the admiralty would have preferred to scrap. It was only by building fewer ships of all types that Goschen believed further economies could be achieved in the near future, and to do this Britain must make up her mind 'to reduce our squadrons, and to undertake less duties in every part of the world.' With some exaggeration he added: 'The fact is, half our expenditure is not for war service in the strict sense, but keeping the police of the seas and protecting semi-barbarous and barbarous men against kidnapping and various forms of outrage. Philanthropy decidedly costs money.'

For his part, Goschen doubted if the public would be content with less force. The cabinet had recently agreed to establish a parliamentary committee over the East African slave trade, and this had pronounced in favour of active measures. The committee was 'breast high for more ships notwithstanding my expenditure'. Interest in the 'Polynesian slave trade' was mounting, and more ships would probably be needed there. If the cabinet were intent upon economy, it must grapple seriously with problems of this type, and endeavour to keep the responsibilities of the navy within strict bounds. Gladstone's reply did not go beyond ineffective generalities, but it is worth quoting as a summary of his conception of British naval policy.

That for which I have been disposed to contend is that we are to have a powerful fleet in and near our own waters, and that outside of this nothing is to be maintained except for well-defined and approved purposes of actual service, and in quantities of force properly adjusted;
and not under the notion that there are to be fleets in the various quarters of the world ready when a difficulty arises with a foreign country, or an offence to our ships, then and there to deal with it with a strong hand.40

The outcome of these discussions was that the estimates for 1872 showed a reduction of only £250,000, and rising prices erased this saving in the following year, despite a reduction of 1,000 in the number of seamen and boys borne. This economy in manpower arose mainly from further reductions to the foreign stations, and by 1874 barely 11,000 were serving outside European waters. Gladstone’s thoughts, however, continued to centre on retrenchment. His government was losing ground in parliament and with the public, and he was looking to further financial triumphs—notably the abolition of the income tax—for political salvation. But as Granville commented, ‘to have a good budget you must have economy and the Army and Navy are the only resources.’ Thus of the £6,400,000 saving in gross expenditure between 1861 and 1866, the navy had provided £3,000,000; of the £6,700,000 saving between 1869 and 1873 the navy had provided £2,100,000. In both periods the navy had supplied the largest savings under all heads of expenditure. Consequently, in the winter of 1873–74, Gladstone a little wearily resumed his battle with the service ministers. He was told by Goschen that prices were still rising, that many ships needed repairs or replacements, and that an increase in the estimates was indicated. This is borne out by the subsequent Conservative estimates for 1874, which were based on Goschen’s plans. Cardwell, for the army, was only slightly more co-operative. He finally agreed to economy should it be shown to be the will of the country. His reply probably did much to persuade Gladstone to appeal to the country in February 1874.41

The ensuing election was a triumph for the Conservatives, and resulted in the implementation of Goschen’s naval policy. Ward Hunt, the new first lord, indeed hinted that supplementary estimates might be necessary, but the ensuing parliamentary debates revealed that this was a party battle rather than a fundamental challenge to British naval policy. The Conservative political secretary to the admiralty agreed that the British navy was

as strong as its next two rivals, and although the estimates were never again to fall below £10 million, naval policy continued along much the same lines under Disraeli as under Gladstone. In particular, the establishment of men remained the same, and the basic redistribution of naval strength was upheld. Even the 1877–78 war scare with Russia had little effect upon the estimates, and the pattern of expenditure was not disturbed until the public outcry at the supposed inadequacy of the navy in 1884–85.

For the navalists the late 1870s and early 1880s were the ‘Dark Ages’ in the history of the Victorian navy. A handful of experts repeatedly voiced their concern throughout the period, but to little effect, despite the revival of the French navy from the late 1870s. They were handicapped by public indifference, by the absence of any notable Anglo-French crisis, by the current state of confusion and uncertainty concerning naval design and construction in the new age of steam power, ironclads and torpedoes. The Admiralty itself was frequently in doubt as to the future of the large ironclad, and the type of fleet required in the near future, and was understandably hesitant about new expenditure. Indeed, it was so preoccupied with technical change that it was failing to see the new problems clearly in their broad strategic context. Although Sir John Colomb as early as 1867 had begun to challenge the contemporary trend towards more fortifications and land defences, it was not until the 1880s that the Blue Water School emerged as a powerful force. In the interval, the navy tended to be viewed, not as a single force to command the seas, but rather as a collection of units and squadrons maintained for widely differing roles. Naval development was thus piecemeal and hesitant. An even greater step making for economy was the displacement of the old Two-Three Power Standard by little more than a margin of security against France. Meanwhile, among the politicians only an occasional voice, such as that of Lord Carnarvon, was raised in favour of increased estimates. The ultimate outcome was a serious decline in naval matériel and efficiency. The reckoning was to come in the late 1880s.

Nevertheless, one must resist the temptation to blame the policymakers of the period 1862–74 for all the subsequent shortcomings. As

in the early 1830s, and again in the 1920s, there was much to be said for rigorous economy. The international scene, in Europe and in the world at large, favoured a reappraisal of British naval needs; a more ambitious British naval programme would have been provocative, and would have quickly saddled Britain with many obsolescent ships. The naval economies greatly facilitated the tax reductions of Gladstone, and to a lesser extent aided the financial policies of Disraeli. Despite rising costs the navy diminished as a burden on the national economy. The redistribution of the navy provides an interesting but little known parallel to the reduction of the colonial garrisons at this time, and also underlines a conscious retreat from the policies of Palmerston. Gladstone, indeed, dominates mid-Victorian naval policy much as Palmerston had dominated the earlier years. It was fitting that Gladstone's final act of resignation in 1894 should have been precipitated by his inability to prolong this period of naval economy.

**BRITISH NAVAL DISTRIBUTION, 1861-74**

The following figures are taken from *British parliamentary papers*, 1867-68 [167] vol. xliv, pp. 638–9; 1868-69 [422] vol. xxxviii, p. 480, and 1876 [225] vol. xliv, pp. 522–3. The figures in brackets are those of the number of ships on each station; the other figures give the number of men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 1</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1874</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>7,970</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>5,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Indies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>1,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>1,325</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>1,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>3,805</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>2,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Coast of America</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape of Good Hope</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>1,775</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast of Africa</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>1,868</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>1,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America and West Indies</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>3,616</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>6,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>17,474</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>7,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squadron of Evolution</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>9,485</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>4,381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total seamen, boys and marines voted | 77,000 | 69,000 | 63,000 | 60,000 |
| Total estimates | £12,640,588 | £10,392,224 | £9,996,641 | £10,440,105 |
II

BRUCE WALLER

Bismarck and Gorchakov in 1879: ‘The Two Chancellors’ War’

There has been much speculation about Bismarck’s reasons for concluding the dual alliance with Austria in the autumn of 1879. Some historians argue that he was uneasy about signs of Russian aggressiveness; others believe that he intentionally provoked the Russians in order to have a plausible reason for his long desired alliance. Where does the truth lie?

One element, perhaps more important than has hitherto been realized, was the dramatic personal and political struggle for power between Gorchakov and Bismarck which reached its peak directly before the conclusion of the Austro-German alliance. Reinhard Wittram has recently written that resentment and hate may have occasionally influenced Bismarck’s reactions, but not his overall policy.¹ Does this assessment need revising? Did Bismarck’s struggle with Gorchakov lead him down paths on which he had not originally planned to travel? Was the alliance with Austria perhaps merely an expedient in his duel with the Russian chancellor? An examination of the ‘two chancellors’ war’ will help us answer these questions.

Bismarck and Gorchakov first met at the Frankfurt Diet of the German Confederation where they represented their respective governments. Gorchakov, who was also accredited in Stuttgart, was seldom in Frankfurt except when serious trouble arose between Austria and Prussia. Then he attempted to mediate, often in a manner favourable to Austria. Bismarck, apparently, did not appreciate his activity; he regarded the Russian minister, his senior by seventeen years, as gifted and amiable, but clownish—‘a fox in wooden shoes’. Gorchakov was, he thought, a mediocre diplomat who would not advance beyond the rank of envoy to a minor court.²

As a young man Gorchakov had been very promising; in the 1820s and 1830s he had occupied important positions in London, Berlin, and Vienna. There seem to be two reasons why he was unable to advance beyond Stuttgart and Frankfurt by the early 1850s. First, he had been on bad terms with Nesselrode ever since he entered the diplomatic service. This was due partly to the rivalry between Nesselrode and his protector, Capo d'Istria, but perhaps mainly to his own tactlessness and anti-Austrian line. While at the Vienna embassy Gorchakov vigorously challenged his government's pro-Austrian policy. He had also been indirectly implicated in the Decembrist plot, a circumstance which Nicholas I could never forget. Gorchakov's advancement was therefore dependent on the political embarrassment of his two mighty opponents.

In 1859 when Bismarck was sent as Prussian envoy to Petersburg his old acquaintance was already firmly installed as foreign minister, a position which gave much more scope for a statesman as polished and gifted as was Gorchakov. Bismarck saw him differently—less clownish and more competent and adroit.

Throughout his long term as foreign minister Gorchakov liked to deal with young but promising members of the diplomatic corps. He patronized them, sometimes giving kindly advice in eloquent monologues, and sometimes scolding and chiding them. He was generally repaid with admiration for his intelligence and dexterity. In 1859 Bismarck was his grateful protégé. For many years afterwards Gorchakov regarded Bismarck as his most promising pupil, but only as Raphael could be considered the pupil of Perugino, as he later magnanimously put it. Bismarck accepted his rôle, initially out of gratitude, later out of calculation.

There is little wonder that Gorchakov and Bismarck could get along well together. They had much in common. They both had extremely


fertile minds and wide-ranging knowledge. Conscious of such gifts, these two self-confident and vain men made every effort to display them. Gorchakov and Bismarck wrote polished prose and talked well, almost compulsively; neither was a good listener. Essentially sensitive and volatile, both could be charming or devastating, just as they chose. Bismarck had greater will-power and energy; Gorchakov, the courtier, was less determined, but he was not as weak as some historians have thought. In an attempt to appear as a loyal servant of his master, he likened himself to a sponge which when squeezed by the hand of the tsar yielded the liquid with which it was filled. But in fact, he was remarkably independent and persistent. He was merely more supple than Bismarck, and his methods were more devious.

As statesmen, the Prussian Junker and the Russian grand seigneur owed much to the cabinet diplomacy of the eighteenth century. They were practitioners of raison d’État. Their policy was guided by the welfare of the state, rather than that of the nation or even the monarchy. They were, of course, monarchical and conservative, but if reason of state required, they did not hesitate to oppose the conservative sentimentality of their masters. Both also wished to restrain the aggressiveness of the generals and the military party.

As cabinet statesmen, Gorchakov and Bismarck concerned themselves mainly with the activity of other cabinets. For both the rôle of personalities with their likes and dislikes was extremely important. Political opponents were personal enemies who should be defeated or replaced at all costs. Neither fully realized that the days had passed when personal feuds could be fought between cabinet statesmen without having any important long term effects on the policy of the states involved.

Gorchakov and Bismarck took a short term view of diplomacy; they regarded it as a series of manoeuvres on constantly shifting terrain. Any combination was theoretically possible. That is why both were as much concerned with keeping the rest of Europe in a state of ‘balanced tensions’ as they were with winning friends and allies for themselves. This meant that allies should not be allowed to become too friendly with one another, or with anyone else. In order to insure the preservation of a healthy state of tension, both Gorchakov and Bismarck had to indulge in involved and not dissimilar tactics. Allies were encouraged to co-operate with one

6 Raschdau, loc. cit.
Bruce Waller

another when this was least likely; but, when they seemed to be too friendly, support was withdrawn and friction stimulated.

Gorchakov and Bismarck were conservative cabinet statesmen at the dawn of a new age; both perceived the revolutionary trends of nationalism and liberalism—if not their ultimate consequences—and attempted to use them for their own ends. But, inevitably perhaps, they were only partly successful. For both statesmen 1848, its aftermath, and the Crimean War were the decisive influences in the formation of their own particular kind of raison d'État—essentially a development of eighteenth-century diplomacy which sought to use, but not to make important concessions to the rising current of nationalism. Both felt their states had been humiliated by their natural ally against revolution, the Austria of Schwarzenberg and Buol. In reaction to this both adopted an approach to statecraft similar to that of Schwarzenberg and used it against Austria. Thus the wave of political realism after 1848 became a tide which neither Bismarck nor Gorchakov had turned, but both helped to swell.

Both statesmen were well acquainted with the culture of the most important European states; neither was much interested in or concerned with the non-European world. From a political point of view, Europe for them was little more than the field on which balance of power diplomacy was carried out. Nevertheless, they were both 'European' statesmen, not in the sense that they were willing to make sacrifices for some ideal of European harmony or unity, but rather in their belief that the ambitions of the several states were strictly limited by the vital interests of the others. This concept of Europe was widely different from, for instance, Peter Shuvalov's7 conservative European ideal, or the liberal and cosmopolitan Europe of which Gladstone dreamed. Both Bismarck and Gorchakov talked of conservative solidarity when it was advantageous for them to do so, but when their own interests or those of their states required an alliance with the revolutionary forces of the day, they were among the first to advocate it. Gorchakov's repeated invocation of 'Europe' and Bismarck's oft quoted rebuttal, 'qui parle Europe a tort; notion géographique', have tended to obscure this basic similarity. In this respect the essential difference between the two was their attitude towards a congress, the incorporation of the 'Concert of Europe'. Gorchakov was a warm advocate of the 'con-

7 Peter A. Shuvalov (1827–89), 1866 chief of the Third Section, 1874–9 Russian ambassador in London.
gress' idea for practical reasons, that is, to prevent other states from increasing their power, or to sanction changes he had already made. Bismarck opposed congresses; he felt that, if necessary, concerted action could be achieved by other, less showy, but more effective means. Thus, even regarding the idea of a European congress Bismarck and Gorchakov (except for the last few years of his career) were guided primarily by practical considerations. In this respect Bismarck was outspoken enough, but behind Gorchakov's illusive eloquence was a similarly practical approach.

How can one explain the subsequent quarrel between these two evidently very close and in many ways quite similar statesmen?

Initially raison d'état suggested co-operation, but later the cooling of Russo-Prussian relations. As long as co-operation was mutually beneficial, the bonds of trust and friendship were strong enough to withstand easily several minor disagreements. Even after 1866 when the mutual advantages of continued co-operation became increasingly problematical, friendship was formally maintained, but as Russo-German rivalry began to develop their relationship became based on calculation. Ostensibly cordial personal relations were maintained on this level throughout the early 1870s in spite of repeated signs of opposition in the material interests of Russia and Germany.

In 1875 the cordiality came to an abrupt end, and shortly thereafter, the feud started. There were several reasons for this. In the late sixties and early seventies Gorchakov had abundantly shown that he disliked the rapid extension of Prussian power and was sceptical about any further conquests; he also strongly disapproved of the liberal trend in Bismarck's domestic policy which, he thought, endangered the monarchical principle. Bismarck strove to secure continued co-operation by the use of flattery (but not always tact), the emphasis on the conservative character of Germany, and by the promise of support for Russian ambitions in the east. This presupposed a quid pro quo in the west. These efforts culminated in the Radowitz mission at the beginning of 1875. A new method, that of

8 G.W., vol. vi–c, p. 34; Semanov regards the period 1872–75 as the high point in the struggle between Gorchakov and Bismarck, pp. 95–101.

indirect intimidation, was tried in the 'war-in-sight' crisis which was the result of the relative failure of Radowitz's mission. The desire to force Gorchakov to take sides against France was probably one of the reasons for provoking this crisis, but just the opposite happened.

Some of Gorchakov's personal motives\textsuperscript{10} for the rôle he played in this episode have often been stressed, but both he and Alexander had good political reasons for wanting to show Bismarck that he had gone too far. They were worried that he might do something rash; even Bismarck's friend Shuvalov thought that he was a little out of his mind at the time.\textsuperscript{11} Gorchakov realized that a powerful Germany could be a valuable ally and a counterweight to Austria and France, but any further aggrandizement would threaten Russia. This is why in Berlin in 1872 and 1875 he spoke out firmly for France, not because he was pro-French, but because he was Russian, a fact he loved to stress.\textsuperscript{12}

Bismarck was, of course, extremely upset by the intervention, and especially by the manner in which it was carried out. He was disappointed because his gamble had failed; still, neither the substance of the Russian position nor Gorchakov's attitude can have surprised him since 'friendship' between the two statesmen had for some time been largely formal. Beneath the surface of cordial relations, there had been considerable tension. Alexander's antagonism may very well have disturbed him more because in the past he had attempted to circumvent Gorchakov by appealing directly to the tsar, recalling the traditional friendship of the two monarchs and the need for conservative solidarity, an indirect thrust at the


\textsuperscript{10} Historians tend to overlook the fact that Gorchakov's position had been badly weakened by his setback in the Stremukhov affair. See Langenau's memoirs, p. 71. Gorchakov, therefore, welcomed the opportunity to consolidate his position by a resounding victory.


Bismarck and Gorchakov in 1879: 'The Two Chancellors' War'

Russian chancellor,\textsuperscript{13} who, incidentally, used the same tactics on him. At any rate, Bismarck did not immediately begin to show great irritation about Gorchakov's intervention.\textsuperscript{14} If it had not been for other factors, the 'war-in-sight' crisis might very well never have marked a turning point in Russo-German relations. What were these things?

Shortly after the 'war-in-sight' alarm the Eastern crisis of 1875–78 broke. It is interesting to note that Bismarck did not begin to show consistent signs of irritation about Gorchakov's rôle in the spring of 1875 until Russia was obviously becoming involved in Balkan affairs. In his countless stories about the episode the rôle he assigned to Gorchakov gradually assumed larger proportions, reaching its most extreme form by 1878.

Up to 1871 it was in the interest of both countries to co-operate closely with one another because both hoped to alter the international status quo. Between 1871 and 1875 neither had ambitious schemes, but, owing to the strain on relations with France caused by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, Bismarck needed Russian support more than Russia needed his. That is why the suspicious Gorchakov could take a firm line, whereas Bismarck was on the defensive. Towards the end of 1875 the situation was reversed. Bismarck, remembering Gorchakov's activity not only in 1875 but in the whole period since 1866, was determined to give as little as possible unless Russia agreed at least to guarantee Alsace-Lorraine, that is, to accept German ascendancy. Gorchakov would ideally have liked the re-establishment of German dualism; he was unwilling to make a concession which, he thought, was not in Russian interests. The more Russia became involved in the Balkan crisis the better was Bismarck's bargaining position, but Gorchakov refused to give way. Thus began another, unique, phase in the age-old struggle for European hegemony; it was the last of such battles waged as a feud between cabinet statesmen.

Why did this political struggle lead quickly to a bitter personal feud between Gorchakov and Bismarck? Part of the answer can be found in the manner Gorchakov used his relatively advantageous position between 1866 and 1875. Up to a point his policy was justified, but Bismarck felt personally injured just the same.

\textsuperscript{13} See, for instance, H. Holborn, 'Bismarck und Schuwalow im Jahre 1875', H[istorische] Z[eitschrift], vol. cxxx, 1924, doc. no. 1.

\textsuperscript{14} Throughout the latter part of 1875 Bismarck criticized mainly the rôle of others; it was not until December that Gorchakov emerged as the principal culprit. R. Wittram, 'Bismarck und Gorčakov . . .', pp. 239 f.; Krasnii Arkhiv, 1938, p. 113.
Bruce Waller

The rôle played by Peter Shuvalov explains much. He was a hard-headed conservative\(^\text{15}\) Russian statesman and a formidable opponent of Gorchakov. In the late sixties and early seventies he had been, perhaps, more influential than Gorchakov, but was outmanoeuvred and ‘put on ice’ in 1874, that is, sent off to the embassy in London. Shuvalov did not willingly go abroad and had a personal interest in repaying his powerful rival. One of the main weapons in his arsenal was his friendship with Bismarck, whom he convinced that Gorchakov alone was Germany’s greatest enemy\(^\text{16}\) and that once he, Shuvalov, was established in power mutual relations would immediately improve. Bismarck had great faith in him, but the Russian ambassador was by no means as trustworthy and pro-German as Bismarck and others thought.\(^\text{17}\) Whether once foreign minister he would have followed the same line is an open question.

When an envoy in Petersburg Bismarck had admired elegant and sophisticated Russian society; until the end of his life he remained attracted to it. But he also was quite aware of its weaknesses, which in the years 1859 to 1862 were particularly apparent. Subsequently the situation had become less precarious; but by the mid-seventies serious signs of disruption were again in evidence. It was partly through Shuvalov that Bismarck’s attention was drawn to the rapidly worsening situation which could be dated from the Russian’s dismissal as head of the Third Section,\(^\text{18}\) or more

\(^{15}\) Sumner’s assessment (p. 29) of Shuvalov as ‘wholly reactionary’ may be appropriate for his work as head of the Third Section, although Dolgorukov is probably nearer the truth when he describes Shuvalov’s early thought as non-political (p. 194). By the late 1870s, however, Shuvalov’s thinking had considerably matured; he advocated constitutional reforms. Schweinitz, Denkwürdigkeiten des Botschafters General von Schweinitz, Berlin, 1927, vol. II, pp. 28, 48; Kálnoky to Haymerle, Petersburg, 6 March 1880, no. 15 E, W.S., PA, x, 75.

\(^{16}\) H. Holborn, H.Z., vol. cxxxi, 1924, doc. no. 5. Later Shuvalov incited Bismarck against two other personal enemies: Grand Duke Constantine, and the minister of war, Miliutin. Schweinitz to Bismarck, Petersburg, 1 May 1880, no. 132 confidential, G.F.O., Russland 61; Frederick William to [Bismarck], Potsdam, 12 May 1881, G.F.O., Russland 61, secret; Schweinitz to Bismarck, Petersburg, 6 February 1880, no. 38 most confidential, G.F.O., Russland 69.

\(^{17}\) R. Wittram, ‘Bismarck und Gorčakov . . .’, pp. 229 f; T. W. Legh, vol. II, pp. 77, 88; Langenau’s memoirs, pp. 13 f, 42 f. Langenau to Andrásy, Petersburg, 2 September 1874, no. 45, A–E réservé, W.S., PA, x, 66; Kálnoky to Haymerle, Petersburg, 24 March 1880, no. 18 D secret, W.S., PA, x, 75.

\(^{18}\) Langenau to Andrásy, Petersburg, 27 March 1878, no. 16 C confidential, W.S., PA, x, 72.
accurately, from the beginning of the Eastern crisis. Particularly in the second year of the crisis, public opinion seemed to run away with the government. Bismarck was determined to take advantage of these weaknesses, at first in the hope that a little bloodletting would bring Russia to her senses (that is, to turn more conservative and follow his leadership), and then in the belief that a change in ministers might bring about the desired alteration. For Bismarck it must have seemed quite logical to hope for Gorchakov’s final embarrassment and the accession of the sensible, conservative, and supposedly pro-German Shuvalov. His approach had a positive side, but it eventually miscarried. Up to the summer of 1879 when Bismarck finally realized that Shuvalov’s candidature had failed he hoped for a turn for the better in Russia. He thought that a determined conservative government would be able to overcome the process of decomposition. Afterwards, however, he lost faith in the possibility of a recovery and sought refuge in a policy of expedients. Throughout the 1880s Bismarck became increasingly pessimistic about Russian conditions. Towards the end of the decade he apparently expected a real improvement in mutual relations only if Russia were to disintegrate.

The change in Bismarck’s relatively optimistic Russian policy to an increasingly pessimistic line is an interesting symptom of the change in the general character of his domestic and foreign policy at the end of the seventies, for the things which disturbed him on the Russian scene made him apprehensive in Germany. Can one not assume that Bismarck’s abandonment of liberalism in this period was partly an attempt to prevent the situation at home from deteriorating in the same way as in Russia? And does not his domestic policy in the 1880s reflect the same kind of pessimism about the future? At any rate, his advocacy of Shuvalov’s candidature and its subsequent failure mark the most important turning point since the establishment of the Empire, not only in Bismarck’s Russian policy, but also in the whole fabric of his domestic and foreign policy. A period of relative optimism and liberalism was followed by one of conservatism and pessimistic expedients.

Starting with December 1875 Bismarck’s previously sporadic displays of irritation at Gorchakov’s policy or behaviour assumed the proportions of a campaign against him. Originally the personal feud was but one aspect of a larger and extremely subtle struggle for leadership. Bismarck did what he could to involve the Russians in difficulties so that they could
not threaten German security, but would themselves be grateful even for Platonic support. Thus Germany would remain on good terms with England, Austria, and Russia, without being under serious obligation to any of these powers. Isolated Russian involvement in war with Turkey was ideal for this purpose. Bismarck also hoped by this policy—which amounted to a short-term weakening of Russia—to induce the tsar to strengthen and reform the government. Gorchakov, therefore, had to go. In 1876 Bismarck dropped any pretence of cordial personal relations. In private conversations he criticized him and praised Shuvalov. Using tactics reminiscent of his struggle with Austria in Frankfurt, he complained to Gorchakov and the tsar about Russian breaches in international etiquette. Parallel with this, partly in order to disguise his hostility to Gorchakov and partly to aid Shuvalov, Bismarck gave assurances of support if Russia were to become materially involved in the Eastern crisis. In fact, this was merely non-committal talk and was interpreted as such by the Russians. It backfired when in the autumn of 1876 he was pressed to take a definite stand; he had to refuse to confirm his promise in precise language. Although his ambiguous policy became transparent he was not deterred; but the subtlety which characterized his approach to Alexander in the late summer of 1876 was dropped; from December 1876 onwards he simply urged the Russians to go to war, perhaps all the more willingly, because at the beginning of 1877 Gorchakov and other Russian statesmen were peacefully inclined. Bismarck hoped that the war would weaken Russia and completely embarrass Gorchakov, thus bringing Shuvalov and a conservative policy to the fore.

The war, however, did not seriously compromise Gorchakov, because although until the summer of 1876 he had opposed it, he then adroitly drifted along with the current of public opinion and the whims of the tsar.

21 R. Wittram’s rejection of Shuvalov’s contention that Bismarck ‘drove’ Russia to war is unconvinced in the light of the material printed by Goriainow and S. S. Tatishchev, Imperator Aleksandr II, ego zhizni i tsarstvovanie, Petersburg, 1903, 2 vols., as well as the memoirs of Miliutin, Reutern, Ignatiev, and Valuev; Bülow to Schweinitz, 2 and 5 January 1877, nos. 4 and 17 secret, G.F.O., Russland 66.
Bismarck and Gorchakov in 1879: ‘The Two Chancellors’ War’

He carefully prepared the war, but when it broke out he retired to enforced but fortunate isolation. He was not personally identified with the ill-considered peace of San Stefano, of which he did not approve. Therefore, in the negotiations leading up to the Congress of Berlin, and also thereafter, he could easily play the rôle of a moderate but fervent Russian and good servant of the tsar, just as he had done after the Crimean War. Shuvalov, on the other hand, had been too ‘European’ throughout the crisis. The weakness of his position was that he could not preach moderation in the name of the tsar and the nation because he had not been willing to go part of the way with them; but Gorchakov had, and the fact that he was not suspect was a great asset in the ensuing struggle. Nevertheless, in the period between the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin it was generally held that Shuvalov would soon be appointed foreign minister. Gorchakov was ailing and had apparently lost favour with the tsar. In the pre-Congress negotiations Bismarck made little attempt to hide his dislike for his rival; and although the tsar was treated with courtesy, and Bismarck gave some spontaneous help as a mediator, his brusque rejection of Gorchakov’s rather abrupt demands for substantial support was regarded in Petersburg as a sign of ill will. Shuvalov, who counted on Bismarck’s assistance in his own private feud with Gorchakov, received little more than mere sympathy.

Even before the Congress Bismarck’s policy of opposition to Gorchakov and platonic support for Shuvalov was problematical. If this was so in Shuvalov’s heyday, it was even more so after the Congress when his star began to fade.

The ‘two chancellors’ war’ was begun when Bismarck learned that Gorchakov would represent Russia at the Congress. He told Shuvalov: ‘Tout est changé; nous resterons personellement amis pendant le congrès; mais je ne permettrai pas au prince Gortschakoff de monter une seconde fois sur mes épaules pour s’en faire un piédestal.’

From the Congress in mid-1878 to the beginning of 1880 the ‘two


chancellors' war' became the central feature in Russo-German relations. Since both Gorchakov and Bismarck wanted to play the leading rôle in Europe, each sought to discredit the other. But the feud rapidly assumed such proportions that the character of Russo-German relations was changed much more than either had wanted at the outset; the struggle for hegemony led to the estrangement of the two neighbouring countries.

Gorchakov wanted to return to the days of Nesselrode, when Russia had been the arbiter of German affairs; he felt that Bismarck alone kept the German emperor from following a pro-Russian line. Bismarck wanted Russia to recognize the altered balance of power and follow his own lead; he believed that his rival sabotaged Alexander's Germanophile policy in favour of the French. Each chancellor regarded the other as unreliable and dangerously radical.

At the Congress of Berlin Bismarck assumed the initiative and retained it till the beginning of 1880; Gorchakov retaliated as best he could. Schüssler has viewed the conflict in terms of a battle for emancipation from Russian tutelage. Although Germany was already 'emancipated', Bismarck probably regarded his struggle in a similar light.\(^{24}\) The chancellor—as many Germans—was perhaps unduly sensitive to what he regarded as unreasonable treatment reminiscent of the days of national weakness. He thought it was not enough to stand firmly and ward off unjustified demands. But the exclusion of the possibility of their repetition was a goal which could only be attained by a significant victory over Gorchakov. In other words, it was not 'emancipation' that Bismarck wanted, but acknowledgement of his leadership.

Bismarck's Russian policy during and after the Congress had two distinct sides, each with its personal and political aspect. The negative side, the predominant one, was the personal campaign against Gorchakov and the refusal to support what he considered as Russia's dangerously immodest and irresponsible claims. The positive side was reflected by his support of Shuvalov and what he regarded as Russia's rational and just claims. By means of this complicated scheme Bismarck hoped to see Shuvalov replace Gorchakov; the change of personnel was to be the testimony of the renunciation of irresponsible diplomacy. In 1878 and 1879 Bismarck

\(^{24}\) W. Schüssler, Deutschland zwischen Russland und England, Leipzig, 1940, pp. 11–14; see, for instance, Bismarck's marginal notes on Schweinitz to Bismarck, Petersburg, 11 February 1880, no. 44 secret, G.F.O., Russland 69.
expected great things from such a change; later he grew increasingly pessimistic.

Although not new, this rather involved policy was characteristic of the year 1879; it did not date merely from the Congress, but since then it was intensified and became more important in its effect on the international political scene.

How did Bismarck conduct his feud and how did Gorchakov react? In poor health when he arrived in Berlin for the Congress, Gorchakov made a particularly bad impression on most of the participants. Shuvalov, with hardly loyal frankness, did what he could to reinforce this impression. He assured Andrássy, for example, that ‘the old man [Gorchakov] is full of arrogance and vanity, and [will] spoil everything’. Bismarck ostentatiously supported Shuvalov in several major and minor issues, but treated the Russian chancellor with a minimum of formal courtesy. He hoped in this way to secure a sizeable diplomatic victory for Shuvalov who could then brush aside Gorchakov. As if to make his point perfectly clear, Bismarck granted an interview during the Congress to the well-known Times correspondent, Blowitz, in which he is reported to have said: ‘But for the affair of 1875, he [Gorchakov] would not be where he is, and would not have undergone the political defeat he has just experienced.’ Immediately after the Congress Bismarck wanted the German press to point out Gorchakov’s mistakes and stress that he was ‘a calamity for Russia and her friends; not even the best intentions of the latter would suffice to make up for the consequences of his foolishness.’

By the time Blowitz’s article was printed on 7 September Bismarck had calmed down and had it disavowed by the government press arguing that although Russia’s diplomacy had made him wary, his policy had not changed. At the same time, however, he privately admitted that Blowitz’s ‘revelations’ were essentially accurate. What bothered him

27 Gorchakov said later that Bismarck had spoken in a similar vein to him at the Congress. Langenau to Andrássy, Petersburg, 14 August 1878, confidential, W.S., PA, x, 71.
28 Bismarck to G.F.O., Gastein, 13 September 1878, telegram no. 37, G.F.O., IABq 128.
was, in fact, not their substance, but the direct attribution of Gorchakov's defeat in Berlin to his own activity. In the following twelve months he wished this line to be held fast by the press. Then, when German policy obviously had changed, this was to be attributed to the irresponsible and threatening attitude of Russia, not to a personal grudge.

Clearly, the newspaper campaign against Gorchakov was instigated by Bismarck during the Congress. Then, when in August Gorchakov went on a long leave, it was continued in the hope to give him thereby the coup de grâce. The result was somewhat different.

During the Congress, as well as afterwards, Gorchakov had done his best to burden Bismarck with the blame for Russia's diplomatic setback. The hostility of the German newspapers after the Congress seemed to substantiate his argument. Until then the outbursts of the Russian press against the Berlin settlement had not been directed particularly against Germany; feeling ran the highest perhaps against the Austrians. But the press began to turn its attention more towards Germany. It refused to discuss the 'mistakes' supposedly committed by its own government, choosing instead to make ironical observations on the 'services' rendered by Germany.

When Bismarck learned that part of the Russian press attacked him and that another part minimized the importance of the Blowitz article, saying that The Times probably wished to injure Russo-German relations, he decided to speak more plainly. He drafted an article, in which the new element is the emphasis on the diplomatic skill of Shuvalov, which next to the bravery of the army had assured the Russians their great gains resulting from the war.

The Russian press understood fully the significance of this hint, but did not draw the conclusions from it which Bismarck had hoped. The reaction of the Golos was probably typical; it maintained indignantly that the

---

29 W. Windelband, Bismarck und die europäischen Grossmächte 1879–1885, Essen, 2nd ed., 1942, p. 52, wrongly regards Bismarck's interference in the press campaign as a defensive measure dating from the beginning of 1879.

30 I. Grüning, Die russische öffentliche Meinung und ihre Stellung zu den Grossmächten 1878–1894, Berlin, 1929, pp. 56 ff.; Mayr to Andrássy, Petersburg, 16 September 1878, W.S., PA, x, 71; Trauttenberg to Andrássy, Berlin, 14 September 1878, W.S., PA, iii, 113; Berchem to Bismarck, Petersburg, 1 September 1878, no. 315, G.F.O., IABi 53.

powers would not allow themselves to be influenced by Germany in the choice of their diplomats.

The position of the liberal and previously not particularly anti-German Golos is worthy of note. Hitherto attacks on the outside world had been led by the nationalistic Moscow press. In 1879 the liberal Petersburg press guided by the Golos was in the front rank in the battle with Bismarck. This was partly due to his break with the liberals and advocacy of a protective tariff; but it was also due to official inspiration. The result was that the nationalist opposition to Germany was strengthened by the liberals. The conservatives were the only important group which remained, temporarily, aloof. When in the 1880s they fell under the spell of the nationalists, anti-German feelings in Russia were well-nigh universal amongst the leading classes.32

In spite of reports by the German representatives in Petersburg that Shuvalov was losing ground with the tsar,33 Bismarck probably still believed that his position had improved and that all that was necessary was to get rid of Gorchakov. In October a further step was taken in his feud; he decided to complain in Petersburg about the constant flirtings of the Russian press with France. Gorchakov was still away on leave, so this activity was attributed to Jomini, his protégé in the foreign ministry. The following month Bismarck sallied forth again. Schweinitz, the German ambassador in Petersburg, was instructed to argue that Gorchakov had not only flirted with the French, but had gone quite far with the pourparlers for an alliance. Unfortunately, no evidence for this contention was offered except that French papers had recently confessed the extent to which the feelers had actually gone.34 Gorchakov's personal inclinations for the French are sufficiently well known, but it is highly unlikely that any negotiations had actually been initiated at this date,35 or for that matter, in

32 S. Skazkin, Konets avstro-russko-germanskogo soiuza, Moscow, 1928, pp. 65–76.
33 Berchem to Bülow, Petersburg, 17 July 1878; Werder to William, Tsarskoe Selo, 6 August 1878, no. 21, G.F.O. IABi 53; Berchem to Bülow, Petersburg, 27 July 1878, secret, G.F.O. IABi 53 secreta. The French and Austrian ambassadors were also sceptical of Shuvalov's chances: D.D.F., vol. ii, no. 345; Holstein: Note of 7 December 1878, G.F.O., IABi 53; Langenau to Andrassy, Petersburg, 31 July 1878 confidential, W.S., PA, x, 71.
34 Bülow to Berchem, 11 October 1878, no. 595, G.F.O., IABi 60; Bülow to Schweinitz, 11 November 1878, no. 665, G.F.O., IABi 53.
35 In fact, Franco-Russian relations immediately after the Congress were at a low point. Berchem to Bismarck, Petersburg, 29 July 1878, no. 229, G.F.O., IABi 53.
1879 when Bismarck revived this complaint. His desire to be rid of Gorchakov may very well have been heightened by the realization that, if Balkan problems became less serious, the attention of the powers would be drawn to Alsace-Lorraine. This was no enticing eventuality as long as his powerful rival was in office and the spectre of a Franco-Russian alliance haunted him.

He repeatedly stressed that his growing coolness towards Russia was not due to a personal grudge, but even the most pro-German Russians found this hard to believe. In fact, his increasingly severe attacks on Gorchakov had not by the end of 1878 appreciably influenced his overall Russian policy. But this was soon to change, because when Gorchakov returned to office in December he was in a position to retaliate. It was one thing for the German chancellor to strike out when his rival was away from the centre of power and out of touch with affairs; it was an entirely different matter to grapple with an accomplished statesman who, in spite of definite signs of senility, was still capable of defending himself.

By the end of 1878 Bismarck had already exhausted his store of ammunition which could be used to combat Gorchakov personally. He treated his Russian opponent with a minimum of formal courtesy; in private and official conversations he praised Shuvalov and indulged in tirades aimed at discrediting Gorchakov, associating him with the revolutionary principle, and ridiculing his foreign policy; he had mobilized the press and kept it supplied with weapons; and he had gone so far as to complain about him in Petersburg. If Bismarck intended to tighten the screws in 1879, he would have to use political pressure.

But till the end of 1878 he had not reached this stage. His problem in the last half of 1878 was to support Russia enough to enable close co-operation once Shuvalov had taken over, but not so much that Germany would become estranged from the western powers and Austria. How successfully was this problem solved?

At the Congress and in the two months following he consistently supported moderate Russian policy hoping thereby to strengthen Shuva-

---

36 Bismarck resisted pressure to follow a definitely anti-Russian line. M. Müller, *Die Bedeutung des Berliner Kongresses für die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen*, Leipzig, 1927, pp. 65 ff.; Frederick William to G.F.O., 29 October 1878, most confidential; H. Bismarck to Bülow, Friedrichruhe, 2 November 1878, G.F.O., IABq 133 secreta.

37 H. Bismarck to Bülow, Friedrichruhe, 1 January 1879, G.F.O., IABI 60.
lov's hand. But when in October serious tension in the Balkans reappeared, he became much more cautious. He did not want to support a more extreme Russian line because he was afraid this would consolidate Gorchakov's position and damage relations with the rest of Europe. The trouble was, however, that Bismarck also failed to support Shuvalov effectively in his efforts to resuscitate the Dreikaiserbund. One of Bismarck's favourite tactics was to make promises to Shuvalov or his friends which he was not prepared to make through the usual channels. Accordingly, in a conversation with Greig, the new Russian minister of finance, on 14 October Bismarck encouraged the Russians to attempt a restoration of the Dreikaiserbund; he promised moral and diplomatic support, but at the critical moment he neglected to give any. Shuvalov failed; the tsar lost faith in him and was disappointed with Bismarck. Russia started to follow a more independent line and Gorchakov and his circle began to argue consistently against the Dreikaiserbund.38

As far as Bismarck was concerned the year ended on a rather discordant note. When at the beginning of December Gorchakov passed through Berlin, he reprimanded the Austrians and Germans; he also took the trouble to remind the kaiser of his services for the peace in the spring of 1875.39

Gorchakov had not lost his self-confidence, but in other respects he had degenerated considerably. Those who saw him in Berlin were impressed by his recovered physical condition, but almost everyone doubted his ability to direct foreign affairs successfully.

Gorchakov's return to office really marks the failure of the attempt to secure his retirement. Bismarck would have done well to take this defeat with good grace, but in the coming year it became increasingly clear that he had set out to get rid of his rival at all costs. At first the only visible result on the Russian side was that Gorchakov, his circle, and the tsar grew more irritated.

The positive side of Bismarck's policy was no more successful. On Christmas day he learned that Shuvalov, who was just as dismayed at Gorchakov's return to power, had formally offered to resign. Now that Shuvalov had forced the issue it was hardly likely that the tsar would

38 Miliutin, vol. iii, 8–9 November 1878; Tatischev, vol. ii, pp. 533–36; Skazkin, pp. 64 f., 70, 77; Bushuev, p. 107.
39 Bülow to Schweinitz, 18 December 1878, no. 719, G.F.O., IABi 53.
decide in his favour. With a little more active support for those things with which he was most closely associated his chances would have been better, but this Bismarck had not given. The rather weak assistance in the details of the treaty execution did not matter much; and the open praise of Shuvalov was detrimental,40 for the tsar surely wondered whether Bismarck's candidate could possibly be good for Russia.

Gorchakov had barely returned to Petersburg when Bismarck extended the scope of his previously predominantly personal attack. By means of a wide-ranging diplomatic action, he attempted to put severe pressure on Gorchakov and to keep Russia isolated. First, he made it clear that he would not support Russian Balkan subterfuge.41 In two matters—the revocation of Article V of the Treaty of Prague,42 and precautionary measures against the outbreak of the plague in Russia—he co-operated ostentatiously with Austria in a manner calculated to irritate the Russians. In addition to this Bismarck encouraged France and Britain to follow an energetic line in the Mediterranean in the hope that they would thereby find co-operation with Russia difficult.43 Thus, in the spring of 1879 Russia was completely isolated. At the same time, to make matters worse, Bismarck initiated discussion on a new comprehensive tariff bill. He seemed to make a point of fighting vigorously for those aspects of the bill which were directed against Russia. There were, of course, also other reasons for all these things, but the common denominator was the desire to embarrass Gorchakov; considered together they form a coherent picture.

Gorchakov keenly felt the attacks which had been aimed at him in the previous few months, and he understood the significance of the German chancellor's political manoeuvres. Seeking to make a virtue of necessity, he advocated and began to implement a policy of 'free hands' in regard to

40 Mayr to Andrassy, Petersburg, 8 October 1878, W.S., PA, x, 71; Langenau to Andrassy, Petersburg, 26 March 1879, confidential, W.S., PA, x, 74; Kálnoky to Haymerle, Petersburg, 24 March 1880, no. 18-D secret, W.S., PA, x, 75; Plunkett to Salisbury, Petersburg, 15 November 1879, no. 592, F.O. 65/1048; D.D.F., vol. ii, no. 345.
41 H. Bismarck to Bülow, Friedrichsruhe, 20 December 1878, G.F.O., IABq 133, iv.
42 Article V provided for a plebiscite in Northern Schleswig.
Germany and Austria. He organized the counter-attack. He spurred on the Russian and pro-Russian foreign press, displayed his sympathy for Beaconsfield, made a fumbling attempt at a rapprochement with England which Shuvalov quickly betrayed to the Germans, and was behind a strongly pro-French movement in Petersburg governmental circles.44 The occasion of the Austro-German measures taken against the plague gave him the opportunity he wanted to repay Bismarck and to protest directly to him. The Russian ambassador in Berlin announced that the tsar was ‘froisse’ and ‘very dissatisfied’.45

Bismarck was furious, all the more so because Giers and Alexander were, in fact, on Gorchakov’s side.46 Since Bismarck’s campaign aimed at hitting his rival, not the tsar or the moderate elements, it was obviously not working. Nevertheless, he wished to complain informally in Petersburg about Gorchakov’s ‘senile nonsense’. A month later the German ambassador was informed that in spite of Gorchakov’s activity Berlin would remain calm; but it could not be forgotten that Russia had threatened to ally with France where at the moment anything was possible, even the red flag prophesied by Treitschke.47

In addition to these informal protests, which were intended to reach the ear of the tsar, the newspaper duel was revived,48 and the efforts to isolate Russia were continued.

When in February 1879 Russia and Turkey signed the final peace treaty Andrássy congratulated Gorchakov for his ‘statesmanlike greatness’. When


45 Bülow memorandum, 2 February 1879, G.F.O., Russland 61 secret.


47 Bülow to Bismarck, 3 February 1879, dispatch no. 21; Bülow to Schweinitz, 4 February and 9 March 1879, dispatches nos. 56 and 122 confidential and secret, G.F.O., Russland 61 secret; cf. Skazkin, pp. 76 f.

Bismarck learned of this he was more than a little upset. Andrásy was told that it was questionable whether such a demonstration would bear fruit; Gorchakov regarded such ovations as justified tribute, and they often had only the effect of increasing his already highly developed self-confidence and making him even more intractable and pretentious. In the past he, Bismarck, had attempted such gratification of Gorchakov’s vanity as a sort of homeopathic cure, but only discovered that the antidote, which was necessary afterwards, had a worse effect than the medicine. In the following weeks Bismarck continued to remind Andrásy that he wished to ‘travel the same path’, and that Gorchakov was responsible for a good deal of the difficulties yet to be surmounted in the Balkan peninsula.49

At the same time he did his best to arouse English and French suspicions of Russia and especially Gorchakov.50

When throughout February and March Bismarck heard suspicious but untrue stories of Franco-Russian co-operation in the Balkans which he attributed to Gorchakov, he decided to take the gravest step yet in his battle. General Werder, the German military representative to the tsar, was sent to Petersburg to complain directly to Alexander. He was authorized to say frankly that Gorchakov was ruining Russian foreign policy, or at least relations with Germany; Russia’s fundamental mistake in the Balkan crisis had been the alienation of Austria through the failure to reach a timely understanding with her; the attempt to burden Germany with the responsibility for the natural consequences of this mistake was estranging Russia’s powerful and perhaps only friend.51

In his own words, Werder’s conversation with the tsar appeared like an indictment of Gorchakov.52 This was certainly plainer language than the

49 Schweinitz to G.F.O., Petersburg, 20 February 1879, dispatch no. 47; Bülow to Reuss, 26 February 1879, dispatch no. 103, G.F.O., IABq 133; Bülow to Reuss, 28 February 1879, dispatch no. 113, G.F.O., IABq 133, viii; Bülow to Reuss, 18 March 1879, dispatch no. 167 secret, G.F.O., IABq 133, iv; Bülow to Reuss, 9 and 12 April 1879, dispatches nos. 147 and 157, G.F.O., IABq 133, vii; D.D.F., vol. ii, nos. 409, 411.


51 Bülow to Reuss, 20 March 1879, dispatch no. 174 most confidential, G.F.O., Russland 61 secreta; Windelband, p. 53.

tsar was to use in August; but it was without positive effect. Gorchakov had lost a great deal of influence, but Alexander's stubbornness in refusing to release his aged minister could hardly have been lessened by this massive pressure.

Both the newspaper campaign and Werder's mission are symptomatic for the trend of Bismarck's Russian policy. The tension had now reached such heights that his carefully maintained distinction between Gorchakov and the Russian government or the tsar was becoming all the more unreal because of his comprehensive diplomatic manoeuvres resulting willy-nilly in the isolation of the Russian Empire. In comparison to this Bismarck's continued support in those matters where he thought Russian aims justified weighed but little; and although Shuvalov was praised again in the press Bismarck found it difficult to support him in the business of day-to-day diplomacy.

Since the Werder mission involved quite a large element of risk, Bismarck felt the necessity to seek reinsurance from Austria. Andrassy was informed that relations with Austria had become more intimate as a result of recent experiences. He was assured that Russia had always been and still was advised to seek an agreement with Austria which Germany, in turn, would willingly join. But this advice did not imply any suggestion to avoid intimate relations with England. Bismarck was preparing the way for an alternative orientation in case Russia should not come round; six months later he was to scout the terrain more thoroughly. At the beginning of April, however, if Gorchakov had been dismissed, the way for a rapprochement with Russia would have been clear. Up to this point Bismarck had taken great pains to direct his ill will against Gorchakov personally. But because the tsar did not yield to German pressure, he had to adopt increasingly severe measures to force him to do so. The growing intimacy with Austria was his chief means of reinsurance and an important element in his policy of keeping Russia isolated.

53 In the dispute over the Bulgarian-Rumanian border: Bülow memorandum, 4 February 1879, G.F.O., IABq 133, 1; and in the question of majority decision in the international commissions set up to supervise the execution of the Berlin Treaty: Bülow to Reuss, 15 February 1879, telegram no. 29, 16 and 21 February, dispatches nos. 85 and 98, G.F.O., IABq 133, 1; Bülow to Reuss, 26 March 1879, dispatch no. 197, G.F.O., IABq 133.

Simultaneously with the news of the failure of Werder's mission Bismarck learned that the Russian army was about to be greatly expanded. This measure was the result of long planning, but the news of it came very inopportunistly for Russo-German relations. It demonstrated dramatically the failure of Bismarck's previous policy. Thus when he saw Schweinitz on 5 April he spoke of the advisability of an organic agreement with Austria and better relations with England as a counter-measure to Gorchakov's intrigues and Russian aggressiveness.\textsuperscript{55} By the beginning of April Bismarck was obviously prepared to resort to the most extreme expedient; in order to counteract Gorchakov tactically, he was forced to adopt increasingly decisive measures, the effect of which went far beyond the range of pure tactics.

Bismarck's conversation with Schweinitz on 5 April marks the beginning of the most acute phase in the 'two chancellors' war'. Of course, he still continued to use his now familiar tactics aimed against Gorchakov personally, but from April onwards co-operation with Austria was steadily and intentionally intensified. Support for Russia correspondingly decreased. In April, when for a moment it seemed that Shuvalov had regained control of Russian foreign policy, Bismarck did little to help him; in the future he was to do nothing. Shuvalov's sun was setting. He himself said at the end of the month: 'L'Empereur ne veut pas de moi.'\textsuperscript{56} On the other side, Gorchakov, too, was fading away, but there were no signs that the tsar was becoming more conciliatory. On the contrary, the arms programme pointed in the opposite direction.

In the work of the commissions set up to carry out the details of the execution of the Berlin Treaty one can observe the rapid change in German policy. In June the German commissioners were occasionally instructed to side with the Austrians when they were at odds with Russia.\textsuperscript{57} Before taking the next step Bismarck waited until the Russians joined a request for

\textsuperscript{55} Schweinitz, vol. \(\pi\), pp. 60 f.

\textsuperscript{56} Reuss to Bülow, Vienna, 28 April 1879, dispatch no. 183, most confidential, G.F.O., Russland 61 secreta; Alvensleben to Bülow, Petersburg, 19 April 1879, dispatch no. 119 most confidential, G.F.O., IABq 133, iv; Medlicott, pp. 249–52; D.D.F., vol. \(\pi\), no. 406.

\textsuperscript{57} Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 14 June 1879, telegram no. 61, Hatzfeldt to G.F.O., Buyukdere, 3 July 1879, dispatch no. 291, G.F.O., TK 136; Radowitz to Bray, 22 June 1879, dispatch no. 4, confidential, G.F.O., IABq 133, \(\pi\); Radowitz to Reuss, 22 June 1879, dispatch no. 446, G.F.O., IABq 133, m.
further support with disregard for German policy. Then, in July, he openly displayed his displeasure, and emphasized co-operation with Austria in opposition to Russia.\textsuperscript{68} When the tsar tried to force Bismarck’s hand things quickly came to a climax.

Bismarck was apparently worried that the tsar would interpret his activity as anti-Russian rather than as justified resistance to truculence in the spirit of Gorchakov. He insisted in the press that German policy was pro-Russian and that the attacks of the Russian papers, even the semi-official press, stemmed from the pan-Slavs and nihilists. In conversations with Saburov, the newly appointed Russian ambassador to Turkey, he reiterated his pro-Russian inclinations. In an attempt to disprove the tsar’s contention that more German help was due to him, Bismarck claimed that in 1876 he had made an offer, but Gorchakov had rejected it and was, therefore, to blame for the unfortunate turn of events. Saburov was greatly disturbed; he felt that Bismarck was troubled not only by the personal tension with Gorchakov, but much more, by the belief that the Russians wished to abandon their traditional entente with Germany in favour of new combinations.\textsuperscript{69} Saburov’s surmise was probably correct. But were Bismarck’s fears justified? In fact they were not. The tsar and his chief adviser at the time, Miliutin, the minister of war, had been greatly annoyed by Bismarck’s ambiguous policy since the outbreak of the Eastern crisis. The tsar still wanted a close German alliance; but he regarded Bismarck as its main obstacle because the period of the German chancellor’s greatest antagonism coincided with Gorchakov’s virtual elimination from a position of influence and power.

Alexander’s famous ‘box on the ear’ letter (15 August) to his uncle William was his answer to Werder’s mission and Bismarck’s subsequent increasingly antagonistic policy. The tsar turned the tables on him and burdened him with the responsibility for the deterioration in mutual relations.

\textsuperscript{68} Radowitz to Schweinitz, 13 July 1879, dispatch no. 430, G.F.O., IABq 133, r; Radowitz to Schweinitz, 14 August 1879, dispatch no. 502 confidential, G.F.O., Russland 65 secreta; Radowitz to H. Bismarck, 26 July 1879, G.F.O., IABq 133, ix; Radowitz to Hatzfeldt, 13 July 1879, dispatch no. 315, G.F.O., TK 136; [M. Kremnitz], \textit{Aus dem Leben König Karls von Rumänien}, Stuttgart, 1896, vol. iv, p. 236.

\textsuperscript{69} H. Bismarck to Radowitz, Kissingen, 8 August 1879; H. Bismarck to [G.F.O.], Kissingen, 18 August 1879, G.F.O., Russland 65 secreta; J. Y. Simpson, \textit{The Saburov Memoirs, or Bismarck and Russia}, Cambridge, 1929, pp. 50–58.
Bismarck's campaign against Gorchakov had obviously failed. He had carried it so far that discreet retreat was no longer easy; at this point he had but two alternatives; to admit defeat and accept Russian leadership, or to conclude an alliance with Austria in order to carry on the struggle from a position of greater strength. He elected for the second alternative and adopted a more or less permanent measure for use as a tactical weapon. Immediately after Bismarck asked Andrásy for the rendezvous at which the dual alliance was arranged, he wrote to his old friend Orlov, the Russian ambassador to France, asserting his attachment to the tsar and his love of Russia, but complaining grievously about Gorchakov.

It is interesting to note that at the moment when he suggested the meeting with Andrásy to talk about an alliance, he left the door open for Russia. At the same time the tsar and his advisers decided to work for better relations. Bismarck's conversations with Saburov and his letter to Orlov had made an impression. But he had achieved no real victory. Gorchakov was not jettisoned. This meant what Bismarck thought it meant: the tsar and his advisers were still extremely suspicious; to lessen his hostility they sought a modus vivendi, but nothing more because they felt real friendship was impossible.

After concluding the alliance with Austria Bismarck was, of course, very pleased that the Russians showed signs of seeking an understanding; but he still wanted a personal victory as an outward sign of his political triumph. Gorchakov had not been dismissed, but he was obviously in a state of de facto retirement. Miliutin replaced him as Bismarck's bugbear. He was ideally suited for this rôle. The tsar's chief adviser, he was thought to be anti-German⁶⁰ and was no admirer of Bismarck, for whom he was the personification of the revolutionary spirit. In addition to this he bore the responsibility for the recent army build-up. Miliutin, a moderate liberal, was also on bad terms with Gorchakov and Shuvalov; he was the last remaining 'reform minister' in Alexander's cabinet and for this reason alone a far more suitable candidate for Bismarck's wrath. Miliutin was vulnerable. There was also a less important domestic motive for the campaign against Miliutin. In order to obtain the acceptance of the new army bill it was necessary to represent publicly Russian aggressiveness as a threat to German security. This motive should not, however, be over-

⁶⁰ See on this the introduction by Zaionchkovskii to Miliutin's Diary.
emphasized because the publicly uttered signs of alarm were repeated in confidential diplomatic correspondence, whereas the French were privately reassured.

Throughout the winter Bismarck tried to get the tsar to disavow Miliutin and his work. The tactics used were the familiar ones. In informal conversation Bismarck associated him with the principle of democracy and revolution, labelled him anti-German and pro-French, and accused him of unreliability and aggressiveness. London and Vienna were kept informed of these apprehensions, the newspapers were mobilized, and complaints were made to the tsar. Although all this was in vain, Bismarck did not abandon the campaign until the army bill was passed and Gladstone emerged victorious from the English elections in April 1880, thus making possible a new international alignment. Fearing that Gladstone could conceivably come to terms with the tsar and Miliutin, Bismarck strengthened German forces in the east and attempted to convince the Austrians that the danger to conservative Europe now emanated from England and Gladstone. The latter became Bismarck’s nightmare. For several months the Russians appeared less reprehensible.

The ‘two chancellors’ war’ was over. What were its results?

The ‘war’ was the final phase in the long rivalry between Bismarck and Gorchakov. In the 1860s their personal friendship and the political necessity for co-operation kept the rivalry from becoming severe. From the beginning of the 1870s the necessity for political co-operation was less, the competition between the two statesmen became more intense, and their personal friendship dwindled away. After the ‘war-in-sight’ crisis and the reopening of the Eastern question in 1875 the personal and political duel between Gorchakov and Bismarck broke out into the open. The confrontation of the two chancellors at the Congress of Berlin marked the beginning of the ‘war’ in which their personal rivalry went far beyond the bounds set by raison d’état.

The struggle ended with a partial success for both; neither statesman was completely discredited. Russia became more conciliatory and sought an alliance with Germany. This was a victory for Bismarck. But he lost what few friends he had in Russia. The Germanophile tsar and his advisers had grown very sceptical; it was no longer likely that Alexander would spontaneously follow a pro-German policy. This was a victory for Gorchakov. It was characteristic of the situation that by the end of 1879
even Shuvalov had turned against Bismarck and neared Gorchakov. Bismarck and Gorchakov had carried their personal struggle too far. In the end it seriously affected the general complexion of Russo-German relations. Bismarck had been too ready to use massive force in essentially secondary matters; he adopted a more or less permanent measure for tactical purposes. As a result the Russians became more conciliatory, but they did not really accept his leadership; they grew more sceptical of him and Germany. And Bismarck, in turn, lost faith in Russia, not only as an ally but also as a pillar of conservative Europe.

After the collapse of Shuvalov's candidature Bismarck made no attempt to work for an improvement in the fabric of Russian society; he turned instead to a policy of expedients aimed at preserving tolerably good relations until the ultimate and inevitable disaster in Russia.

Gorchakov's undeniable partial responsibility for the deterioration in Russo-German relations has long been recognized. Most historians have accepted in one form or another Bismarck's devastating assessment: 'His vanity, his jealousy of me were greater than his patriotism.' Certainly there is more than a grain of truth in this criticism, but in the period after the Congress of Berlin Gorchakov was definitely on the defensive. His failing was that his views reflected only too well those of the tsar, not that he incited his monarch against Bismarck.

After the end of the 'two chancellors' war' really intimate relations between Russia and Germany were virtually impossible—not only because of the bitterness and distrust which the 'war' had left behind. The inherent rivalry between any two neighbouring great powers would have been sufficient to make continuous close co-operation difficult. But the feud, between Gorchakov and Bismarck coincided with and accelerated a period

---

61 P. A. Valuev, Dnevnik 1877–1884, Petersburg, 1919, entry of 14 December 1879; Miliutin, vol. iii, entry of 8 December 1879; see also Schweinitz, vol. ii, pp. 218 f. Széchényi to Haymerle, Berlin, 20 December 1879, dispatch no. 50 A–B secret, W.S., PA, iii, 119; Trauttenberg to Haymerle, Petersburg, 30 January 1880, dispatch no. 7–E confidential; Kálnoky to Haymerle, Petersburg, 17 April 1880, dispatch no. 21–C, W.S., PA, x, 75; Schweinitz to Bismarck, Petersburg, 25 March 1880, dispatch no. 101 most confidential, G.F.O., Russland 61. Shuvalov hinted broadly about the abandonment of the Dreikaiserbund and the advantages of an alliance with England; O. Russell to Salisbury, Berlin, 19 December 1879, dispatch no. 613, very confidential, F.O. 64/936; Dufferin to Salisbury, Petersburg, 31 December 1879, dispatch no. 682, confidential, F.O. 65 1048.

Sir Robert Ensor did not regard Lord Salisbury as a great foreign secretary. He pointed to Salisbury’s failure ever to take the guiding initiative in Europe, ascribing the failure partly to unfavourable circumstances but partly to Salisbury’s own temperament. On the one hand, continental distrust of the British parliamentary system kept him largely isolated from continental alliances, while the Egyptian imbroglio limited the freedom to act which such isolation should have conferred. On the other hand, Salisbury was temperamentally inclined to tackle situations as they arose rather than scheme ahead. Ensor concluded that Salisbury ‘can scarcely be ranked in the first flight of international statesmen, though his place must be extremely high in the second’.\footnote{R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870–1914, Oxford, 1936, pp. 200–1.} Something of a question mark has, indeed, always hung over Salisbury’s reputation. Since the second world war a great deal of new material from public and private collections has formed the basis for numerous monographs on Salisbury’s diplomacy. The near-unanimity with which his realism and skill have been admired prompts the question: does Salisbury now deserve promotion to that ‘first flight of international statesmen’ from which Ensor excluded him?

In one sense the very nature of the admiration expressed for Salisbury lends support to Ensor’s view. The geographical range of British interests greatly increased during the nineteenth century, and the Foreign Office archives became correspondingly more voluminous and diverse. Research into Salisbury’s defence of those interests has tended out of sheer practical necessity to isolate some region, problem or period for detailed study. His policies in the Near East, Africa, the Far East and so on have been carefully analysed, and he has emerged as a brilliant and cool-headed diplomat coping with difficult but not very obviously related crises in different parts of the world. Emphasis has naturally fallen on Salisbury’s distinctive style
of diplomacy, on the principles and methods underlying his conduct of international affairs, and this has helped to confirm Ensor’s picture of him as an opportunist and improviser, content to meet situations as they arose and lacking a long-term, overall strategy. Moreover, the unifying concept traditionally applied to Salisbury’s policies, albeit critically, has been undermined now it is argued that he was not really an isolationist. But did Salisbury achieve nothing more than the peaceful and profitable resolution of whatever crises arose? Did any of the problems confronting him prove big enough and persistent enough for a pattern to emerge in his conduct of affairs, a coherent and consistently applied strategy such as is sometimes attributed to Bismarck? Did he contribute towards a long-term solution of Britain’s basic international problems?

The basic international problem of any state at any time is how to win security from attack, or at least from defeat. After 1871 European statesmen lived in the shadow of the disasters which had in swift succession overtaken the Russian, Habsburg and French empires. All lived in tense expectancy of the next war; all faced direct threats to their frontiers; none, not even the victorious Germans, could muster enough armed force to defy every possible coalition, so that allies were deemed essential. British statesmen appeared to have less cause for anxiety. The only state capable of invading the British Isles was France, whereas on the continent each great power faced the possibility of direct attack from at least two others. Moreover, the French threat to the British homeland rarely acquired any urgency. There were occasional invasion scares. In 1888 there was even much discussion at cabinet level as to the possibility of the French seizing London by a coup de main.2 Generally speaking, however, British naval power despite its recognized deficiencies, was felt to be an adequate defence. Fashoda confirmed what had been apparent to many since 1882, namely that France’s vital interests lay in Europe, where enmity with Germany meant that her very survival could be at any time threatened. As long as the Alsace-Lorraine issue kept that enmity alive, an all-out struggle with Britain for overseas interests would remain a luxury she could not afford. Salisbury recognized France as the greatest, indeed the only potential danger to Britain itself, but found no cause for alarm. Close relations with France’s own enemies on the continent, Germany and Italy, would suffice until such time as the Egyptian wound healed, while patience and restraint

2 [Public Record Office], Cab. 37/21, nos. 14-15, 17-18; Cab. 37/22, nos. 32, 37.
in the handling of other overseas disputes would reduce tension and perhaps open the way to reconciliation.

With the French threat muted, Britain's main security problem concerned her Indian empire. Both Professor Grenville and Dr Greaves have commented on the neglect of India as a factor in the formulation of British foreign policy in the later nineteenth century.\(^3\) Such neglect is understandable. The great crises of the period involving the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese Empire and Africa have absorbed historians largely because of the light they throw on the origins of the 1914 war and on the nature of late nineteenth-century imperialism. Within the context of either of these major historical problems the Russo-British fencing in Asia is of limited interest, especially as it reached crisis proportions only once, after the Penjdeh incident in 1885. Thus, while the relationship of Salisbury's policies to the more spectacular developments of world history received the prominence it deserved, his preoccupation with the defence of India as a factor in shaping those policies received little more than formal acknowledgement. Yet the security of the subcontinent was second only in importance to that of the British Isles, and throughout the Salisbury era India's security was thought to be in jeopardy.

India's security could be threatened only by Russia among the great powers, if one discounts a remote and improbable threat from the French in Indo-China. The Russian threat could take three forms: a direct attack; the subversion of British rule, perhaps through the humiliation of an even partially successful attack; and the undermining of Britain's whole strategic position in Asia by turning India's neighbours—Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, and the Ottoman and Chinese Empires—into something like Russian satellites. Dr R. L. Greaves, in what is perhaps the most illuminating recent work on Salisbury's policy, has shown how seriously the threat to India was taken in British political and military circles, and especially by Salisbury himself. Russia's rapid advance in central Asia in the decades following the Crimean War, and the consolidation of her position by a network of strategic railways brought the threat, in all three forms, into the realm of practical politics by the 1880s.\(^4\) Whatever doubt there might be about


\(^4\) Greaves, chs. 1–5.
Russia’s will or ability to exploit her favourable position, the need for precautions was undeniable in view of what was at stake.\textsuperscript{5} Equally undeniable were the difficulties which stood now in the way of effective precautions. While Russia’s ability to strike at British interests in Asia and the Near East had steadily grown, Britain’s capacity for deterrence or retaliation had just as steadily declined. The alliance of France and Turkey, and Habsburg hostility to Russia had created favourable conditions for an attack through the Black Sea in 1854, while the defects of Nicholas I’s military system had made it impossible for his armies to expel the invaders. The high cost of defeating Turkey, the alienation of Austria-Hungary from Russia by the treaty of San Stefano, and the attitude of Bismarck had given added substance to Britain’s threat to pierce Russia’s guard at the Straits in 1878. Russia’s fears as to her vulnerability, indeed, persisted, especially after Salisbury had cast doubt on Britain’s acceptance of the principle of closure of the Straits. But in London pessimism as to the possibility of fighting a successful war against Russia soon became the keynote. Already in 1884, following the storm of public protest and alarm over the Russian incorporation of Merv, a War Office memorandum had discussed Britain’s ‘means of offence against Russia.’ It stressed how limited these means were. A naval blockade would not inflict significant damage on the Russian economy. An army could be sent into Afghanistan to establish a line of defence or to drive back the Russians, but only at the cost of loosening the military grip on India itself at a dangerous moment. Only 36,000 men were available for offensive operations from Britain. They could be sent to the Baltic to strike at St Petersburg but with little hope of penetrating Russia’s defences. The only other area where a British army could hope to damage Russia enough to persuade her to restrict her advance in central Asia was the Black Sea. At only one point was Russia thought to be still vulnerable there: Batum. An expedition could probably

\textsuperscript{5} The Soviet historian, N. A. Khal’pin, has complained with some justice of the persistent use of the phrase ‘the threat to India’ in British works, as imputing to Russia aggressive plans she never had; see N. A. Khal’pin, Russia’s policy in central Asia, 1857–1868, London, 1964, (being an abridged translation of Politika Rossi i v Sredney Azii, 1857–1960, Moscow, 1960), introduction. It is true that ‘threat’ implies aggressive intent, but in international politics it is a normal precaution to assume aggressive intent in any state capable of harming another unless the state is a very firm ally with a very stable political system. A British government could not foresee what policy a future tsar would pursue nor what form of government would succeed tsardom. But perhaps ‘British fear’ would be less tendentious than ‘Russian threat’.
seize Batum by a *coup de main*, and strike at enemy communications in Central Asia by advancing to the Caspian. Such a move was expected to have the support of the non-Russian population of the Caucasus.6

In the following spring the Penjdeh clash between Russian and Afghan troops brought Britain to the brink of war, and this memorandum was printed for circulation to the cabinet. It made depressing reading. The only war plan regarded as feasible had as its essential pre-condition ‘that our relations with Turkey should be such as to secure for our fleet an immediate entry into the Black Sea,’ In 1885 this condition did not obtain. The British fleet would have had to force its way through the Straits in face of the hostility of Turkey backed by Russia’s partners in the Three Emperors’ Alliance. Nor did the prospect of war in 1885 end with the Penjdeh crisis. There was general agreement in official circles that the establishment of Russia in the key strategic centre of Herat would so seriously endanger the security of British India that war must result.7 Throughout the summer of 1885 it was believed that Russian troops might march on Herat, and it was accepted that Herat could not at present be defended.8 The threat of war might deter Russia, but if it did not and she accepted the challenge where and how was the war to be fought?

This was a problem which vexed British policy makers for the next twenty years and to which no clear and consistent answer could be found. India’s frontiers were becoming as vulnerable as any of those in Europe. The Director of Military Intelligence, General Brackenbury, spoke in 1887 of ‘the quicksands of utter uncertainty to which we are now confined in consequence of the want of a defined policy for meeting further Russian aggression’, and feared that ‘we shall find Russian troops occupying the

6 Cab. 37/13, no. 36. Memorandum by Major J. S. Rothwell, 7 July 1884. The memorandum suggested that the necessary information about Batum could be obtained if one or two Russian-speaking officers went to the area in the guise of sportsmen or artists.

7 Greaves, pp. 74–76, appendix I.

8 There is a good deal of correspondence about this in F.O. 65/1247–9. The man on the spot, Colonel Ridgeway, thought Herat would not be safe against a *coup de main* before the end of August, and that the prospects of withstanding a siege were remote; but he believed the Russians might well be unaware how vulnerable it was. Ridgeway to Salisbury, 8 August 1885, dispatch no. 70; 12 August 1885, dispatch no. 73, F.O. 65/1248. The Russian commander, however, was rumoured to have got hold of Ridgeway’s cipher. When the immediate tension had died down, Salisbury warned St Petersburg that an advance on Herat would mean war. Salisbury to Grosvenor, 11 September 1885, dispatch no. 336 confidential, F.O. 65/1250.
passes of the Hindu Kush before we have made up our minds at what point Russian advance must be checked, and while neither in India nor in England are we prepared with plans and means of resistance. Moreover, the Russian naval build-up in the Black Sea impressed expert opinion, and the prospect of French aid for it in the Mediterranean led the Admiralty and the War Office to conclude in 1892 that Constantinople must be abandoned to Russia should she choose to seize it. The Turkish attitude had, in any case, already rendered obsolete the traditional plan of striking at Russia through the Straits, but no obvious alternative strategy emerged. What stood out starkly from all the discussions between the British and Indian governments were the immense disadvantages and risks accompanying any proposed military solution. To take the offensive against Russia anywhere now seemed out of the question; the idea of sending an army to drive Russian forces out of Herat in the event of an attack had been mooted and quickly dropped. To allow Russia to advance towards the frontiers of India through Afghanistan without counter-action would convince the Indian people that the British could not tackle the Russians, and fatally undermine their prestige as rulers. To establish a defence line inside Afghanistan between Kabul and Kandahar, as many urged, would tie up troops in difficult, mountainous country amid a doubtfully friendly population; prolonged service in Afghanistan would, moreover, be bitterly resented by Indian soldiers. In any warfare beyond the Indian frontier, Russia would have great numerical superiority, while the forces sent against her could be withdrawn safely from India itself only if adequate reinforcements arrived from Britain—and in the event of war no reinforcements at all could be guaranteed. Whatever plan was adopted the military prospects were discouraging.

Even supposing the Indian Army to remain chiefly on the defensive, merely occupying Kabul and Kandahar in moderate strength, there is

---

9 Brackenbury’s minute is quoted in a valuable cabinet print prepared by the India Office in November 1891, summarizing discussions on Indian defence over the previous four years. Cab. 37/30, no. 39. One aspect of India’s defence problem has been exhaustively examined in G. J. Alder’s British India’s northern frontier, 1865–95, London, 1963.

10 Salisbury vigorously opposed expert opinion on Constantinople, and believed British prestige demanded its defence against Russia. Grenville, pp. 26–28. But he had by 1887 lost faith in the possibility of diverting Russia from India by counter-measures in the Black Sea, for which Turkish support was essential. Cab. 37/30, no. 39, ibid.
much force in the observations of the Commander-in-Chief in India that the task before the Indian Army would be one of great difficulty. Our position in India is at all times liable to serious disturbance, and would be specially so on the near advance of Russia; we have to deal with a long and seldom peaceful frontier, to provide for the defence of the large seaports, to maintain peace and order in a population of 286 millions, and to keep watch over many powerful Native States, in which Russian agents would endeavour to stir up disaffection.

This summary of the situation from an India Office memorandum in 1891 went on to reflect that with only thirty thousand Russians across the border the Indian Army might prove unequal to the task.11

Russia’s intentions could only be guessed. If they should prove hostile Britain would have to fight, and there seemed no doubt that the odds would be against her. She could not afford even the initial reverses to which history had accustomed her; a single defeat at the hands of Russia could have catastrophic repercussions in India. The experts might well be wrong in their predictions, as experts had so often been wrong with regard to nineteenth-century wars, but only a very bold or desperate statesman would relish war from a position of acknowledged inferiority.

This was Britain’s basic international problem after 1885, and it remained so until the German naval threat took priority in the time of Grey. The armed forces could not answer for the security of the Indian Empire should Russia choose to use the powerful position she had established in central Asia. It was up to the diplomats to construct an alternative system of protection. For the greater part of the period when this was the central problem of British foreign policy Salisbury was prime minister or foreign secretary, or both. His stature as an international statesman may therefore be judged by how far his policies constituted a solution to this problem. Yet when Salisbury retired from political life in 1902, fear of Russia’s designs in Asia and a sense of helplessness as to how they could be met were far stronger than in 1885.12 Salisbury’s policies were regarded as having failed, and the quest for new solutions had begun before his departure from office.

11 Cab. 37/30, no. 39.
Salisbury himself was unrepentant, and in retrospect his policies certainly look more appropriate than they did to his contemporaries. In its most extreme form, of course, the problem was insoluble. If Russia was bent on destroying Britain’s Indian Empire, there was little to be done but reinforce Britain’s general position in Asia and Africa, make what preparations for defence were possible, and trust that the incalculables of war would favour Britain rather than Russia. Diplomacy could no more guarantee India’s security in these extreme circumstances than could the armed forces. But diplomacy could help prevent the problem assuming its extreme form. Salisbury had much more room in which to manoeuvre than did the military men. If Russia was planning aggrandizement in Asia, her freedom to do so would always depend on the European situation which British diplomacy could hope to influence. If Russia was not planning aggrandizement, diplomacy could ensure that she was neither provoked nor tempted into doing so, and could pave the way for a permanent reconciliation. In either case, Britain had to strive for the elimination of sources of tension between herself and other Powers. Throughout the Salisbury era the underlying need to prepare for, and at the same time stave off a trial of strength with Russia shaped British diplomacy over much of the world.

In Asia Salisbury tried to exclude Russian influence over India’s neighbours, or at least to prevent their transformation from buffer states into bases from which Russia could launch an attack. Dr Greaves has convincingly demonstrated the coherence and consistency of this aspect of his policy. Rapid success could not be expected and, given political conditions in these countries so unhappily sandwiched between the great rivals, no success could be thought of as permanent. Moreover, in this, as in his emphasis on the need for a network of strategic railways, Salisbury often did not see eye to eye with the government of India as to priorities. Slowly, but too slowly, railways were built. The tier of buffer states remained in being, but no more became a strong and stable barrier hostile to Russia than had the Ottoman Empire in Palmerston’s day.

In Africa, where naval power could be a decisive instrument of policy, much more could be done. It was possible to ensure that Britain controlled those areas of the African continent essential to communication with her

13 Greaves, ch. 12.
14 Ibid.
Asian empire and that no other power won a position in Africa commanding enough to challenge her control. British predominance in southern Africa, and thus over the vital base at the Cape, was jealously guarded by Salisbury. He resolutely opposed any extension of German or Portuguese power in the years following the Angra Pequena episode, and secured their recognition of vast additions to Britain's empire in south and east Africa. The later challenge presented by the Transvaal was met more clumsily and at great cost in the Boer War. At the other end of the continent direct British control over Egypt and the Suez Canal came to be accepted as equally necessary despite the embarrassing international consequences of her continued presence there. Competitors were skillfully excluded from the Nile valley in the course of a complex struggle for power which has been graphically described in a recent work by Dr G. N. Sanderson.\(^{15}\) The protection of Britain's strategic interests during the scramble for Africa was Salisbury's most striking diplomatic achievement.

These developments helped to prevent any further weakening of Britain's strategic position in respect of India. But if she felt hard put to it to defend India against Russia and if these counter-measures could bring only partial, fluctuating or long-term rewards, Britain could not afford to be quarrelsome. A second and equally fundamental object of policy was the settlement, wherever possible, of Britain's differences with other powers. Growing imperialist activity had brought a rash of territorial and other disputes among the states concerned. Britain inevitably had the largest share. Salisbury, determined never to yield where a vital interest was involved, was equally determined on the peaceful settlement of lesser conflicts whatever the pressure from commercial and other interests. If a major crisis broke amidst the tension created by such minor disputes, its peaceful resolution would be difficult. On the other hand, if these disputes were tackled in a conciliatory spirit the process and successful issue of negotiation would create an atmosphere in which collision on a major question was less likely. With frontier commissions, arbitration and territorial exchange as his principal instruments, Salisbury worked hard to clear away the mass of disputes which might damage his valuable relationships with Germany and Italy, and might erupt with fatal consequences in the case of France and Russia. Fair settlements might promote eventual

reconciliation with the latter powers, and thus the prospect of real security for the British Empire. The African settlements negotiated with Germany and France were Salisbury’s most substantial achievements in this field.

Salisbury’s drive from 1886 to 1890 to reduce the tensions which had developed between Britain and the continental powers and to free her from dependence on them over Egypt was successful enough to restore Britain’s capacity for diplomatic intervention in Europe. His military advisers after 1890 and his cabinet colleagues at the turn of the century urged him to use the opportunity to join the Triple Alliance, or at least Germany, in a solid front against France and Russia. But Salisbury shrank from permanent involvement in European quarrels. The term ‘splendid isolation’ is likely to stick obstinately to the Salisbury era despite all attempts by conscientious historians to dislodge it. There was nothing splendid in being at the mercy of unpredictable tsarist governments, and a policy which included the Mediterranean Agreements and close cooperation with Bismarck was doubtfully isolationist. Yet the word ‘isolation’, with all due qualifications, has some merit in conveying the general character of Salisbury’s attitude to Europe. The British Empire’s security system touched the European security systems at intervals like a circle occasionally intersecting others. Salisbury could by his interventions exert a measure of influence over the movements of France and Russia, and could even promote combinations against them as in the case of the Mediterranean Agreements. He contributed indirectly to the break-up of the Three Emperors’ Alliance. But these were diplomatic manoeuvres by an outsider concerned primarily with a different area of conflict. He understood the value of Britain’s relationship with Europe, but he knew its rôle was limited and that continental commitments, incautiously handled, could be to the detriment instead of to the advantage of British and imperial security. His attitude to the German connexion illustrates his peculiar brand of ‘isolation’.

The association of the three ‘eastern’ courts, which Bismarck had revived, had traditionally aroused the antipathy of British governments.

17 Salisbury even welcomed the Franco-Russian alliance as finally putting paid to the Three Emperors’ grouping and giving Britain more room for manoeuvre in continental diplomacy. C. J. Lowe, Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886–1896, London, 1965, p. 76. As France and Russia were reluctant to get involved in one another’s imperialist disputes, their alliance did little to worsen Britain’s position.
The advantage to Russia especially of the link with Berlin had been demonstrated during the Penjdeh crisis, when Russia could have faced a war with Britain secure on her western frontiers and probably at the Straits. In this situation Britain's relations with Germany were crucial. Salisbury's approach to Bismarck shortly after he formed his first administration in June 1885, when war with Russia was still on the cards, recognized this. It was, on the face of it, a rather odd approach. In early August 1885 Sir Philip Currie had informal talks with Herbert Bismarck. He declared that failure to reach a rapid settlement of the disputes which had grown out of the Penjdeh crisis would probably lead to war between Britain and Russia, took the unusual course of informing Russia's ally of Britain's war plan to strike through the Caucasus, and stressed that 'it would be an absolute necessity for us to obtain an entrance to the Black Sea for our ships, and this we should unquestionably do by some means or other, whatever view Europe might hold as to the localization of the war.' He proposed arbitration by Bismarck as the only way to avoid such a war.\(^{18}\) Arbitration was so obviously unthinkable to Bismarck, still smarting from the consequences of honest brokerage in 1878, as to suggest that the proposal was an excuse for the overture rather than its purpose. Presumably Salisbury hoped that Bismarck, who would scarcely relish the Eastern Question being reopened by Britain's forcing the Straits, might discourage St Petersburg from precipitating the conflict Britain was so anxious to avoid. He certainly hoped to initiate a rapprochement with Germany, as Currie stressed that Salisbury's wish for the future was 'an alliance in the fullest sense.'

What was meant by this is far from clear. Currie, from a later conversation with Bismarck himself, appears to have had a formal treaty in mind, and his reports constitute the only evidence. It is possible that on taking office Salisbury found so much cause for despair in the international situation that eventual adhesion to the Triple Alliance seemed the only way out. But Salisbury often meant by alliance the habit of close cooperation without binding paper agreements. It would certainly be necessary to use a turn of phrase arresting enough to convince Bismarck that a real change of policy was intended by the new government and a rapprochement with Germany genuinely desired. Whether or not this overture was consistent with Salisbury's general attitude to continental

\(^{18}\) Currie's reports are printed in full in Greaves, appendix II.
entanglements there was soon less cause for despair. The Bulgarian crises soon broke up the fragile Three Emperors' Alliance through which Bismarck had hoped to secure the German Empire against a hostile coalition. Bismarck had now to preserve the link with Russia and maintain the Triple Alliance at a time when Austria-Hungary was increasingly at odds with Russia and Italy with France. His need for Britain to support his Triple Alliance partners coincided with Salisbury's need for European counters to play against Britain's overseas rivals.

A tenuous Anglo-German friendship consequently characterized Salisbury's second administration. Its uses and limitations came to be well understood by the two statesmen, who exploited one another's difficulties with growing tact and delicacy between 1886 and 1890. Each was aware of the advantages of co-operation; each was also aware that too high a price could be paid for them. Germany's vital interests lay in Europe, and Bismarck could not carry co-operation with Britain to lengths that would imperil his alliance with Russia and hence his eastern frontier. Britain's vital interests lay outside Europe, and they would become more, not less, vulnerable if Salisbury's commitment to the Triple Alliance became so deep that the lines of conflict with Russia and France were permanently hardened or military obligations, already too onerous, were extended to the continent. Bismarck's successors and those colleagues and advisers of Salisbury who advocated a full alliance exaggerated its value and underestimated its price. Successive attempts, from Caprivi to Chamberlain, to make the connexion do too much damaged a relationship which in its limited form was of great mutual advantage.

It may be suggested, therefore, that Salisbury's acknowledged realism and skill served a policy which was coherent and far-sighted in its approach to Britain's principal security problem. Certain doubts remain. Salisbury's most successful period was from 1887 to 1892 when he conducted foreign policy with a minimum of interference from his cabinet and with public opinion for the most part indifferent. In face of opposition from a powerful personality like Churchill in 1886 or Chamberlain after 1895 Salisbury was less successful in pushing his policies through. His shortcomings as a politician may thus have diminished his achievement. Secondly, until more is known of the development of Russian policy in central Asia the impact of Salisbury's diplomacy in St Petersburg cannot be assessed. But Salisbury may have been over-pessimistic as to the possibility of an under-
standing with Russia while Giers was foreign minister. Professor Medlicott has shown that Giers favoured an arrangement by which Britain would feel secure in India, and thus cease to frustrate Russia in the Near East; he saw conflict with Britain as merely increasing Russia’s dependence on the Central Powers.¹⁹ It may turn out that Salisbury’s policy merely stiffened the Russian attitude. Such flaws in personality and judgement may be deemed serious enough to confirm Ensor’s general rating of him as an international statesman. Yet in an age when such qualities were often dangerously lacking Salisbury brought a cool restraint and constructive realism to his rôle in world politics, while his belief that the British Empire had to develop as an independent international unit at peace with all its neighbours was not without a certain grandeur.

When the government of 'Iraq, under the late Major-General 'Abdul Karim Qasim, laid claim to sovereignty over Kuwait in June 1961, its action not only precipitated a crisis which engaged the attention of a restless world for several days but it also brought a fleeting prominence to two half-forgotten episodes in Kuwait's past—the conclusion of the agreement of 23 January 1899 with Britain, and the shaikhdom's obscure relationship with the former Ottoman Empire. For it was the abrogation of the 1899 agreement by Britain and Kuwait on 19 June 1961\(^1\) which emboldened General Qasim to advance his claim, and it was Kuwait's juridical status half a century earlier as a qaza, or district, of the vilayet of Basra which led him to base his claim upon 'Iraq's residual rights of sovereignty as a successor state of the Ottoman Empire. Although much was said and written at the time of the Kuwait crisis about the 1899 agreement and its origins, and although it has frequently been referred to in passing by historians writing on the diplomacy of the period before 1914, especially in the context of British, Russian and German rivalry in the Middle East, comparatively little attention has been paid to the circumstances in which the agreement came about. These, when looked at more closely, prove to be more complicated than is generally assumed.

In May 1896 the ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Muhammad ibn Sabah, was murdered, along with his brother Jarrah, by his half-brother, Mubarak. The slain ruler's sons and those of Jarrah ibn Sabah fled to Turkish 'Iraq, where they found refuge with a maternal relative, Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, a wealthy merchant and landowner residing at Dorah, on the lower Shatt al-Arab. Soon afterwards they petitioned the Ottoman sultan, 'Abdul

\(^{1}\) See Cmd 1409, 'Exchange of Notes regarding relations between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the State of Kuwait', June 1961, Kuwait No. 1 (1961).
Hamid, for Mubarak’s deposition and punishment, and they also asked that he should be compelled to restore to them the family estates of the Al Sabah which he had seized. The estates were located in the vicinity of Fao, at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, and Mubarak had seized them in order to forestall their possible sequestration by the Turkish authorities at Basra. This same concern for his own well-being had also led him, even before his nephews petitioned the sultan, to seek investiture from ‘Abdul Hamid as ruler and qaim-maquam (or governor) of Kuwait. In so doing he was simply following a precedent set by the two previous generations of Al Sabah shaikhs, who had likewise sought to safeguard their property on the Shatt al-Arab, from which they derived the major part of their income, from interference by the Turks by allowing the sultan to confer upon them the title of pasha and the rank of qaim-maquam.2

Two months after Mubarak’s seizure of power H.M.S. Sphinx visited Kuwait with the senior naval officer, Persian Gulf, Commander C. J. Baker, on board. Baker found the atmosphere in the town unsettled. ‘Kuwait is nominally an independent Arab territory,’ he wrote in his report, ‘but in reality the Turks exercise great influence over it, more especially since the new Chief acceded to power, he finds it necessary to play into their hands. I paid him a visit, but he would not come off to the ship; I also noticed that he flew the Turkish flag, and taxed him with it, but could not get any satisfactory answer from him.’3 Mubarak was in no position to give a satisfactory answer. While he had been lavishing bribes upon officials in Baghdad and Constantinople—including the Shaikh al-Islam and the Shaikh ‘Abul Huda, one of the influential coterie of religious shaikhs around ‘Abdul Hamid4—in an effort to secure recognition from the Sublime Porte, the vali of Basra, Hamdi Pasha, had adopted the cause of the late ruler’s sons and was urging the Porte to exploit the open-


3 Baker to Euan Macgregor (secretary to admiralty), 4 August 1896, no. 8, passed to foreign office, 16 October 1897, F.O. 78/5113.

4 See Memo. by Capt. J. F. Whyte, Pera, 22 March 1897, enclosed in Sir P. Currie (ambassador, Constantinople) to secretary of state, 24 March 1897 (no. 203), F.O. 78/5113.
ing offered it to impose its authority upon Kuwait. The Porte was undecided what to do, particularly as it was somewhat bewildered by a report which had reached it that Mubarak, in murdering his half-brothers and usurping power, had acted with the connivance of the British political resident in the Persian Gulf. According to the tale which had reached the ears of the sultan’s ministers, and which caused some agitation in the serai, the resident was attempting to create ‘an Arabic confederation’, independent of the Porte if not actually hostile to it, and consisting of the principalities of Jabal Shammar, Najd, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. When Muhammad ibn Sabah and his brother Jarrah refused to have anything to do with the scheme, so the story went, Mubarak, who had been living for a month as the resident’s guest at Bushire, crossed to Kuwait and murdered his half-brothers.5

The story had no foundation, but the very fact that it had been concocted and had received even partial credence at Constantinople was indicative of the hostility with which the Turks viewed the British presence in the Gulf. Over the preceding three-quarters of a century Britain had built up in the Gulf a predominant position, based upon her treaties with Bahrain and the Trucial Shaikhdoms and backed by British naval power. The Turks had challenged this position in 1871 when they occupied Hasa and extended their nominal authority over the Qatar peninsula, farther south, by securing the allegiance of the ruler of Dauhah, its principal town. To their annoyance, however, the British government refused to curtail their maritime surveillance of the Gulf, which took in the coasts of Hasa and Qatar as well as the waters around Bahrain and off the Trucial Coast. Not only did the Royal Navy continue to police the waters off Hasa but the British government also refused to recognize any rights of sovereignty on the part of Turkey over Qatar, or, for that matter, over any part of the Arabian coastline south of Qatif, however much the Al Thani ruler of Dauhah might profess his loyalty to the Ottoman sultan. For the point at issue, so far as the British government were concerned, was not abstract questions of neutum and tuum in the Gulf, but the security of shipping and commerce, and they had no intention of abating their maritime protectorate simply to humour Turkish pretensions, especially as the Turks themselves were incapable of keeping order off their own coasts or of constraining the maritime tribes who were their nominal subjects to keep

5 Memo. by Stavrides, 30 June 1896, op. cit.
the peace at sea. Indeed, it was this very consideration which had induced the ruler of Qatar, Jasim al-Thani, to acknowledge Turkish suzerainty and to accept appointment as *qaim-magam* of Dauhah.

In the last decade of the century the Turks' endeavours to make their power felt in the Gulf were concentrated upon the head of the Gulf and upon the delta of the Shatt al-Arab, in particular. A military post was established at Fao and British Indian vessels proceeding up-river were forcibly halted there and made to pay quarantine charges, even when they were not bound for Turkish ports. The outbreak of plague in India in 1896, and the subsequent convening of an international conference at Venice in 1897 to devise measures to prevent the plague from spreading, presented the Porte with further opportunities for aggrandizement. It was agreed at the conference that two quarantine stations should be established in the Gulf, one near its entrance and the other at Basra. Britain and Persia ratified the convention embodying this decision but the Turks did not. Instead, they insisted that the proposed lazaret at Basra should be moved to Fao, that the number of quarantine stations in the Gulf should be increased, with stations in Bahrain, Qatar, Hasa and Kuwait, and that they all should be placed under the control of the international board of health at Constantinople. Britain opposed the establishment of stations under Turkish control in Bahrain and Qatar, which she regarded as independent shaikhdoms, and she was doubtful of the Porte's right to locate one at Kuwait. Shaikh Mubarak evidently shared this feeling, for when in February 1897 a Turkish quarantine official arrived at Kuwait with the intention of taking up duty there, Mubarak sent a hasty message to the political resident at Bushire, asking to be granted an interview with him.

The request was relayed to London through both the government of India and the British embassy at Constantinople. In passing it on, the ambassador, Sir Philip Currie, remarked that he was himself unsure of Mubarak's actual status *vis-à-vis* the Porte. He had earlier been given to understand that the shaikh was 'in reality an independent potentate and only nominally subject to the Sultan,' but he had recently been told by the British assistant political agent and consul at Basra, Captain J. F. Whyte, who passed through Constantinople on his way to England on leave in March 1897, that the ruler of Kuwait was usually regarded as an Ottoman dependant.

---

6 Currie to Salisbury, 24 November 1896 (no. 972), F.O. 78/5113.
The acceptance by the Shaikh of an appointment from the Sultan as Kaim Makam [Whyte explained] precludes the possibility of any foreign power recognizing under present conditions his independence. The present Shaikh, Shaikh Mubarak, when at Fao in November last officially visited the Turkish Mudir of that place, a proceeding hardly consonant with the dignity of an independent Arab Chief. . . . Shaikh Mubarak has since his usurpation been employing his late brother's wealth to secure his recognition as Shaikh, and his appointment as Kaimmakam of Koweit by the Sublime Porte.7

The foreign office was no more able to make up its mind on the question than Currie. From an examination of the files it was discovered that in 1889, and again in 1893, the embassy at Constantinople had acknowledged, at least by implication, the existence of Turkish sovereignty down the Arabian coast of the Gulf from Basra as far south as Qatif.8 Although on neither occasion had Kuwait been alluded to by name, or specifically included among the places admitted to be under Turkish jurisdiction, the fact that a general acknowledgement of sovereignty had been made seemed to preclude any categorical statement of Kuwait's independence now being made to the Porte. Before accepting his conclusion the foreign office decided to refer the question to the India office. The disposition there was to view the matter more from a practical than from a legal standpoint. A number of piracies had lately been committed in the Shatt al-Arab on foreign shipping, including some British Indian vessels, and investigations had revealed that some of the pirates involved were subjects of Mubarak. The government of India had consequently recommended that 'there might be advantage in fixing upon the Turkish Government the

7 Memo. by Whyte, Pera, 22 March 1897, enclosed in Currie to Salisbury, 24 March 1897 (no. 203), F.O. 78/5113.
8 The principal acknowledgement had been made by the oriental secretary of the embassy in a conversation with the grand vizir in July 1889 about the measures which the Porte was supposed to be taking to suppress piracy along the Hasa coast. 'I pointed out to H.H.', the oriental secretary reported, 'by means of a tracing on a flying paper the position of El Katr [Qatar] and the considerable distance intervening between El Katr and that locality, adding that want of security prevailed between Busra and El Katr and not between the latter and El Katr. I also took the opportunity of mentioning to H.H. the considerations which made it very desirable for the Turkish Government not to extend its military action South of El Katr'. (A. Sandison to Sir Wm White (ambassador, Constantinople), enclosed in Sir N. O'Connor to Salisbury, Constantinople, 22 December 1898, no. 667 secretary. F.O. 78/5113).
responsibility for the Sheikh of Koweit’s actions’, and that ‘a state of affairs in which he can shelter himself under a nominal subjection to the Porte, while the Porte can disclaim at will any responsibility, is in the last degree unsatisfactory.’\(^9\) On the other hand the India office itself thought that there was little, if anything, to justify a Turkish claim to sovereignty over Kuwait. It therefore hedged in its reply to the foreign office, saying that if the latter were disposed to recognize Turkish sovereignty over Kuwait, a demand might be preferred upon the Porte both for the payment of an indemnity for the piracies committed on British Indian shipping and for assurances regarding the future good behaviour of Shaikh Mubarak. Alternatively, the India Office suggested, it might be preferable to treat Mubarak as independent, and ‘to convey to him a serious warning, and inform him that his responsibility will be enforced if his subjects are not restrained from repeating such attacks upon British Indian Baghlas in future.’\(^10\)

The foreign office wanted time to consider the question further, so on 2 April 1897 it instructed Currie to avoid, if possible, any discussion with the Turks on Mubarak’s status. Currie was also informed that, if the meeting which Mubarak had requested with the political resident in the Gulf took place, he would be given a serious warning about his responsibility for his subjects’ behaviour at sea, on the lines suggested by the India office.\(^11\) A few days after these instructions were sent Captain Whyte arrived in London from Constantinople. He told Sir Thomas Sanderson, the permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, that before he left Basra at the beginning of March he had learned that Mubarak’s object in seeking an interview with the resident was to ask for the extension of a British protectorate over Kuwait.\(^12\) Sanderson was not at all attracted by the prospect, and he said so when he reported Whyte’s news to Salisbury: ‘Bahrein gives us trouble enough, but it is an island; but to have constant

\(^9\) Governor-general in Council to secretary of state, 24 February 1897, no. 27 secret external, [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 90. See also under-secretary, India office, to under-secretary, foreign office, 12 February 1897, ibid.

\(^10\) Under-secretary, India office to under-secretary, foreign office, 24 March 1897, F.O. 78/5113. A baghlah is a large dhow.

\(^11\) Draft to Currie, 2 April 1897 (no. 96), F.O. 78/5113.

\(^12\) Note by W. Lee Warner (secretary in political and secret department), 6 April 1897, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 170.
squabbles with the Turks about the adjoining coast tribes would be intolerable, unless we were prepared to establish a military post there." The prime minister agreed but he was reluctant not to turn Mubarak’s approach to some good use. ‘Might we not obtain from him’, he asked Sanderson, ‘a promise not to accept any other protectorate—we only giving him an assurance in return that we will not encroach on his independence, but will treat him in a friendly manner?’

Sanderson passed the suggestion to the India office where it aroused little enthusiasm. Sir W. Lee Warner, the secretary in the political and secret department, who had been handling the Kuwait question, thought it was now probably too late to send further instructions to the political resident regarding his meeting with Mubarak, and that, in any case, if Mubarak should raise the subject of protection or of Kuwait’s independence, the resident would be bound to refer for instructions before replying. It would be better, therefore, Lee Warner concluded, not to supplement the resident’s existing orders at this stage. Sanderson, on reflection, thought so, too, and on 26 April he suggested to Sir Arthur Godley, the permanent under-secretary at the India office, that any contact with Mubarak should be strictly limited to conveying to him the warning about piracy.

While the British government were trying to make up their minds whether or not he was independent, Mubarak was persisting in his efforts to persuade ‘Abdul Hamid to recognize him as ruler of Kuwait and invest him with the rank of qaim-naqam. Despite the expenditure of large sums of money at Constantinople and Baghdad, he had no success up to the closing weeks of 1897. In June his nephews had made an effort to unseat him, and although the attempt came to nothing it prompted Currie to ask the foreign office for guidance on what his attitude should be if a similar attempt were to be made in the future. He was told to stay clear of all disputes over the succession at Kuwait. ‘Unless . . . the Chiefs in the Gulf under engagements with us intervene in the struggles at Koweit so as to disturb the general peace of the Gulf, we do not see that the matter

13 Minute by Sanderson, 8 April 1897, F.O. 78/5113.
14 Minute by Salisbury, n.d. (8 April 1897?), F.O. 78/5113.
15 Lee Warner to C. A. Hopgood, foreign office, 14 April 1897, and Sanderson to Godley, 26 April 1897, F.O. 78/5113.
calls for action or enquiry on our part. We have never acknowledged Koweit to be under Turkish protection. But it seems doubtful whether we could deny that in fact it is under Turkish influence.'¹⁶

In July 1897, a Turkish corvette visited Kuwait, and several hundred inhabitants of the Turkish frontier town of Zubair, near Basra, probably at the instigation of Mubarak's nephews, or of their relative, Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, petitioned the Porte for Mubarak's removal.¹⁷ Alarmed by these manoeuvres, Mubarak sent a messenger to Bahrain to tell the residency agent there that he had certain proposals which he wished to lay before the political resident as soon as possible. The resident, Lieutenant-Colonel M. J. Meade, in reporting the approach to the government of India, recommended that he should be permitted to receive Mubarak's messenger, especially as it would give him an opportunity to deliver the warning about the shaikh's responsibility for his subjects' conduct at sea. The permission was granted but at the last moment Mubarak's messenger declined to accompany the residency agent from Bahrain to Bushire and left instead for Kuwait. Before he went, however, he told the residency agent that the object of Mubarak's overture was to canvass the idea of a British protectorate over Kuwait, to the exclusion of Turkish influence there.¹⁸

A letter from Mubarak himself arrived at Bushire in the latter part of August, saying that he had no one sufficiently intelligent to send to the residency to discuss what he had in mind, and asking Meade to send someone to him instead. In the first week of September Meade sent his assistant resident, J. C. Gaskin, to Kuwait in the residency steamer, R.I.M.S. Lawrence, with orders to find out what Mubarak wanted and to deliver to him the warning about piracy.¹⁹ Gaskin reached Kuwait on 5 September. Mubarak refused to come on board Lawrence, lest he compromise himself with the Turks, so Gaskin went ashore to see him. When he handed the

¹⁶ Draft telegrams to Currie, 17 July 1897, nos. 306 and 307, F.O. 78/5113. See also Currie to secretary of state, 16 July 1896, tels., nos. 465 and 467, cypher, ibid.
¹⁷ Currie to secretary of state, 21 July 1897, tel. no. 476 cypher), passed to India office, 22 July 1897, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 172.
¹⁹ Political resident, Persian Gulf, to foreign secretary, Simla, 22 August 1897, tel., and foreign secretary, Simla, to political resident, Persian Gulf, 29 August 1897, tel. no. 1367 E.A., ibid.
warning on piracy to Mubarak, the shaikh denied that any of his subjects had misbehaved themselves at sea, although he admitted that some of the people employed in his date gardens on the Shatt al-Arab occasionally attacked vessels passing up the river. Most of the people involved, however, he said, lived on the other side of the Gulf, and they had often attacked and plundered Kuwait vessels. Whenever he had complained to the Turkish authorities at Basra about these attacks and asked for protection, the only result had been to subject his own people to extortion at the hands of the Turkish officers and soldiers sent to investigate his complaints. He would be willing, he told Gaskin, to co-operate with the British government in the suppression of piracy, and he promised both to pass on any information which he received about piracies and to assist in the pursuit and capture of pirates.

Gaskin then raised the question of Mubarak’s quarrel with his nephews, and suggested that he should accept the offer which reputedly had recently been made by the shaikh of Bahrain, 'Isa ibn 'Ali, to arbitrate in the dispute. Mubarak replied that while he was quite ready to accept Shaikh 'Isa’s mediation, and to come to terms with his nephews, he was not prepared to allow them to return to Kuwait. The conversation now turned to Mubarak’s approaches to the political resident. The shaikh had no hesitation in revealing their purpose. He wished, he said, ‘to be placed under British protection such as is enjoyed by Bahrain and the Trucial Chiefs. If the British Government will extend its protection to him, . . . he is prepared to assist the British in maintaining law and order in that part of the Gulf [Kuwait and its vicinity] with the full force at his disposal, which . . . amounts to 25,000 tribesmen.’20 He and his people, Mubarak went on, found the Turks grasping and unreliable, and he suspected them strongly of planning to absorb Kuwait entirely in the near future. It was to prevent this happening that he was now applying for admission to the trucial system.21

Meade’s first reaction to Mubarak’s request, when Gaskin reported it, was to treat it simply as a strategem by Mubarak to bring pressure upon the Porte to recognize him as ruler of Kuwait. Most of the petty chieftains

20 Meade to foreign secretary, Simla, 25 September 1897 (no. 90 confidential), enclosed in foreign secret letter 147 (external) of 21 October 1897 (passed to foreign office, 18 November 1897), F.O. 78/5113.
21 Ibid.
along the Arabian coast of the Gulf were ready to invoke British or Turkish protection whenever it suited their interest to do so, and Meade doubted whether Mubarak would have made any advances to the British government if the Porte had not hesitated to recognize him. However, in reporting the results of Gaskin’s visit, Meade pointed out to his superiors that, regardless of what his motives might be, Mubarak’s approach offered an opportunity to extend British influence to the head of the Gulf, which would be extremely advantageous to British interests in the region as a whole.

Koweit possesses an excellent harbour, and will, under our protection, undoubtedly become one of the most important places in the Persian Gulf. Apart from the chances of its being the sea-port for the projected railway from Port Said, which is under consideration and which the possession of Koweit would enable us to protect, the trade with the interior is already considerable, and will greatly increase. At present, in spite of the Sheikh’s assertions, it is regarded as a centre for piratical expeditions, and, therefore, endangers our trade with the Shat-el-Arab. Finally, it is said that it is a great slave emporium, and that our efforts to put a stop to the slave trade are more or less barren of results as long as slaves can be marched across Arabia, and shipped at Koweit for Turkey and Persia.\(^{22}\)

Meade concluded:

As far then as we are concerned, it seems advisable to fall in with Sheikh Mubarak’s views, and to extend to Koweit and its ruler the protection enjoyed by Bahrein and other places on the Arab coast; but I am aware that the Turkish Government claims a certain amount of influence in the place, the Sheikh, for instance, flies a Turkish flag over his own residence, and his predecessor had the title of Kaim-Makam conferred on him by the Porte. These facts, however, do not, I think, constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the extension of our influence. We have never admitted Turkish authority in Koweit, and the Turks, as far as I am aware, have never entered into formal agreement with the Sheikh, nor have they ever exercised sovereign rights at the place.\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899

There was little inclination in London to accede to Mubarak’s request for trucial status. Lord George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India, telegraphed to the viceroy, the Earl of elgin, on 13 October: ‘Her Majesty’s Government are not disposed to interfere more than necessary for maintenance of general peace of Persian Gulf or to bring Koweit under protection.’ But the matter could not be dealt with as simply as this. On 27 October a telegram arrived from Elgin to say that a fresh attack on Kuwait by Mubarak’s nephews and their supporters was expected to take place on or about 6 November, and that Meade had asked whether he should despatch a gunboat to watch events. Hamilton passed the viceroy’s enquiry to the foreign office, where Salisbury decided that it would do no harm to send a gunboat, provided that it did not interfere except to protect British interests. On the morning of 6 November H.M.S. Pigeon dropped anchor off Kuwait town. There was no sign anywhere of any hostile forces, and when Pigeon’s commander went ashore he was told by Mubarak that none were expected. Nor did he fear them, the shaikh said, if they should appear, for his enemies could raise only 3,000 fighting men while he had 16,000 armed tribesmen at his command. However, he added, he would still like to be taken under British protection, more especially as his kinsman, Shaikh ‘Isa of Bahrain, had lately impressed upon him the advantages to be derived from it. Mubarak also spoke bitterly of the Turks, saying that he wished to be rid of all connexion with them.

Although this latest turn of events led Hamilton to look again at Colonel Meade’s arguments in favour of extending a protectorate over Kuwait, it did not in the end lead him to alter his decision of 13 October. As he explained to Salisbury, à propos of Meade’s report,

No sufficient case is made out for the extension of the British Protectorate to a point so far north of the limit of the existing responsibilities of the Government of India. On the other hand, there appears

to be nothing in the political situation of Kowit that need hamper
British naval officers in the repression of piracy in case it should be
found necessary to bring home to the Shaikh responsibility for acts of
that character'.

Salisbury accepted the argument and Elgin was informed accordingly on
9 December.

Events immediately afterwards seemed to confirm the correctness of
the decision. Northern Arabia had been disturbed by the death of the amir
of Jabal Shammar, Muhammad ibn Rashid, and by the simultaneous
movement of Turkish troops southwards from Baghdad into the vilayet
of Basra. Hamdi Pasha, the late vali of Basra and an old enemy of Muba-
rak's, had been at Constantinople, urging the Porte to place a permanent
garrison in Kuwait, and it was believed that the troops collecting at Basra
were destined for the invasion of Kuwait. Mubarak was unperturbed by
the apparent threats, and with good reason. His efforts of the previous
eighteen months were now bearing fruit, and towards the end of Decem-
ber 1897 the vali of Basra was informed that an imperial iradé (decree) had
been issued, appointing Mubarak qaim-maqam of Kuwait with the title of
pasha. Thereafter his name appeared in the official almanac of the Basra
vilayet, and Kuwait was formally classified by the Porte as a qaza of the
sanjaq of Najd in the vilayet of Basra.

There, so far as the British government were concerned, the whole
question of Kuwait's status might have rested, had it not become linked
to considerations of a wider nature to which the British government's
attention was drawn in the early months of 1898. These were first raised
by Lieutenant-Colonel William Loch, the consul-general at Baghdad,

28 Under-secretary, India office to under-secretary, foreign office, 18 November
1897, F.O. 78/5513.
29 Under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 25 November
1897, and draft telegram, cypher, to viceroy, 9 December 1897, [I.O.] Political and
30 Various telegrams from Currie between 17 December 1897 and 3 March 1898,
[I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vols. 174 and 175.
31 For Kuwait's designation, see under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary,
India office, 21 April 1899, Secret, enclosing A. C. Wratislaw, Consul, Basra, to
Correspondence, vol. 182.
after he had visited Basra in December 1897 to investigate the reasons for the movement of additional troops into the vilayet. Writing to the foreign secretary of the government of India after his return to Baghdad, Loch said that he was convinced that the troop movements and other activities, such as the appointment of a new vali to Basra and the renewed attempt by the Porte to establish a quarantine post at Fao, were designed to extend and consolidate Turkish control not only over the delta of the Shatt al-Arab but also over Kuwait.

The occupation or protection by the Porte of Kowcit [Loch warned] would be a standing menace to our trade interests in Turkish Arabia. Scarcely a day passes but attempts are made to hamper our trade, sometimes by vexatious quarantine regulations, at others by some move on the part of the Turkish authorities to gain complete control over the mouth of the Shattul Arab at Fao, and it is from here that they must be watched and their actions checked.'

The Turks, however, were not the only ones in Loch’s view whose activities at the head of the Gulf deserved watching.

For some months [he told the foreign secretary at Simla] vague rumours have been afloat that Russia and her Agents were working in the Gulf, and I would invite your reference to my letter No. 616 dated 15th ultimo in which I forwarded a copy of an Embassy despatch from Constantinople with enclosures, bringing to my notice that Russia was seeking to acquire a coaling station in that quarter, which confirms to a certain extent these rumours. Moreover, from hints I have received it is Kowcit on which Russia’s eyes are fixed.

The dispatch to which Loch referred was one from Currie, enclosing a letter from John Dickson, the consul at Jerusalem, dated 21 September 1897, and reporting that M. Krouglov, the acting Russian consul-general at Jerusalem, who had lately been appointed consul-general at Baghdad, where he had been vice-consul some years earlier, had left for Russia on his way to take up his new post. ‘I am informed confidentially’, Dickson wrote, ‘that Monsieur Krouglov has been instructed to report, on his

32 Loch to foreign secretary, government of India, 22 December 1897, no. 659, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 175.
33 Ibid.
arrival at Bagdad, on the much desired scheme of securing for Russia a Coaling Station in the Persian Gulf, though I have not been able to ascertain whether any particular place, outside Persian territory, has been fixed upon.'34 Krouglov did not, in the end, go to Baghdad, but Loch was fairly certain that the Russians would push the question of a coaling station at Kuwait, if only because their consul-general at Baghdad was 'an intense Anglophobe and extremely active in intrigue'.35 Loch also found it significant that Shaikh Mubarak had observed to the commanding officer of H.M.S. Pigeon, when she was at Kuwait in the first week of November, that he had heard that there was talk of a projected railway to the head of the Gulf, and he had added that, for his part, he would be glad to see it become a reality.36

There were other signs of a Russian interest in the upper Gulf in 1897 and 1898. On the pretext that they wished to study the effects of plague at Bushire the Russian government had sent two doctors there in 1897, although at that time there were no signs of the plague at the port. Two more doctors followed in 1898, and they, like their predecessors, visited the entrance of the Gulf. The two earlier doctors had also toured the head of the Gulf in August 1897 before going on to Baghdad. It seemed fairly clear that the Russian plan was to use the possibility or incidence of plague in southern Persia to extend their influence there, much as they had extended it in eastern Persia by sending Cossacks to establish a plague cordon in Seistan. There might even have been some connexion between the doctors' investigations and the Russian government's plans to construct a railway through Persia. They had successfully blocked any similar plans which the British government might have had by securing a decree from the shah in 1890 forbidding the construction of railways in Persia for ten years, by the end of which time, they hoped, the line that they were building through the Caucasus would have reached the Persian border.37

34 Dickson to Currie, 21 September 1897, no. 47 confidential, enclosed in Currie to Salisbury, 1 October 1897, no. 675 confidential, F.O. 78/4808.
35 Loch to foreign secretary, government of India, 22 December 1897, no. 659, above.
37 It did not, in fact, reach there until 1904. Russia, however, had meanwhile provided for this contingency by obtaining from the shah in 1899 a ten-year extension of the ban.
A copy of Loch's report reached the foreign office via Currie at Constantinople at the beginning of February 1898. It was read with considerable interest by George Curzon, the parliamentary under-secretary of state, who drew Salisbury's attention to it and particularly to Kuwait's place in the rumoured Russian designs.

I think we should keep our eye on the place. It is not a Turkish port, i.e. the Turks have never, I believe, occupied or administered it, though they have had some flirtations with the local Sheikhs, which are going on at this moment, Sheikh Mubarak having, it is alleged, applied for their aid. Successive Sheikhs have frequently asked the Brit. Govt. to extend their protectorate over it but we have always declined. A time may come, however, when a Protectorate may be the most useful method of anticipating acquisition by another Power. I imagine that under no circ. should we admit of a Russian position in the Persian Gulf. Is it worth while to call the attention of the Indian Govt. to the contingency indicated by Col. Loch and to ask their opinion concerning it?  

Salisbury thought the inquiry worth making and a telegram was sent to the viceroy on 7 February. Elgin replied two days later to say that he had no confirmation of the rumours of Russian intentions towards Kuwait, although Colonel Meade had learned that the two Russian doctors who had toured the head of the Gulf in 1897 had been accompanied by a third Russian who was not a medical man.

Hamilton took the opportunity of relaying the viceroy's reply to Salisbury to ask whether, in the light of the current rumours, the policy of non-interference in the affairs of Kuwait laid down the previous October should be altered. Salisbury referred to Sanderson for his opinion. The permanent under-secretary, although he did not believe that the rumours had any foundation, thought it best to pass the inquiry to the director of naval intelligence, Admiral L. A. Beaumont, for his opinion on the strategic aspects of the question. Beaumont replied:

38 Curzon to prime minister, 4 February 1898, F.O. 78/5113.
40 Under-secretary, India office, to under-secretary, foreign office, 11 February 1898. F.O. 78/5113.
J. B. Kelly

The anchorage off the town of Koweit is a good one and could well be made into a coaling station, but it is on the way to nowhere and I cannot conceive why the Russians should desire to have it! If, however, Russia ever descends through Persia to establish herself on the shores of the Gulf, Koweit would be the natural port for any ships she might get into the Gulf. 41

Though Beaumont’s reply largely confirmed Sanderson’s scepticism about Russia’s supposed interest in Kuwait (‘I should have thought it myself an unlikely and inconvenient place for the Russians to choose’, he told Lee Warner of the India office42), there was just a sufficient element of doubt in it to lead him to think that it might be prudent to allow Hamilton’s inquiry to stand over for the time being. Consequently no official answer was returned to it, and the subject did not come up again for discussion until the closing months of 1898, when a complicated set of diplomatic circumstances invested it with an urgency which it had not before possessed.

The year 1898 was an unhappy one for Britain in foreign affairs. It opened with a crisis over China which had begun with the German seizure of Kiaochow in November 1897 and reached its climax in February 1898, when Russia occupied Talienwan and Port Arthur and refused to evacuate them. Not only was Britain powerless to prevent Russian expansion in the Far East but she was equally hard put to it to contain it in central Asia, and particularly in Persia. The misgovernment and incapacity of the new shah, Muzaffar ud-Din, had brought widespread unrest and near bankruptcy to his country, making it more vulnerable than ever to Russian penetration. In India, disaffection in the north-west frontier tribal districts had erupted into open revolt in 1897, and the uprising was proving all the more difficult to suppress because of the flow of arms which came to the insurgents through Bandar ‘Abbas, in southern Persia, and through ports on the Makran Coast. The centre of the Gulf arms traffic was Muscat, and there British efforts to curb the traffic were frustrated both by the unhappy state of relations with the ruling sultan and by the intrigues of Russia’s ally, France. The French had for some time been trying to exert a quasi-

41 Beaumont to Sanderson, 18 February 1898, confidential, ibid.
42 Sanderson to Lee Warner, 7 February 1898, demi-official, ibid.
protectorate over eastern 'Oman, and at the height of the Fashoda crisis in October 1898 news was received from Muscat that the French consul there had induced the sultan to grant a site for a naval coaling station about five miles from Muscat. The grant was a direct violation of an undertaking which the sultan had given to the Government of India in March 1891 that he would never alienate any portion of his territory to any power other than Britain.

Nor were France and Russia the only powers whose expansionist activities in Asia seemed, in British eyes, to threaten the security of India. Germany was now assuming in the councils of the Ottoman Empire the place which Britain had once held and which Russia had long aspired to hold. The kaiser's visit to Constantinople in October 1898 and his subsequent exuberant portrayal of himself at Jerusalem as a champion of Islam were the outward signs of a more intimate German involvement in Turkish affairs than there had ever been before. One practical expression of this involvement was the effort being made by the Anatolian Railway Company during the closing months of 1898 to secure permission from the Porte to extend its existing railway system, which then ran from Haidar Pasha, near Scutari, to Ankara and Konia. The immediate aim of the company was to construct a line southwards from the Konia spur to Dinair, but it had also expressed, although guardedly, an ambition to build a line to Baghdad.\(^{43}\)

Ostensibly, however, it was not the Anatolian Railway Company which was making the running in this direction in the latter months of 1898 but a syndicate nominally headed by Count Vladimir Ivanovitch Kapnist, who described himself as a nephew of the Russian ambassador at Vienna. In June 1898 Kapnist had submitted a petition to the Porte\(^{44}\) applying for the grant of a concession to build a railway to the head of the Persian Gulf. The proposed line was to run through Aleppo and Homs to Meyadin on the Euphrates, and thence to Najaf. From Najaf a branch line would run north to Karbala and Musaiyib, across the Euphrates to Baghdad, and on to Khanaqin, on the Persian frontier. The main line would continue south from Najaf to Basra and terminate at Kuwait. Preferential rights would be reserved for the construction of a line from Baghdad

\(^{43}\) For reports of the various railway projects being mooted at Constantinople at this time, see F.O. 78/5102, passim.

\(^{44}\) It was dated 'Heidelberg, 9/21 June 1898'.

265
north to Mosul and on to Diyarbekir. Kapnist also asked in his petition for the right to construct ports at Tripoli, on the Syrian coast, and at Kuwait; for the right to drain and irrigate land in the neighbourhood of the Tigris, Euphrates and Shatt al-Arab; and for the right to make whatever improvements were necessary to these waterways and to navigate them freely.45

A copy of his petition was obtained by the British embassy in Constantinople and forwarded to the foreign office at the beginning of August 1898. At first it excited no comment, possibly because of the disorganized state of the foreign office during that month, Salisbury having fallen ill and gone off to the south of France to recuperate, leaving Arthur Balfour in charge. During August Balfour was deep in the negotiations with Germany over the future of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, and Curzon, who would certainly have taken more interest than most in Kapnist's project, was no longer parliamentary under-secretary of state. He had resigned his seat in the Commons on his appointment as viceroy and was taken up with preliminary arrangements for his departure. When at length, a few weeks later, he learned of Kapnist's application to the Porte he lost little time in warning Salisbury of the dangers he saw in it.

My views on the E.V.R. [Euphrates Valley Railway] and other Trunk Railways in Asia Minor [he wrote], were stated at length in a chapter on Railways in my book on Persia. They remain substantially the same. I think that railway communication is certain someday to be established via Baghdad to the head of the Persian Gulf. If the proposed railway is to end at Koweit it may be remarked that Koweit is not in Turkish but in independent Arab possession; and that such a step could be guarded against by declaring a British Protectorate over Koweit.

I do not myself believe that such a railway, if built, will be of advantage to British interests or that it will be greatly used in communication with India. On the contrary it would be likely to create other and rival interests in Mesopotamia. The construction therefore of such a line by German or Russian or indeed by any alien concessionaires is to be deprecated. But I see no early likelihood of this being

45 M. de Bunsen, chargé d'affaires, Constantinople, to Salisbury, 1 August 1898, no. 426 confidential, enclosing copy of petition, F.O. 78 5102.
Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899

done: nor if there were, does it follow that we should encourage the construction of the line ourselves.

British interests in that part of the world will be best protected by a firm policy on both shores of the Persian Gulf, by a proper police of its waters, and by allowing no other Power to obtain an outlet in that sea. 46

Much the same view was taken by Sir Nicolas O’Conor, the new ambassador at Constantinople, when he returned to his post from leave in early October. If Kapnist’s scheme became reality, O’Conor believed, it would seriously affect British influence and interests in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, not only because it would hamper the growth of British trade in those regions but also because it would conflict with plans which had already been put forward for the construction of a railway from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates and the Gulf, plans, such as that to extend the Haifa railway to Damascus and across the Syrian desert to Baghdad and Basra, which were not only British-backed but were also better suited to British strategic needs. It was highly undesirable, to say the least, O’Conor argued, to leave the construction of a railway to the Gulf ‘to be carried out by a Russian company which leans on its own Government, who would reap the political advantages, for support, but seeks the necessary capital in England.’ 47 Kapnist was said to be hopeful of raising the majority of capital for his project from British financiers, but O’Conor could see little to attract them in it. He had been told that between £12 million and £20 million would be required to carry it out, and that the Porte was resolutely opposed to granting any further kilometric guarantees. For this reason, if for no other, he was inclined to suspect that those who were pushing the scheme might not be entirely serious about it but might have other objects in view. In short, ‘its promoters would perhaps be satisfied if it attained the political result of keeping British companies out of the field.’ 48

But who were its promoters? The only persons apart from Kapnist whom O’Conor had been able to discover as being associated with the scheme were a firm of London stockbrokers, Williams, Meyer and

46 Curzon to Salisbury, 5 October 1898.
47 O’Conor to Salisbury, 6 October 1898, ibid, no. 525, F.O. 78/4919.
48 Ibid.
J. B. Kelly

Company. On the receipt of O’Conor’s dispatch, in the last week of October, the senior partner in the firm, Gerald Walton Williams, was called to the foreign office and asked to explain his part in the project. Williams said that he had originally been put in touch with Kapnist by mutual friends, and that his partner, Augustus Meyer, had agreed to help raise the necessary capital for the scheme by floating a company for a capital of £5 million. Kapnist had stipulated that half the share capital was to be reserved for issue in Russia, and that half the directors should be Russian. He or his partner, Williams went on, would be leaving shortly for Constantinople to help the venture along. It was expected that an imperial iradé would be granted to Kapnist in the near future, although not before a sum of money had been lodged in trust for those Ottoman officials who had helped to secure the decree. Williams concluded by saying that he would let the foreign office have a copy of the original petition, and that he hoped the venture would not be opposed by the British government.49

Williams’s explanation only made the whole affair more odd in Salisbury’s eyes, so in the first week of November he asked Sir Charles Scott, the ambassador at St Petersburg, to find out what he could about it. Scott replied a fortnight later to say that Kapnist had been in St Petersburg some weeks earlier, trying to interest the Russian government in his scheme.

I have subsequently learned [Scott wrote] that Count Kapnist, who has, I understand, been put forward as ostensible concessionaire on account of his nationality and name, is only very distantly connected with the Russian Ambassador at Vienna, that he has no private means of his own, or personal influence in this country, and that, although the Russian Foreign Office has made enquiries from the Russian Embassy at Constantinople respecting his concession, they have not evinced any disposition as yet to regard it as seriously meriting official support.50

Augustus Meyer had arrived in Constantinople in the first week of November and had called upon O’Conor to try to enlist his help in securing the desired concession from the Porte. He told the ambassador that Kapnist was ‘a mere figurehead’, that the capital for the proposed

49 Williams, Meyer and Company to foreign office, 25 October 1898, re-capitulating details of interview and enclosing copy of petition, F.O. 78/5102.
50 Scott to Salisbury, 17 November 1898, no. 372 confidential, ibid.
railway company would be provided by English financiers, and that Kapnist had undertaken, as soon as he had secured a concession to prospect and survey a route, to make it over to an Ottoman limited liability company, the shares of which would be held in London. Meyer laid particular emphasis upon this last point. While Russian capitalists, he said, would continue to be interested in the enterprise, and while it would receive the backing of the Russian minister of finance, Sergei Witte, the bulk of the capital would nevertheless be raised in England. O’Conor was not impressed by Meyer’s arguments. ‘His story was incoherent,’ he reported to Salisbury, ‘and I could not make out that any security really existed against Count Kapnist refusing to allow himself to be set aside after the issue of the Sultan’s irade.’ As for the scheme itself, O’Conor’s dislike of it had in no way been altered by Meyer’s advocacy. He saw it simply as a plan ‘to engage British capital in an enterprise of very questionable financial profit while leaving to the Russians the possible political advantages to be derived from it.’

By now Salisbury’s interest in the Kapnist affair had been fully aroused, and in the last week of November he instructed Sanderson to send the papers concerning it to the director of military intelligence, Major-General Sir J. C. Ardagh, for his opinion. Ardagh was as unconvinced as O’Conor was of the financial soundness of the venture. He estimated that it would cost nearer to £30 million than £15 million to build the railway, which made it an unattractive investment for British capital. Ardagh was not certain, however, that the aim of the promoters was to secure predominantly British financial backing. ‘From the analogy of other instances of a like nature,’ he told Sanderson, ‘it may be inferred that Count Kapnist’s reservation [of half the share capital for issue in Russia] was not intended to furnish a field for the surplus capital of private persons in Russia; but rather to create an opportunity for the State financiers of that country to acquire predominant influence in the basins of the Euphrates and Tigris, with a view to their eventual inheritance.’ Unless provision could be made that British directors would form a majority on the board of the company, the undertaking, Ardagh believed, would become ‘essentially a

51 O’Conor to Salisbury, 8 November 1898, no. 585, ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Memo. by Ardagh, 28 November 1898, secret, enclosed in Ardagh to Sanderson, war office, 29 November 1898, F.O. 78/5102.
Russian monopoly,' and as such inimical to British interests in Asia. Under Russian direction, the scheme, and especially that part of it which provided for drainage and irrigation rights in the basins of the Euphrates and Tigris, might well lead to 'so vast an accretion of territory to that Empire [Russia] as to disturb most materially the balance of power in Asia.'

The same argument was put to Salisbury with even more force by Curzon in a lengthy memorandum which he gave to the prime minister in late November, on the eve of his departure for India. The first part of the memorandum dealt with Russia's influence in Persia, which Curzon saw as constantly on the increase, mainly because of Britain's failure to take any steps to counteract it. The second, and longer, portion of the memorandum was concerned with the British position in the Persian Gulf, and with the various schemes—Kapnist's in particular—which had been put forward to construct a railway to the Gulf from the Mediterranean. Curzon feared that Britain's paramountcy in the Gulf was threatened, not only by France's intrigues at Muscat but also by the commercial activities of other powers in the area.

Commercial interests are the familiar precursor to political claims [he wrote]. Germany is the Power that is now pushing her way into the Gulf. In November 1897 she established a Consul at Bushire to safeguard the interests of six German subjects in the entire Gulf. She is making a determined bid to get hold of the Bussorah trade, and these considerations, coupled with the German Emperor's recent evidence of particular interest in the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan, point to the likelihood of increased German activity in the Gulf, and even to the possible appearance of German claims there in the future. Germany so far has the largest railway interest in Asia Minor; and there can be little doubt that one or other of those lines will ultimately be protracted to the Euphrates or Tigris, and will finally descend from Mesopotamia towards the Gulf.

For the moment, however, it was Kapnist's scheme which most engaged Curzon's attention. Like Scott and O'Connor, he doubted whether

---


the capital for it could be raised in Russia; consequently the only possible interest that the Russian government could have in it would be to use it as a means of blocking similar projects by others. Curzon found particularly disturbing the proposal that the projected line should terminate at Kuwait. 'The asking of a concession from Turkey for a railway with a terminus at Koweit, and, still more, the granting of it involve the assumption that Koweit is under Turkish sovereignty, which it certainly is not, or under Turkish control, which it equally cannot be said to be.'\textsuperscript{56} To acknowledge Turkish jurisdiction over Kuwait, even tacitly, Curzon firmly believed, would be to jeopardize Britain's whole position in the Gulf.

For even though Turkey did not assert her authority, she could (and is very likely even now negotiating to) part with her assumed rights to other parties or Powers; and the experience of Talienwan and Port Arthur is a recent reminder of the views that are apt to be taken by Foreign Powers of the way in which the maritime terminus of a great railway, though situated in the country of another Power, is capable of being treated. A Russian railway ending at Koweit would be in the highest degree injurious to British interests. A German railway to Koweit would be scarcely less so—even a Turkish railway to Koweit would be unwelcome. Any one of these would challenge our hitherto uncontested supremacy in the Gulf, and would turn those waters into a sort of mid-Asian Gulf of Pechili.\textsuperscript{57}

There was only one sure way, in Curzon's view, of averting such a contingency and that was to declare a British protectorate over Kuwait.

The responsibilities entailed would be these. We should not interfere with the internal politics of the place; but a gunboat would require occasionally to visit it. We should insist upon the suppression of piracy. We should prevent the raising of any other flag. And in the last resort, should the Turks march to attack it—which they are not at all likely to do—we should have to prevent them from taking it.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.} Curzon had reached this conclusion both from his own investigations and from a summary of the arguments for and against the fact of Turkish sovereignty over Kuwait which had been drawn up for him the previous June by Lee Warner of the India office. A copy of the summary is appended to his memorandum.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}
J. B. Kelly

The risks are almost infinitesimal, but the trouble they would be instrumental in avoiding might, in the future, be great. Above all it seems to me important that the Persian Gulf should not be allowed to become an arena of international rivalry. For though the actual advantages of interference to other Powers might for a time be small, until they had consolidated their land connections, yet the injury they could do us would be serious and lasting.  

Salisbury was not fully convinced of the dangers implicit in the Kapnist scheme, still less of the need to take prompt action to avert them. Events were forcing him, however, to take more notice of Curzon's arguments than he might otherwise have done. A few days before he received Curzon's memorandum news had arrived from the British consul-general at Baghdad that the vali of Basra, with the sanction of the Porte, had appointed a commission to investigate the various complaints which had been lodged against Shaikh Mubarak by his nephews and others over the preceding two years. The commission had already had a meeting with Mubarak at Fao, and it was due to have a further meeting with him shortly at Kuwait. On learning this, the India office expressed the view to the prime minister that it was high time that he considered seriously whether or not to modify the policy of non-interference in the affairs of Kuwait which had been followed so far. In reply, on 5 December 1898, Salisbury gave cautious approval to the declaration of a protectorate over the shaikhdom.

How far he had been converted to Curzon's views in the time between receiving his memorandum and giving the India office its answer it is difficult to judge. Sanderson, who, unlike some of the senior officials at the India office, notably Lee Warner, was not persuaded of the desirability or necessity for a protectorate, told a member of the India Council a day or two after Salisbury had made his decision that the prime minister 'attached little or no importance to the Koweit project', while he himself believed that it would lead to trouble with the Turks. Salisbury himself

---

58 Ibid.
60 Sir A. C. Lyall to Godley, n.d. (6/7 December 1898), [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 180. Lyall had at one time been foreign secretary of the government of India.
certainly qualified his approval in his letter of 5 December; for while, on the one hand, he strengthened the draft of the reply which Sanderson had drawn up, so as to make it quite clear that he accepted the conclusion that a protectorate was virtually unavoidable, on the other hand he wrote:

The question of establishing a protectorate over Koweyt and the responsibilities such a protectorate would entail is a matter primarily for the consideration of the Government of India, as on that Government would fall the duty of undertaking the arrangements to be made for the assertion and maintenance of the Protectorate and the control of the Sheikh that would be entailed by it. If the Government of India is of opinion that the Protectorate can be undertaken without difficulty or inconvenient extension of the duties of police already exercised in the Persian Gulf, Lord Salisbury would approve such a step and would be prepared to acquiesce in the establishment of such protectorate and to support it diplomatically in case the Porte should raise counter-claims. It does not appear that there is any foundation in fact for a Turkish claim of sovereignty or control over the district.61

O’Conor was notified of the proposed change of policy a week later and asked for his opinion on what the Porte’s reaction to it was likely to be. He replied on 22 December, advising the government to handle the contemplated protectorate as quietly and cautiously as possible, and adding, ‘any formal declaration to this effect at the present moment would be considered little short of a hostile act by Turkey, and in any case it would be sure to produce very serious diplomatic complications not only with this Government but probably also with Russia.’62 On the same day he also wrote privately to Sanderson to say that rumour had it that Witte had withdrawn any support that he might have been prepared to give to Kapnist’s scheme as a consequence of being informed that British capital was to be predominant in it. This made the scheme no less dangerous than it had been before, in O’Conor’s eyes, for it had now to be viewed, he said, in conjunction with the determination recently expressed by the Porte to push the German Anatolian Railway through to ‘Iraq.

61 Under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 5 December 1898, ibid.
62 O’Conor to Salisbury, 22 December 1898 (no. 667 secret), passed to India office, 30 December 1898, ibid.
J. B. Kelly

The German line is bound by its contract as soon as traffic receipts equal its guarantee to extend itself towards Diarbekir, and it is not likely that any other line will be allowed to compete. Thus it is probable that if the Kapnist Company commenced operations at the two extremities of the projected route it would not be allowed to complete the connection from sea to sea; with the result that far from creating a shorter route to India the Company would end by building a line from the Persian Gulf Northwards which Russia would utilize when the line through Western Persia is completed.63

Barely had O’Conor’s warning been received than Williams, Meyer and Company informed the foreign office that an imperial iradé had been issued to Kapnist at Constantinople. The iradé was dated 24 December and it invited Kapnist to attend at the Ministry of Public Works to discuss the bases of the concession. O’Conor telegraphed on 30 December, confirming the news, and adding that, although he had not seen a copy of the iradé, he doubted whether it guaranteed controlling British participation in the concession.64 ‘I wish that we had secured Koweit a year ago,’ Lee Warner commented ruefully when he heard the news.65 What Salisbury now had to balance against each other were O’Conor’s warning of what the Porte’s reaction to the declaration of a protectorate was likely to be (with its attendant possibility that the Russians might exploit the Turks’ resentment for their own purposes), and the ambassador’s second warning that Kapnist’s negotiations, if carried through to a successful conclusion in the shape of the granting of a railway concession, might well result in the advancement of a territorial claim to Kuwait by Russia at some future date. Faced by these alternatives, Salisbury decided that he, or rather Curzon, would have to settle for something less than a full protectorate, perhaps in the form of an undertaking from Shaikh Mubarak that he would not alienate any of his territory to a foreign power.66

63 O’Conor to Sanderson, 22 December 1898, private, F.O. 78/5102.
64 O’Conor to Salisbury, 30 December 1898, tel. no. 234, cypher, passed to India office, 31 December 1898, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 180.
The government of India had not been informed of Salisbury’s earlier willingness to consider a protectorate over Kuwait until 24 December, when they had been asked to report both upon the existing situation in the shaikhdom and upon the measures they could take to make the protectorate, if actually assumed, effective. The telegram had been deliberately held back until this time so as to prevent any action from being taken upon it in India until Curzon had arrived and assumed the viceroyalty. Elgin, it was known, did not attach much significance to the Kuwait question, and would be reluctant to commit the government of India to any new responsibilities just as he was relinquishing office. Now, on 4 January 1899, Salisbury proposed to the India office that the idea of a protectorate should be dropped and that steps should be taken at once to obtain from the Sheikh of Koweit an engagement that he will not cede, lease, mortgage or otherwise alienate any portion of his territories to the Government or subjects of any other Power, without previously obtaining the consent of Her Majesty’s Government. If the government of India had any doubts about their ability to secure the undertaking ‘secretly and speedily’ through the agency of the political resident in the Gulf and the naval force at his disposal, Salisbury was prepared to ask the admiralty to send a warship to the Gulf for the purpose. He was also prepared to pay Mubarak the sum of £4,000 or £5,000 as an inducement to subscribe to the engagement, the sum to be advanced from the Indian treasury pending a decision about its ultimate incidence. ‘Lord Salisbury is very emphatic on the necessity of secrecy and rapidity,’ Sanderson wrote to Lee Warner the same day. ‘The wording of the arrangement should be made as comprehensive as possible. Lord Salisbury adds that if it is necessary to give as high a price as £10,000 we will arrange to find one half of the amount.’

The secretary of state, Hamilton, was away from the India office at the time, and the draft instructions to India had to be taken to him at Sheffield by special messenger. He telegraphed his approval on 5 January. Earlier

67 See Godley to Curzon, 22 December 1898 [I.O.] European MSS. F. 111/142 (Curzon Papers): ‘On the 24th we are going to telegraph for an opinion about Koweit. We have kept the telegram back till then, in order that the subject may not be disposed of without being brought before you personally.’

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

that day the government of India had been informed by telegram of O’Conor’s dual warning about the need to observe caution and secrecy in any dealings with Mubarak and about the Porte’s probable reaction to the assertion of a protectorate. On 6 January Salisbury’s instructions to secure the non-alienation bond were telegraphed to India. It was the day on which Curzon formally assumed the viceroyalty.

Curzon’s view of what was both desirable and possible in the nature of a British connexion with Kuwait had differed from Salisbury’s almost from the moment that the subject was first raised. The prime minister’s view was summed up by Godley, the permanent under-secretary at the India office, in a private letter to Curzon at the time of sending him the instructions of 6 January. ‘We don’t want Koweit, but we don’t want anyone else to have it. This sounds rather bad, when it is baldly stated: but it is the true explanation of a good deal of our diplomacy, and it is not really as bad as it sounds.’\(^71\) It sounded bad enough to Curzon, though not in the sense that Godley had in mind, and he lost no time on receiving Salisbury’s instructions in trying to get the prime minister to change his mind and revert to his earlier decision to declare a protectorate. On 9 January he telegraphed to say that he had asked the political resident in the Gulf to report on how he intended to carry out the negotiation, adding, ‘Proposed negotiations, if successful, seemed to involve ultimate protectorate.’\(^72\) A day later he telegraphed again, this time to forward a suggestion by the resident, Colonel Meade, that he should be given authority to promise Mubarak a yearly payment of £1,000 instead of a lump sum, and to assure him of the good offices of the British government as long as he adhered to the agreement. Meade also recommended that the agreement should be made binding upon Mubarak’s successors.\(^73\) While Curzon himself, as he informed the India office on 14 January, thought that an annual subsidy on this scale was excessive, he was not opposed on principle to the idea of a recurrent subsidy versus a single fixed payment. Furthermore, he thought that the engagement taken from the trucial shaikhs in

---

73 Viceroy to secretary of state, 10 January 1899, tel., passed to foreign office, 11 January 1899, F.O. 78/5113.
1892 might prove a better model for the proposed agreement than the Muscat non-alienation bond of 1891, which had been suggested by the India office.\(^4\)

The exclusive agreements with the trucial shaikhs of March 1892 had gone much further to bind them to the British government than the proposed engagement with Shaikh Mubarak would have bound him. Those agreements, moreover, were a natural consequence of the intimate relationship which had grown up between the trucial shaikhs and the British government during the previous century, a relationship concretely expressed in the series of treaties which had been concluded with the shaikhs concerning piracy, the slave trade, and maritime warfare. No similar agreements—in fact, no agreement of any kind—had been concluded with Kuwait up to this time. Curzon was now seeking to remedy this omission at one stroke, by bringing the shaikhdom, if not wholly into the trucial system, at least into a dependent relationship with the British government comparable to that which the exclusive agreements of 1892 had created for the trucial shaikhs. The agreements which they had signed had bound them, their heirs and their successors, to refrain from entering into any engagements, or even correspondence, with any government other than the British, to refuse to allow the agent of any other government to reside in their territories without British consent, and never to alienate any portion of their territories except to the British government.\(^5\) Curzon believed that unless similar obligations could be imposed upon the shaikh of Kuwait there was every chance that the non-alienation bond could be rendered worthless, either by the murder or deposition of Mubarak and the refusal of his successor to adhere to the bond, or by the Porte’s simply ignoring it (if it came to know of its existence) and ceding territory in the shaikhdom to another power. The viceroy confided his fears on this score to Hamilton in a private letter on 12 January.

If we intend, as I think we ought to do, to prevent the Turks asserting their authority over Koweit in any form, we should have to resist any such step on their part [as a cession of territory] and should be compelled to translate the proposed agreement into a more formal

\(^4\) Viceroy to secretary of state, 14 January 1899, tel. P. For. Sec., no. 68 E.A., passed to foreign office same day, *ibid*.

protectorate. It is of course for the Foreign Office to say when the moment for any such step will arrive, but I do not think that we should expect the action at present proposed materially to relieve our anxieties about the matter.\textsuperscript{76}

The secretary of state had anticipated his arguments, knowing full well what they would be as surely as he had known that Curzon would try to widen the scope of the proposed agreement with Mubarak. Two days after receiving the viceroy’s telegram of 9 January, with its allusion to an ‘ultimate protectorate,’ he had gone to see Salisbury to ask for a final decision on the protectorate issue. Unlike Curzon, he himself, he told Salisbury, was against the assumption of a protectorate because it would involve the government of India in responsibility for the defence of Kuwait, as Salisbury himself had made clear in his letter of 5 December 1898. At that time, however, Hamilton went on, the alternative of a non-alienation bond had not been considered. What he wished to know now was whether the Indian authorities were still free to make up their own minds on the protectorate question, as Salisbury had stated on 5 December that they were, or were they simply expected to acquiesce in the assumption of a protectorate should the foreign office decide at the last moment that a non-alienation bond would not suffice for the object in mind. In the latter case, Hamilton told the prime minister, he would have to point out that whilst the government of India would be willing to act as his agents in concluding the agreement with Mubarak, they could not undertake to send troops to defend Kuwait in an emergency.\textsuperscript{77}

Salisbury replied by assuring Hamilton that the decision to secure the non-alienation bond from Mubarak in no way implied the assumption of a protectorate over Kuwait. The two questions were entirely separate. The arrangement which he contemplated did not constitute, nor was it intended to constitute, a protectorate. The power to decide upon a protectorate still lay with the India office and the government of India, having regard to their ability to defend and maintain the protectorate afterwards. All that he had intended in asking for their assistance was to use their officers, who were on the spot, to effect the arrangement which he desired. The afford-

\textsuperscript{78} Curzon to Hamilton, 12 January 1899, [I.O.] European MSS. D. 510/1 (Hamilton Papers).
\textsuperscript{77} Hamilton to Curzon, 24 January 1899, [I.O.] European MSS. C. 126/1 (Hamilton Papers).
ing of such assistance did not pledge the government of India, 'in the slightest degree... to take any action, or to accept any liability, under any circumstances that might arise in the future.'

So far as Hamilton was concerned this meant that the protectorate issue was now dead, whatever Curzon might say, and he turned to deal with the other points which the viceroy had raised. Opinion at both the India office and the foreign office was that the crucial shaikhs' agreements of 1892 went beyond what was required in the case of Kuwait, and that the Muscat non-alienation bond of 1891 should remain the model. It was similarly agreed that the proposed agreement should be made binding upon Mubarak's successors, and it was thought surprising that Curzon should not have taken this for granted. Meade's suggestion that he be given discretion to promise Mubarak an annual subsidy instead of a lump sum in payment was less easily dealt with. Lee Warner was in favour of a subsidy (though not on the scale that Meade had proposed), not only because it was more in line with traditional practice in the East and provided a regular reminder of the obligations incurred by the recipients, but also because it was economical: 'If we are disappointed in the fulfilment of the treaty we stop our subsidy.' Salisbury, in contrast, thought a lump sum both a more practical method of payment and more advantageous diplomatically: 'There seems to me a great objection to making the payment for Kowcet annual. It makes the transaction less permanent. Instead of buying the neutrality of the Sheikh we are only hiring it.' He was prepared, however, to concede that the matter should be left to Curzon's discretion, although he stipulated that, if a subsidy were decided upon, it should not exceed £200 per annum.

The telegram embodying these decisions was sent to Curzon on 17 January, and in a private telegram on the same day Hamilton informed the viceroy of the understanding he had reached with Salisbury on the

78 Under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 18 January 1899, F.O. 78/5113. See also, Hamilton to Curzon, 24 January 1899, above.
81 Note by Salisbury on draft telegram of 14 January 1899, ibid. Cf. Sanderson to Lee Warner, above, quoting Salisbury: 'Meade should be told to do it as cheap as he can, a sum down is better for our purposes than a stipend.'
J. B. Kelly

The protectorate question. Curzon telegraphed his orders to Meade on the 18th. The only precaution which he urged upon him was that he should make sure that Mubarak was in a stable position, and that he was not in imminent danger of attack by his nephews or the Turks before taking the engagement from him. Meade had let it be known at Bushire, after receiving the first intimation of the contemplated agreement, that he intended visiting Kuwait shortly to discuss the arms traffic with Mubarak. He had also arranged to go shooting on the island of Kharaq, off Bushire, before he left, so as to be able to slip away quietly at night in the residency steamer when he wished. On the night of 20–21 January he sailed from Kharaq in the Lawrence and he raised Kuwait before noon on the 21st. A Turkish corvette was in the harbour but she sailed on the afternoon of the 22nd. Meade’s assistant, Gaskin, went ashore soon afterwards, and found Mubarak pleased with the resident’s visit but unwilling to go on board the Lawrence to see him lest news of it should reach the Turks. Instead, he deputed his brother Hamad, to convey his greetings to the resident and to hear what he had to say.

Meade began his conversation with Hamad ibn Sabah by saying that his brother’s request to be brought within the sphere of British influence had been considered by the British government, and that they were prepared to reach a secret understanding with him. The resident then explained the provisions of the proposed arrangement. Shaikh Hamad, in reply, said that he was sure that his brother would accept the arrangement, although if he offended the Turks he might find that his family’s estates in Turkish ‘Iraq would be endangered. Would the British government be prepared, Hamad asked, to help protect these estates as a condition of Mubarak’s signing the agreement? Meade said that he could give no guarantee on this head until he had referred the question to India. The

---

82 See secretary of state to viceroy, 17 January 1899, tel, For Sec passed to foreign office, 18 January 1899, F.O. 78 5113; and secretary of state to viceroy, 17 January 1899, tel, priv., [I.O.] European MSS. D. 508 (Hamilton Papers). On Lee Warner’s covering letter of 18 January Sanderson noted: ‘These telegrams had better not be printed in any series.’ They were printed for the use of the cabinet but they are not to be found in the relevant confidential print (F.O. 406, Eastern Affairs, or F.O. 424, Turkey).

83 Foreign secretary, Calcutta, to political resident, Persian Gulf, 18 January 1899, (Tel. P. no. 85 E.A.), enclosed in viceroy to secretary of state, same date (Tel., foreign secret, cypher), [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 111.
interview ended with Hamad promising to convey the resident's proposals to his brother.\textsuperscript{84}

Gaskin had meanwhile ascertained that Mubarak's position seemed to be quite secure and that there was little likelihood of his being attacked by the Turks or his nephews in the near future. He had also learned that Mubarak's price for consenting to the non-alienation bond would probably be Rs 15,000 (about £1,000) and a written assurance of support in the future. On 23 January Meade went ashore, taking with him a draft agreement which he had drawn up on the basis of his instructions. Mubarak, when he read it, raised no objections to its terms, but he expressed the same anxiety as his brother had done about the possible threat to his estates at Fao if he signed the agreement, and he also pressed Meade for a written guarantee that the British government would protect them. Although Meade could give him no more definite assurance on this score than he had given his brother, he pointed out that the general promise of good offices which he was empowered to give would probably cover the contingency which Mubarak feared. At this Mubarak declared himself satisfied and proceeded to sign the agreement.\textsuperscript{85}

Although Meade had been instructed to use the Muscat non-alienation bond of 1891 as his model, the agreement which he presented to Mubarak began by requiring the shaikh, his heirs and successors, 'not to receive the Agent or Representative of any Power or Government at Koweit, or at any other place within the limits of his territory, without the previous sanction of the British Government'. Meade's reason for departing from his instructions, as he afterwards explained, was that Gaskin had been told by Mubarak that he had recently received overtures from the French government, which he did not welcome because he did not want foreign agents residing at Kuwait. The same concern to close any loopholes through which other European powers might penetrate Kuwait led Meade to make a further departure from his instructions. After requiring Mubarak to pledge himself, his heirs and successors, 'not to cede, sell, lease, mortgage, or give for occupation or for any other purpose any portion of his territory to the Government or subjects of any other Power without the previous consent of Her Majesty's Government for these purposes,' Meade also

\textsuperscript{84} Meade to foreign secretary, government of India, 30 January 1899, no. 10 confidential, enclosed in foreign secret letter 35, external of 23 February 1899, \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}
stipulated that the undertaking should extend to 'any portion of the territory of the said Sheikh Mubarak, which may now be in the possession of the subjects of any other Government.' Meade pointed out later that this condition was designed to prevent the transfer of houses at Kuwait, belonging to Turkish subjects, to Russians or other foreigners.  

The assurance of the good offices of the British government was incorporated in a letter from Meade to Mubarak which accompanied the agreement. It stated that these good offices would be furnished only on condition that the agreement was scrupulously and faithfully observed. The letter also promised that when the agreement had been ratified by the governor-general in council, and ratifications had been exchanged, Mubarak would receive the sum of Rs 15,000. He was warned that an essential condition of the agreement was that its existence should be kept secret and was not to be divulged without the previous consent of the British government.

The principal risk of disclosure, Meade thought, lay in the discontent which Mubarak's two brothers had expressed with the agreement because it failed to give a specific guarantee of protection to the family estates at Fao. They had signified their disapproval by refusing to sign the agreement, and although Mubarak had assured Meade that their signatures were not necessary to make the agreement valid and binding on his successors, the resident felt that the brothers' resentment might lead them to reveal the agreement's existence to the Turks. Their chief fear was that, in the event of the agreement's being transformed later into a treaty of protection, the Porte might retaliate by enforcing the law which prohibited aliens from possessing landed property in the Ottoman Empire, and confiscate the estates, which were the Al Sabah's principal source of revenue. Meade tried to convince the brothers that the estates would come

86 Ibid., enclosing text of agreement, dated 10 Ramadan 1316/23 January 1899. See also Meade to foreign secretary, government of India, 19 February 1899 (Tel., confidential), [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 182, and Meade to foreign secretary, government of India, 21 May 1899 (no. 70, confidential), enclosed in foreign secret letter 109, external of 8 June 1899, Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 114. The agreement is printed in Aitchison, Treaties, vol. xi, p. 262, and in Cmdn 1409 (Kuwait no. 1), London, 1961.

87 Meade to Mubarak, 23 January 1899, secret, enclosed in Meade to foreign secretary, government of India, 30 January 1899, no. 10 confidential, above. See also, Aitchison, loc. cit.
under the general protection of the promise of good offices, but they were not persuaded. In his report, therefore, Meade emphasized the need for some kind of reassurance to be given the Al Sabah shaikhs, and suggested that it should take the form of the specific undertaking which Mubarak's brothers wanted. There was little doubt in Meade's mind that the Turks' suspicions would be aroused by his visit to Kuwait: if they suspected that he had reached any kind of understanding with Mubarak they might react in the way that the shaikh's brothers feared. They would be less likely, Meade thought, to try conclusions with Mubarak direct: he was too well entrenched at Kuwait and he had, besides, formed alliances with several of the Bedouin tribes in the interior.\footnote{Meade to foreign secretary, government of India, 30 January 1899, no. 10 confidential, above.}

Meade sailed from Kuwait to Fao to engage in a few days' shooting in the hope of disarming any suspicions the Turks might have about the reason for his visit to the head of the Gulf. He returned to Bushire on 28 January and telegraphed the news of the conclusion of the agreement to Calcutta. Shortly afterwards he sailed for Muscat to deal with the crisis which had arisen with the sultan over his grant of a coaling station to the French in defiance of his non-alienation bond of 1891. Meade's impetuous and often ill-considered actions at Muscat in the next two weeks led to a clamorous exchange of telegrams between Calcutta and London, in the midst of which the Kuwait agreement was virtually lost to sight. It was not until the India office telegraphed on 10 February, asking to be informed of its terms, that Curzon thought fit to send a summary of Meade's report to London. The viceroy himself was quite pleased with the agreement. '[I]t carries us quite as far as I gather Lord Salisbury wished to go,' he wrote to Hamilton, 'although not so far as, in my opinion, we may require to go before long . . . Meade has, I think, done his work pretty well.'\footnote{Curzon to Hamilton, 16 February 1899, private, [I.O.] European MSS. D. 510/1.}

This was hardly the reaction in London. Lee Warner, when he read the viceroy's summary, exclaimed, 'Altogether the engagement is not what we authorized or asked for, and it is lucky that we telegraphed for it before it was ratified!'\footnote{Minute by Lee Warner on viceroy's telegram of 12 February 1899, [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 111.} Salisbury was equally displeased. 'He is a good deal annoyed,'
Hamilton wrote to Curzon, 'and I think justly, with the manner in which Meade has on two separate occasions [at Kuwait and Muscat] outrun his instructions.'

Salisbury's displeasure was mainly provoked by the clause in the agreement forbidding Mubarak to correspond with, or to receive the representatives of, other governments. As Lee Warner put it:

The 'no-correspondence' clause made the Trucial Chiefs' agreement practically a protectorate agreement which we did not want. Now this Koweit agreement binds the Chief not to receive a Foreign Representative, and we had no authority to introduce that clause. . . . Its introduction seems to me to run the risk of shutting us out of the benefits of Lord Salisbury's promise . . . that no liability would attach to India for a non-alienation treaty.

The second provision inserted by Meade, that the engagement should also extend to any Kuwait territory in the possession of subjects of foreign governments, was even less to Lee Warner's liking. 'We care for the seaport of Koweit, not for territories held by subjects of foreign powers.' There was, of course, a reason for Meade's insertion of this clause, but it was set out in his full report of his proceedings which had not yet reached London. Even if it had it is doubtful whether it would have altered the generally unfavourable verdict which was passed upon his handling of the negotiation, nor would it have softened the strictures which Salisbury passed upon his conduct at both Kuwait and Muscat. 'His disposition', Hamilton wrote ruefully to Curzon of the prime minister, 'has always been to attribute high-handedness and harshness to Indian Politicals in their dealings with Native Princes, and what has recently passed will I fear confirm him in that view.'

For all this, however, Salisbury was not prepared to disown the agreement or to insist upon its amendment before ratification. Moreover, he was even willing to approve Meade's suggestion that a hope should be held

---

93 Ibid.
94 Hamilton to Curzon, 10 March 1899, private, [I.O.] European MSS. F. 111/142.
Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899

out to Mubarak that the British government would do what they could to protect his family estates at Fao. The prime minister's approval was telegraphed to India on 14 February, and the agreement was ratified by the governor-general in council on the 16th. Half the cost of the Rs 15,000 later paid to Mubarak was borne by the imperial treasury, and the balance was charged to Indian revenues.

Some reaction by the Turks to Meade's visit to Kuwait was only to be expected, and so it came as no surprise when the consul at Basra, A. C. Wratislaw, reported early in February that the vali there had questioned him closely about the reason for the visit. What was a little more disturbing was a further report from Wratislaw that two Russians had arrived at Basra from Baghdad at the beginning of the month with letters of introduction from the vali of Baghdad. They had gone on to Kuwait after being given a letter of recommendation to Shaikh Mubarak by the vali of Basra. Although as far as Wratislaw could discover, the Russians—who were also, as was found later, Muslims—were interested only in trade, O'Conor at Constantinople leapt to the conclusion that they were visiting Kuwait in connexion with Kapnist's railway scheme, and he informed the foreign office to this effect in the third week of February. There was a spate of rumours concerning the activities of foreign powers in and around Kuwait in the second half of February and the early part of March. A German warship was said to be expected shortly in the Gulf, a French agent was reported to be on his way to Kuwait, the Porte was reputedly thinking of stationing a high official permanently in the shaikhdom, significant military preparations were under way at Basra, one of the Russians visiting Kuwait had gone on to Qatar, presumably for some sinister purpose, and a third Russian, of Armenian extraction, had passed through Basra from Baghdad on his way to Kuwait, ostensibly to buy lambskins.

Many of these rumours were accepted by Curzon at face value, and he

95 Under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 14 February 1899, immediate and secret, F.O. 78 5113.
96 O'Conor to Salisbury, 17 February 1899, tel., no. 8, cypher, passed to India office same day, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 181. For Wratislaw's reports, see same series, vol. 182.
97 For these various rumours, see [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vols. 181 and 182, passim.
several times pressed Salisbury to ask the admiralty to strengthen the naval force in the Gulf and to order the commander-in-chief, East Indies, to keep a ship constantly on station off the bar of the Shatt al-Arab to prevent the movement of troop transports from the river to Kuwait. Salisbury refused to be stampeded into giving such orders: he could discern no positive threat to Kuwait’s security in anything that had occurred so far, and if any hostile move were to be made against the shaikhdom by the Turks, he preferred to trust to diplomatic protest at Constantinople to halt it rather than to hasty and ill-considered naval action. For the correspondence concerned, see [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 111, especially secretary of state to viceroy, 15 February 1899 (Tel., foreign secret); viceroy to secretary of state, 3 February and 2 March 1899 (Tels., foreign secret); viceroy to secretary of state, 16 March 1899 (Tel., foreign secret), ibid., vol. 112; under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 16 February and 6 March 1899 (immediate and secret), Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 181; and under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 11 March 1899 (immediate and secret), ibid., vol. 182.

98 For the correspondence concerned, see [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 111, especially secretary of state to viceroy, 15 February 1899 (Tel., foreign secret); viceroy to secretary of state, 3 February and 2 March 1899 (Tels., foreign secret); viceroy to secretary of state, 16 March 1899 (Tel., foreign secret), ibid., vol. 112; under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 16 February and 6 March 1899 (immediate and secret), Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 181; and under-secretary, foreign office, to under-secretary, India office, 11 March 1899 (immediate and secret), ibid., vol. 182.


100 Viceroy to secretary of state, 16 March 1899, tel., foreign secret, [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 112.
Kuwait, had contravened Turkish quarantine regulations by going ashore despite the objections of the quarantine official there to their landing.\(^\text{101}\) The Turks did not carry the protest any further, and Curzon was undoubtedly right when he characterized the objections of the quarantine official, who was not a Turk but a local Arab, as 'illegal and frivolous.'\(^\text{102}\)

Of much more moment than the rumours current in the Gulf about Russians and Frenchmen bent on mysterious errands was what was happening at Constantinople over railway concessions, and over the Kapnist project, in particular. In the third week of April Ernest Weakley, the commercial attaché at the British embassy, learned that Kapnist had been induced to give up his part in the project, and that his place had been taken by an Austrian named Rechnitzer. Furthermore, Augustus Meyer had retired from the firm of Williams, Meyer and Company, which had been reconstituted as Williams, de Broc and Company and was engaged in setting up a syndicate for the promotion of the Kapnist scheme. A number of London merchant houses were participating in the syndicate and financial support was said to have been enlisted from a number of European banking houses.\(^\text{103}\) It seems fairly likely that Kapnist's retirement from the project was fore-ordained. At least, this is the impression which emerges from the account of the project's origins which Rechnitzer gave to Weakley later in April. He told him:

The scheme was first brought forward under Count Kapnist's name, with a view to prevent Russian opposition, and with the idea of obtaining powerful influence, both in St Petersburg and in Constantinople, for the furtherance of the project. With this end in view, Count Kapnist had been successful in obtaining the support of Count Mouraviev and M. de Witte on the condition that a portion of the capital necessary for the construction of the line was to be raised on the Russian market. The scheme was however from the outset very strongly opposed by Prince Oukhtomsky, and M. Tatischeff, Financial adviser to the

\(^{101}\) See O'Conor to Salisbury, 15 and 16 February 1899, nos. 52 and 59 secret, passed to India office 25 February 1899, [I.O.] Political and Secret Home Correspondence, vol. 181.

\(^{102}\) Governor-general in council to secretary of state, 1 June 1899, no. 102 external, secret, [I.O.] Political and Secret Letters from India, vol. 114.

\(^{103}\) Memo. by Weakley, 18 April 1899, enclosed in O'Conor to Salisbury, 20 April 1899, no. 194 confidential, F.O. 78/5102.
Russian Embassy in London, considered that Russian support should only be given to Count Kapnist in the event of the project he was interested in being entirely placed under Russian control. M. Tatischeff was even of the opinion that under such circumstances the Russian Government scheme of extending the Central Asia railway into Afghanistan might be abandoned. In the course of subsequent negotiations Messrs de Witte and Romanoff stipulated that a small Share capital of 10,000,000 Francs should be raised, of which 6,000,000 Francs was to be held in Russia, and that a Debenture capital of 250,000,000 Francs should be obtained in England. These conditions could not be accepted by the London syndicate, as they would place the line entirely under Russian control, and further negotiations being impossible, it was considered undesirable that Count Kapnist should, under the circumstances, continue to take an active part in the matter.\textsuperscript{104}

Seeing that Salisbury had known since late November 1898, when Scott had reported the fact from St Petersburg, that the Russian government were not backing Kapnist's scheme, and since he also shared Curzon's view that if the Russians ever tried to push a railway through to the head of the Gulf they would build it through Persia, it may be asked why he troubled to take the non-alienation bond from Shaikh Mubarak in January 1899. One possible answer is that he was simply being pushed by Curzon to conclude some kind of agreement with Kuwait, preferably, from the viceroy's point of view, a treaty of protection, and that, having no decided opinion of his own on the question, he allowed himself to be persuaded by Curzon's arguments, even though he suspected that there was no real cause to fear anything from the Russians. But this explanation runs counter to Salisbury's well-known caution in foreign affairs, and his reluctance to enter into engagements, or to assume responsibilities, which were not strictly necessary. He must have felt the Kuwait agreement to be unavoidable to have sanctioned it; and if his suspicions of Russian intentions were not sufficiently strong to convince him of the need for the agreement, some other consideration must have tipped the scales in his mind. That other consideration was probably German activities at Con-

\textsuperscript{104} Memo. by Weakley, 21 April 1899, enclosed in O'Connor to Salisbury, 27 April 1899, no. 207 confidential, \textit{ibid.}
Salisbury, Curzon and the Kuwait Agreement of 1899

Constantinople in the closing months of 1898. It was they, and not the Russians, who were the principal railway concession-hunters at this time, and it was their efforts which were eventually rewarded when the Porte confirmed the grant of preferential rights previously awarded to the Anatolian Railway Company to extend its system to the Gulf. It was they, in short, as much as the Russians, whom Salisbury sought to check at Kuwait with the agreement with Mubarak.

How early the German concessionnaires had settled upon Kuwait as a logical terminus for their railway cannot be determined with any certainty, but it is significant that they lost little time after the confirmation of their preferential rights in exploring its possibilities for this purpose. Late in 1899 a German technical commission, led by the German consul-general at Constantinople, travelled the proposed alignment of the railway to Kuwait, and on arrival there in January 1900 its members tried to persuade Mubarak to sell or cede land for a terminus. It is a far from remote possibility that the whole Kapnist project was nothing more than an elaborate stalking-horse to divert both British and Russian attention from the negotiations which were quietly proceeding between the Anatolian Railway Company and the Porte in the latter half of 1898. Evidence to support this supposition can be found in O’Conor’s remark in October 1898 that ‘its promoters would perhaps be satisfied if it attained the political result of keeping British Companies out of the field,’105 a result which could hardly have been looked for if the promoters had been serious in their efforts to secure a majority of British capital for the venture; and they would have had to secure a majority of British or other capital because the necessary amount, or even half of it, could not have been raised in Russia. There is also Scott’s report that Kapnist had been put forward as the ostensible concessionnaire ‘on account of his nationality and name,’106 which points less to a desire on the part of the promoters to attract Russian financial support, since little was available, than to an attempt to lull any suspicions which the Russian government might have had about the scheme and its backers—or the activities it was designed to cloak.

Kapnist’s scheme disappeared from sight once it had served its purpose. The Kuwait agreement remained, and its usefulness was demonstrated

105 See above, p. 267.
106 See above, p. 268.
again and again in the years that followed. Despite Salisbury’s initial mis-
givings about the clause inserted by Meade, forbidding the reception of
foreign agents and correspondence with foreign governments, it proved
to be one of the most valuable features of the agreement. Salisbury had all
along been opposed to entering into a protectorate relationship with
Kuwait because of the difficulties it would produce with the Turks and
possibly the Russians. He was also opposed on principle to the extension
of Britain’s responsibilities in the Gulf. Yet he could not ignore the case
for some kind of agreement with Kuwait which would prevent other
powers, either alone or as a consequence of the assertion of Turkish
authority over the shaikhdom, from effecting a lodgement there. He had
in the end to concede the necessity for an agreement, but even then he
tried to evade the consequences of it by thrusting the responsibility for
declaring and maintaining a protectorate on to the government of India,
and he grasped eagerly at O’Conor’s warning about the Porte’s probable
reaction as an excuse to retreat from the protectorate to a non-alienation
bond, which was as much as he had wanted from the start. Even a non-
alienation bond, however, carried with it implicit responsibilities for
Kuwait’s well-being, as Hamilton had pointed out to him in their inter-
view of 11 January 1899, when he asked whether an ultimate protectorate
was envisaged. Reluctant though he was to commit himself finally,
Salisbury could prevaricate no longer: he wanted the non-alienation
bond, there would be no protectorate, and the government of India were
relieved of responsibility on this head. Curzon, in contrast, knew what he
wanted all along, viz., the extension of Britain’s maritime protectorate in
the Gulf to its natural limits in the northern shore, a move which, he was
convinced, should not be delayed any longer. His judgement, on this
occasion, was sounder than Salisbury’s. If the Kuwait agreement had not
been concluded when it was, it might have been impossible a year later.
Much has been written on the entry of Turkey into World War I. The most recent publications of W. W. Gotlieb, Studies in secret diplomacy, London, 1957, and the article of Ulrich Trumpener, 'Turkey's entry into World War I: An assessment of responsibilites', Journal of Modern History, Chicago, vol. xxxiv, 4, 1962, pp. 369–80, give a good picture of the final stage. But as these studies are based completely on western sources, certain gaps and misinterpretations inevitably appear. Amongst the Turkish sources, the Turkish archive material that is available is covered by Y. H. Bayur in his immense work Türk İnkılabı Tarihi (The History of the Turkish Revolution). But it is also interesting to note that the minutes of the Turkish cabinet covering the period on this subject are missing and this gives rise to anxieties that they might have been mysteriously suppressed. However, additional records of valuable information in the central Turkish archives are currently being classified, which will no doubt cast some more light on the question. Even so, the present material, together with the British foreign office records, which were hitherto closed to academic research, helps to clear away some ambiguities on the Turkish side in the period of transition from the end of the Balkan War in 1913 to the formal entry of the Porte into the war on 3 November 1914.

In addition to the valuable work of Bayur, a series of memoirs written by the leading Turkish personalities of the first world war period provide interesting material for the historian. Needless to say, memoirs may mislead the scholar. This difficulty, however, can be overcome by assessing the conditions under which they were written. Of the leading figures on the Turkish side, Enver Pasha, once the real master of Turkey behind the shadow of the sultan, left no memoirs. It is assumed that he destroyed his personal archives shortly before leaving Turkey forever on the eve of the armistice. The minister of the interior, Talat Pasha, who also fled the
country, endeavoured not to go into details in his memoirs.\(^1\) Cemal Pasha, the minister of marine, was comparatively frank, except in his pretence that he knew nothing of those of Enver's movements which culminated in the surprise attack on the Russian ports of Odessa and Sebastopol, which heralded Turkey's entry into the war.\(^2\) Halil Bey, the president of the Senate, remained inscrutable on points which were of key importance.\(^3\) He knew much but wrote very little. Whereas the minister of finance Cavid Bey's diaries, published posthumously,\(^4\) the war memoirs of General Ali İhsan Sabis,\(^5\) assistant chief of planning in the Turkish general staff, and the book of General Kâzım Karabekir, assistant chief of Turkish intelligence, *How we entered the First World War*,\(^6\) are comparatively free from pretence and political justifications.

It may be argued that the best course for Turkey would have been to preserve strict neutrality during the war. But she could not afford to do so in view of the dangers with which she was then threatened. Neutrality was the policy strongly advised for her by the Entente powers. And yet it was by no means safe for the Turks. The British acquisition of Egypt (1881), the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908), the cession of Libya and the Dodecanese Islands to Italy (1912), together with Balkan Wars had almost brought about the extinction of the Ottoman Empire. This succession of events suggested to the Turkish leaders that the war might well be made the pretext for Russian aggression against the long-coveted Straits, perhaps with the connivance of Britain and France. The favourable attitude shown by those two powers to the new Christian states of the Balkans in the Balkan wars was taken to justify those fears.

To begin with, both the Straits and Asia Minor had ceased to be a centre of interest to British foreign policy after the acquisition of the Suez

---

\(^1\) *Talat Paşa'nın Hıtraları*, ed. by H. C. Yalçın, Istanbul, 1946.

\(^2\) Cemal Pasa, *Hıtralar*, ed. by C. Selk, Istanbul, 1959. There is also an earlier edition in English, Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish statesman, 1915–1919*, London, 1919, where the author deleted on purpose certain paragraphs so as not to annoy some individuals. But the editor, who owns the original manuscript, inserted them all in the Turkish edition.

\(^3\) See the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*, 13 October–11 December 1946.

\(^4\) See the daily *Tanın*, 15 October–21 November 1944.


How Turkey drifted into World War I

Canal. On the contrary, the inability of the Porte to fulfil its reforms for its Christian subjects, and the campaign of its agents pouring discontent in the European press, had finally led Lord Salisbury to declare openly that Britain had been putting her money on the wrong horse. So with the change of geographical setting, British policy had also taken a different turn, which ended the Disraeli tradition in the Near East.  

British alienation from Turkey became much clearer to the Turks when, in the tedious negotiations to settle the Armenian reform question in the Eastern Anatolian provinces of Turkey (May 1913–February 1914), London refused the Turkish offer to appoint English inspector-generals without the prior consent of Russia. Thus when the war clouds began to gather, protagonists of neutrality, at the cost of Russian control of the Straits, could find no very convincing grounds for supporting their position. When the crisis came to a final head in August 1914, there were four different opinions in the Turkish cabinet: (i) supporters of Germany, who were convinced that the Triple Alliance would win a decisive and speedy victory; (ii) supporters of the Entente, who believed that, owing to their vast resources Britain, France and Russia would triumph in the end; (iii) those who were aware of Russian intentions towards Turkey and suggested an alignment with Germany, but coupled their suggestion with the proposal that Turkey should avoid an armed conflict and maintain armed neutrality until she was satisfactorily prepared for war; (iv) dissidents advocating complete neutrality.  

Turkish policy should have followed the third of these courses. But the progress of diplomacy played into the hands of Enver, who favoured the first course and put Turkey prematurely on a war footing. That being done, he was able to wait patiently, allowing his opponents, advocates of the second course, to take the initiative in seeking a western alliance and seeing them fail to make an impression on the intransigence of Britain and France.

In actual fact both London and Paris underestimated the military strength of Turkey; nor could Russia have known that the Turkish fronts

---

7 A. Cunningham, 'The wrong horse: A Study of Anglo-Turkish relations before the first world war', Middle Eastern Affairs, St Antony's Papers, Oxford, 1965, p. 61.
10 Sabis, vol. 1, p. 41.
would be fatal to her destiny. Eight years later Lloyd George gave the best description in the House of Commons on August 1922: ‘... that the action taken by Turkey then had the effect of prolonging the war by probably a couple of years. I will go beyond and say that the collapse of Russia was almost entirely due to Turkey and would probably never have happened had the Black Sea been free.’

If France and Britain turned a deaf ear to Turkish overtures, it was because of their desire not to offend Russian susceptibilities. Only Germany knew when to take advantage of the misjudgements of the Entente powers.

Oddly enough, the first great power with whom Turkey attempted to negotiate an alliance was Russia. The visit of Talat and İzzet Pasha, the ex-minister of war, to Livadia had the appearance of a courtesy call on the tsar at his summer resort in the Crimea. Sultan Abdulhamid II had adopted the habit of sending a delegation to greet the tsars when they came to the Black Sea for summer holidays. The first of these visits was made in 1879 and the second in 1891. In the third visit, which took place on 10 May 1914, the Turkish representatives were entertained to dinner by Nicholas II, during which no reference to politics was made. But towards the end of a farewell banquet given on the Turkish yacht Ermişrül in honour of the Russians, Talat whispered into the ear of Sazonov (the Russian foreign minister) an offer of an alliance with Russia. This surprised Sazonov greatly as his ambassador in Istanbul had been reporting that Talat could not be trusted an inch as he was one of the exponents of a pro-German policy in the Turkish government. So Sazonov could only say that this subject might be discussed with Giers in Istanbul.

Russia could have won great advantage by taking the Turkish offer seriously. But the idea of an alliance with Turkey did not even exist in current concepts of Russian foreign policy. For both Izvolsky, St Petersburg’s ambassador in Paris, and Sazonov aimed at conquering the Straits. A rapprochement with Turkey would necessarily have implied the abandonment of such schemes but, as early as May 1914, they could

---

12 Y. H. Bayur, Türk İnkılabı Tarihi, Ankara, 1952, vol. ii, p. 185. See also F.O. 371/3173, enclosure 1 to no. 1259, 5 December 1920. In his memoirs Talat does not mention any talks with Giers on the subject of an alliance. There is good reason to believe that he dropped the matter on account of Sazonov’s indifference.
hardly have realized that their chances of securing a free passage through the Straits were doomed to fail otherwise. Turkey was thus convinced that the diplomatic expedition to Livadia had proved useless. Her two great fears remained. One was the Greek question, with unrest in the south-western provinces of Asia Minor, Smyrna and Aydıñ threatened by the Greek farmers, who since the Hellenic occupation of the eastern Aegean Islands received instructions direct from Athens. The other was the permanent danger of Russian action against the Straits.

So in the early summer of 1914 Istanbul fell to hunting for allies again. Anglo-French economic interests in Turkey led the Turks still to think of France and Britain as suitable allies. The pro-entente party in Istanbul believed that an agreement with Britain or France might protect Turkey against Russian designs and win support for Turkish claims to the Aegean Islands occupied by Greece.

Such an opportunity did occur in July. Being well aware of Cemal’s Francophile dispositions, the French government invited him as their official guest to observe the manoeuvres of the Mediterranean fleet due to take place on 10 July. The minister of marine had pinned all his hopes on the outcome of his talks with the French leaders, in the expectation that his presence at the manoeuvres would enable him to prepare the necessary ground. He obtained the agreement of his colleagues to his accepting the French invitation, but could not help noticing that neither Enver nor Talat were enthusiastic about his trip. But when he arrived in Paris he found that the premier and foreign minister, Viviani, was about to leave for St Petersburg together with President Poincaré. Viviani therefore asked to be excused and referred Cemal to Marjorie, the director of foreign affairs. When Cemal asked for French co-operation, particularly against Greece, he was told bluntly that France could not commit herself before having consulted her allies. On July 18 the minister of marine returned broken-hearted to Istanbul and expressed his disappointment to Bompard, the French ambassador.

It was not only the failure of Cemal’s mission but many other factors that contributed to the triumph of the pro-German party. Now Enver could go into action.

13 Cemal Paşa, Hâsralar, p. 115.
14 Ibid., p. 116.
Y. T. Kurat

When the first Turco-German contacts which culminated in the alliance were made still remains obscure. Enver had served as a military attaché in Berlin in 1910 and 1911. Though he was a good eyewitness of German military strength and his experiences subsequently established his firm conviction in German victory should Germany be involved in a war, no negotiations of any nature could then be contemplated. In 1910 Enver had no influence on the Turkish government, nor was the public opinion in Turkey well disposed towards the Triple Alliance. Strong feelings prevailed against Austria-Hungary for her annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Italy, with her claims on the remaining possessions of the Ottoman Empire in Africa, let alone her ultimate designs in the western Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor (the port of Adalia and its hinterland), was regarded as a confirmed enemy. Even the Germans themselves questioned the use of the Turkish alliance as late as spring 1914. The chief of the German general staff, von Moltke, wrote on 18 May 1914: 'To count on Turkey in the future in favour of the Triple Alliance is a big mistake.' However, Liman von Sanders, the head of the German military mission in Istanbul since December 1913, persuaded Berlin that Turkey in the German camp could render great service to the Triple Alliance by drawing off some of the enemy forces to her own fronts. In contrast, Wangenheim, the German ambassador, opposed Turkish intervention on the side of Germany. However, even though he was overridden, he did more than just carry out his instructions in the most effective manner.

During his office, Grand Vizier Mahmud Shevket Pasha, the victim of a conspiracy on 15 June 1913, was determined to reform the Turkish army by adopting the Prussian example. He had approached the kaiser through Wangenheim requesting that a German general be placed in charge of the reorganization of the army (22 May 1913). Germany did not welcome this request at that time as fighting had not yet ceased in the Balkans and the prospects of a Turkish victory remained uncertain. So it was not before 27 October, after the Turks had made a recovery by their mastery of the right bank of the Maritsa river, that the agreement on the German military mission was signed.

However, Sanders was very unpopular with the Turkish staff officers and Albertini is not right in saying that with the coming of the mission the Turkish capital and army were dominated by the Germans.\textsuperscript{18} Germany was not, as yet, counting on Turkey. Besides, the presence of German officers in the Turkish army was nothing revolutionary. The army had been used to having them for more than three decades. Moreover, it was also customary for the Turkish navy to employ English experts. In 1914 Admiral Limpus was in charge of the Turkish sea forces, following the example of his predecessors, Captain Slade in the middle and Hobart Pasha in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Equally Colonel Baumann of France was entrusted with reorganizing the Turkish gendarmerie. So German preponderance in the Turkish forces did not really come about until the middle of August 1914. However, it would be fair to say that the German military mission formed the nucleus of the German efforts at collaboration during the war.

Enver was in the habit of making frequent contacts with the individual German officers. Actually he had no great love for Liman von Sanders. He preferred the company of General Bronzart, the German adviser to the Turkish General Staff,\textsuperscript{19} with whom he was to make a crucial decision later.

The steps which were taken towards the conclusion of a Turco-German alliance followed secret deliberations, conducted from 18 to 23 July, some of which took place in the villa of the grand vizier and foreign minister, Said Halim Pasha, at Yeniköy, the fashionable summer resort by the Bosphorus. It was decided that Enver should make an official offer to Wangenheim on 22 July for the information of Berlin and Said Halim would simultaneously do the same to Pallavicini, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador.\textsuperscript{20} Oddly enough, the decisions concerning the destiny of the Ottoman Empire were not taken by the Turkish government as a complete and immaculate political body, but by Enver, Halil, Said Halim and Talat, that is by one faction, if the leading one, inside the Turkish government. The rest of the cabinet were kept uninformed of the situation for security reasons.

\textsuperscript{19} A. İ. Sabis, \textit{Harb Hatralarım}, vol. i, p. 53.
Y. T. Kurat

It was only after this that the pro-German party realized the difficulties of the undertaking they had embarked on. Cemal and the minister of finance, Cavid Bey, would not easily yield to the arguments of Enver's faction. However, his failure in France made it much easier to win Cemal over to the German camp. Immediately after Cemal's return from France, Talat approached him and asked Cemal's opinion as to whether he would be in favour of an alliance offer which might come from Germany on 'certain conditions'. Talat was trying to insinuate that further insistence in refusing a rapprochement with Germany would be no longer tenable. Cemal, however, eased the situation by saying: 'I am inclined to accept any alliance which will save Turkey from being isolated.'

Cavid came to know of the alliance only by accident. In their financial difficulties the Turkish government had agreed to declare a 'moratorium', talks on which had been in progress since the beginning of July. So when the minister of finance came to the grand vizier's villa (1 August 1914) for him to sign the bill to that effect, he was surprised to find Weber, the counsellor of the German embassy, there. Cavid felt certain that something extraordinary but very significant was on the way. And when he asked Enver, Halil and Talat, who were also present in the residence, what was about to take place, they would not give any explanation. Not until the grand vizier joined the group and asked Cavid to swear on his honour to keep it confidential, was he informed of the draft agreement on a Turco-German alliance. Nevertheless, he was not told that it would be signed that very evening between Wangenheim and Said Halim. The minister of finance was upset and when asked to give his opinion, he refused to make any comments on the ground that the proposal was completely new to him.

Cemal also was not informed until before midnight when Enver's group decided to discuss the issue with the ministers of finance and marine. Accordingly Cemal was first spoken to by the grand vizier who informed him of the alliance and said that it could not be announced to all the cabinet members. In the meanwhile only eight people, the grand vizier, the grand mufti, the minister of finance, the minister of the interior, the minister of war, the president of the Senate, the minister of justice and the minister of education—Talat was to inform the latter two—pledged to

21 Cemal Paşa, Hattolar, p. 121.
22 'Cavid Bey Hatalarları' (Cavid's memoirs), Tanin, 16 October 1944.
How Turkey drifted into World War I

secrecy in the matter, would know the alliance. Cemal was not as indignant as Cavid for not having been told of the affair at the stage of negotiations with the Germans.

Wangenheim being aware of my endeavours to make a Franco-Turkish alliance might have asked that I should be kept out of the negotiations until a final settlement was reached, taking into account that my political inclinations were against my Government's having talks on the subject of an alliance with Germany and that I might come with very strong objections.23

Cemal made no attempt to resign afterwards and was content to say in his memoirs that he stayed in office in the interests of the country, so as not to cause tension in the government.24

But when that fraction of the government entrusted with the great secret met at Yeniköy shortly after midnight, the strongest objections came from Cavid. He asserted vigorously that it would be a fatal mistake to expect a definite German victory in the war, and that in the event of a defeat Turkey would disappear from the map. Talat said nothing, but Enver, without losing his composure, announced that these objections came too late; 'There is nothing that we can do, the matter is now settled and the Grand Vizier has already signed the agreement.'25 Afterwards a telegram from Tevfik Pasha, the Turkish ambassador in London, dated 1 August, was read, informing the government that Britain had put an embargo on the two Turkish warships under construction in British yards which were due to be handed over to the Turks at Newcastle on 30 July.26 The manner in which the telegram was made known to the members of the government present was no doubt another piece of Enver's strategy, to crush any further opposition on the subject. There had been a nation-wide collection campaign to raise funds to pay for those ships, and their non-delivery would naturally arouse the hostility of Turkish public opinion against Britain.

Churchill, the first lord of the admiralty, said that his country could not afford to dispense with these two fine ships, still less to see them used

23 Cemal Paşa, p. 131.
24 Idem.
25 'Cavid Bey Hatıraları,' Tanımlar, 16 October 1944.
against Britain. Nevertheless, he could not help the inevitable result of the withholding of these two ships, which was to push Turkey definitely into the arms of Germany.

The British decision came as a shock to Istanbul. These ships were not primarily intended for use in the decisive struggle between the Entente and the Triplace, but for use against Greece in case the dispute over the Aegean Islands led to war. The Turkish government expected possible trouble from Athens, as the presence of a dreadnought, the Sultan Osman, and a cruiser, the Reshadiye, would turn the scales in favour of Turkey, in terms of naval strength. Rumours had reached Istanbul that the Greeks intended to send a submarine to Gibraltar to sink these ships or would attack them in the Aegean by mobilizing their whole fleet. So suggestions were even made in the Turkish capital that Germany be requested to lend the Goeben, which was then cruising in the Mediterranean, to act as an escort so as to curb the Greek intentions. But with the British embargo on the Sultan Osman and Reshadiye a probable Greco-Turkish tension turned into hostility against Britain.

Another aspect of the Yeniköy meeting (1–2 August) was the decision to put the following proposals to Germany: (1) Turkey would not go into action until a definite agreement was reached with Bulgaria and Roumania, for the Porte wanted to prevent a Balkan coalition against herself; (2) Germany would support Turkey in the abolition of the Capitulations (trade privileges granted to foreign powers); (3) Germany would not make peace until the enemy forces had vacated territories that belonged to the Ottoman Empire; (4) should Greece fight in the opposite camp and be defeated, Germany would guarantee the return of the Aegean Islands occupied by Greece; (5) Germany would assume the responsibility of rectifying the eastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire in a manner suitable for the establishment of a link with the Muslim peoples of Russia; (6) Germany should see to it that Turkey would get a fair compensation at the end of the hostilities. These were made the basis for talks with Berlin. However, Cavid could rightly say that they ought to have been discussed with the Germans before the signing of the agreement and made conditions of the alliance.

The minister of finance was right, for as Germany was in a state of war

---

27 A. İ. Sabis, Harb Haturalarn, vol. 1, p. 35.
28 'Cavid Bey Haturalari', Tabin, 16 October 1944.
with Russia on 1 August, it meant that Turkey should also enter into the hostilities. Accordingly, as soon as Moltke was informed of the conclusion of the alliance, he wanted Turkey to declare war on Russia immediately, and that the treaty should be made public at once. But Turkey was not in such a hurry. She insisted firmly on the maintenance of the secrecy of the alliance. The only immediate steps taken were the closure of the Parliament on 2 August and the proclamation of neutral mobilization the same day.

When the six Turkish proposals were submitted to Wangenheim on 3 August, he gave assurances only with regard to Germany's not making peace with enemy forces present on Ottoman territory. But when he communicated Berlin's reply (6 August), the German terms were found elastic in the sense that though Germany agreed to carry out all the requirements of the Porte, they were made dependent on Germany winning a decisive victory in the war and her terms being accepted by the enemy. Yet the Turkish provision on the abolition of the Capitulations for instance, did not necessitate a wait-and-see attitude on the part of Germany as a faithful ally.

On the subject of an alliance with Germany, there was much dissension and difference of opinion amongst the leading personalities of the Turkish army. Hafiz Hakki Pasha, the second chief of general staff, and Mahmud Kâmil Pasha, the counsellor of the war ministry, were stout supporters of the German camp. But Lieutenant-Colonel Karabekir, the chief of the Turkish intelligence, felt very unhappy about the sudden changes in the general staff. General Bronzart was appointed to this office, formally replacing Enver, who became the acting commander-in-chief, that is under the sultan, whose assumption of the actual title of commander-in-chief had only a symbolic meaning. The general staff was organized into three sections, operations, intelligence and railways; each section had a German director with Turkish assistant chiefs. Thus the whole control and direction of affairs gradually came into the hands of German officers. For intelligence, the German mission relied on their embassy service, but took the wrong step in appointing the officers under Karabekir to other duties and recalling all the Turkish military attachés abroad as replacements for them. So Karabekir was right in his suspicion that the government had made a secret arrangement with Berlin. And when he expressed

29 C. Mühlmann, Das Deutsch-Türkische Waffenbündnisse, p. 17.
his fears to Enver on this possibility, the latter asked on what grounds had Karabekir reached such a conclusion. His reply was clear and short: 'With a German being appointed as the chief of general staff, does it not mean that we have subordinated our military power into the hands of Germans as a condition of an alliance. If your chief of intelligence entertains such a view, it will not be difficult for the others to share the same opinion.'

Karabekir also said that the recall of military attachés was another trick of Germany. It was done with the intention of keeping Turkey uninformed of the actual military developments on the western front, and exercising complete authority over Istanbul by concealing from the Porte her failures and defeats. In these circumstances he asked to be released from his office. But Enver told him to remain, and withdrew the order on the recall of military attachés. However, he was careful in concealing the alliance and explained the appointment of Bronzart as follows: 'This was indispensable, for Bronzart had prepared the plan on the mobilization and it is quite natural that he should put this into application.'

Whilst the German military mission began to exercise a dominating influence over the Turkish army, the coming of the Goeben and Breslau was to push Turkey further into the arms of Berlin, with the consequent withdrawal of the British naval mission from Istanbul. At the outbreak of hostilities these battleships had been cruising in the midst of the British fleet in the Mediterranean and by virtue of the secret alliance, Turkish waters within the Straits offered the safest shelter. So the ships received instructions to proceed towards Istanbul, and Enver was informed of this development on 4 August. The Turkish commander-in-chief did not hesitate to take the necessary steps for admitting them, but on this subject he fell into disagreement with the grand vizier. Said Halim was reluctant to allow these battleships to pass through the Dardanelles before any firm understanding had been reached with Bulgaria, for he feared that their presence in the Sea of Marmara might immediately push Turkey into war and thus spoil the policy of the Porte. This controversy, in fact, delayed for a while the delivery of the permission for these ships to enter the Straits and exposed them to the threat of the approaching British cruisers.

32 Ibid., p. 184.
Eventually the Goeben and Breslau entered the Dardanelles on 10 August. So Enver had won his round.

Oddly enough, the minister of marine appears to have been uninformed of these developments until Enver announced the fait accompli at a meeting attended by Talat, Cav VID and Halil at the grand vizier's residence on 11 August. And yet Turkey faced a dilemma. Under the terms of the laws of war these ships could not remain in Turkish waters more than twenty-four hours; the alternative would be to offer Britain a casus belli. After two hours of deliberations it was decided that they should be disarmed and made incapable of going to sea. Then Talat and Halil went to the German embassy but found Wangenheim adamant in refusing to abide by this decision. He said that though Turkey had decided to remain neutral for the time being, the sheltering of these two ships was indispensable, and it should be equally indispensable for the Porte to sever all relations with the Entente as a natural consequence of this development. Immediately afterwards another meeting ensued at the grand vizier's villa. Enver associated himself with Wangenheim's views but faced the stiff opposition of all the others. Finally Halil said: 'Would it not be possible for the Germans to have sold us these ships beforehand? And would it not be possible to explain their entering the Dardanelles on this basis? This proposal received general acceptance and Wangenheim agreed to cable it to Berlin, whence a reply arrived at 4 a.m. on 12 August. Accordingly Turkey could announce the purchase of these two ships, on condition that Admiral Souchon, the commander of the Goeben, was employed by the Ottoman navy.

This action, more than any other, was to prove fatal for Turkish neutrality. No longer could Turkey be regarded as a completely neutral country when the Goeben [Yavuz] and Breslau [Midilli—meaning Lesbos then under Greek occupation]—appeared by the Princes Islands near Istanbul on 16 August. The understanding of the ministry of marine was

31 Cemal Paşa, Haturalar, p. 135.
32 With the exception of Talat, all the leading Turkish personalities of the first world war have in their memoirs carefully omitted the name of the person who proposed the purchase of the Goeben and the Breslau. Also Halil makes no reference to his own name (‘Halil Bey Haturalar,' Cumnuriyet, 24 October 1946). See Talat Paşa’num Haturalar, p. 27.
33 Cemal Paşa, Haturalar, p. 135.
34 Ibid., p. 136.
that Turkish officers and crews would take over from the Germans off Principo Island, then the ships would anchor as Turkish ships off the Golden Horn. But Admiral Souchon refused to agree. And although both the Goeben and Breslau were flying the Turkish flag, Souchon would not lower his ensign. Thus the situation had become embarrassing for Rauf Bey, who having just arrived from England without the Sultan Osman, on account of the British embargo, had been promised the command of the Goeben or Breslau. But Souchon’s attitude showed that he was determined not to abandon either the ships or their German crews. When Rauf complained to the minister of marine, Cemal said: ‘What can we do, neither does that fellow (Souchon) leave the ships, nor does he lower his ensign. These ships belong to us nominally.’\(^{38}\) Whereupon Rauf said: ‘Then make me the commander of the torpedo fleet, so we can surround these ships and force the crew out.’\(^{39}\) But the following day was full of surprises. A German was brought to the command of the torpedo fleet and Enver asked Rauf to lead a delegation carrying a letter and presents to the Afghan king, as the run of affairs did not permit him to go in person. Most surprising was Rauf’s acceptance of this exile without hesitation.\(^{40}\) So the events made it clear that Cemal was playing Enver’s tune.

Limpus had already resigned on his own account after the ships had entered the Dardanelles. The British admiral, as the commander-in-chief of the Turkish fleet, wanted to deal with the so-called Ottoman ships, in order to train the Turkish crews who were supposed to be on them. But upon Cemal’s refusal he asked to be relieved of his duties temporarily and retired to Therapia by the Bosphorus. Upon his temporary resignation, all the British personnel in the shipyards were asked to leave the works and sent to offices in the ministry of marine. So it became clear to London that Turkey was no longer neutral and her entry into war on the German side was imminent. Therefore the first measures taken were that both the Yavuz and Midilli should be treated as German ships if they left the Dardanelles. They could not be regarded as Turkish ships as there had been no genuine sale.\(^{41}\) The other step was the withdrawal of the British

\(^{39}\) Idem.
\(^{40}\) Idem.
\(^{41}\) Malet to Grey, 7 September 1914, tel. confidential, F.O. 371/2141, file 40071. There being no sale is also confirmed by Cemal Pasha, see Haturalar, p. 136.
naval mission, since Admiral Limpus's presence had become derogatory to the prestige of Britain, as he was forced to give up all executive control. But what made London more anxious was that the mission could be detained as prisoners of war if Germany struck in the East and Turkey followed her. Accordingly the mission left Istanbul on 20 September and Admiral Souchon took the Turkish fleet for a light practice cruise in the Black Sea on the following day.

Strangely enough the very day that the German battleships arrived, a secret meeting was held at the general headquarters (16 August, in the evening). Enver and Hafiz Hakki, the second chief of staff, were the only Turks present. The German military figures included Sanders, Bronzart and Lieutenant-Colonel von Kress. Souchon's coming ashore to take part in the discussions gave an added interest. The Germans considered the Bulgarian alliance almost certain and pressed Enver for the speeding up of complete mobilization. Then strategical matters were discussed. General von Sanders intended to land Turkish troops on the coast between Odessa and Akkerman in order to ease the Russian pressure on the Austro-Hungarian forces. But this project was not supported by the majority of the Germans who, with the backing of naval experts, rather favoured an attack on Suez, which they imagined would cut off the transport of British reinforcements to the western front, and make Turkey again the actual master of Egypt. So the decisions taken were that, in the meantime two plans for the projected campaigns in the Black Sea and against Suez would be prepared.

Accordingly Hafiz Hakki instructed Major Sabis, the assistant chief of operations, to draft the necessary orders for the campaign on the Black Sea front. To this Sabis objected. General von Sanders's strategy, he argued, was not tenable, for the Turkish transport ships would have to cover a distance of 300 miles from the Bosphorus in order to go to Odessa or Akkerman, which they could not do in under thirty hours and during this time the Russian fleet could be easily alerted. Therefore it was first necessary to destroy the Russian ships to make the landing effective. Sabis also said that Souchon's view should be required in a written report if somebody was to bear the full responsibility for the landing. At the same

42 Churchill's minute, 9 September 1914, F.O. 371/2141, file 47817.
44 Ibid., p. 173.
time Sabis issued the following instructions for the knowledge of his subordinates in the planning section: ‘(1) plans on Odessa campaign will be kept top secret, (2) in principle we are against it, (3) warn the officers working with Souchon not to show our naval strength as being more than it is.’

Sabis’s objections had their effect and Enver asked Souchon to give a written report, which was submitted on 10 September. The German admiral had found the Ottoman navy inferior to the Russian, though he claimed that the Goeben and Breslau could bridge the gap to a great extent. But he reported that for the landing to become effective Ochakof, Odessa and Sebastopol would have to be blockaded in order to harass the Russian men of war. This the Ottoman fleet was incapable of doing. In the absence of such a blockade, the Turkish transports would be exposed to surprise attacks by enemy naval forces. Last but not least he maintained that the coast between Odessa and the estuary of the Danube was unsuitable for amphibious operations. If a landing was to be carried out, the bridgehead ought to have been chosen near to the Roumanian frontier. Though Souchon concluded with the intention of conducting more observations, it was natural for him to express faith in swift action as a belligerent German. Nevertheless, he had quite invalidated the strategy of von Sanders.

In the meantime the Turkish attempt to win the Bulgarian alliance had come to nothing. For this purpose Talat and Halil had gone to Sofia. But the agreement they signed on 19 August in Sofia was merely a paper of convenience with no commitments on the part of Bulgaria, its terms merely stipulating that neither of the powers was entitled to declare war against any Balkan state without consulting the other. In the event of failure to consult, the country remaining neutral was required only to practice benevolent neutrality. But as even the coming into force of this agreement was made conditional on the conclusion of an agreement between Bulgaria, Roumania and Turkey or between Bulgaria and Roumania alone, the indifference and detachment of Bucharest made the whole agreement completely nugatory.

Thus the negotiations with Bulgaria and Roumania ended in a fiasco.

46 Ibid., p. 182.
How Turkey drifted into World War I

Turkish preparations for mobilization were also painful. The 700,000 men under arms were very badly supplied as the War Office had not yet had time to replace all the losses suffered during the Balkan War. Strenuous efforts were being made to obtain army cloth, boots and tents from England and Italy, but both countries had prohibited the export of such articles and the Germans could not supply them. The government had issued requisitioning orders, but the measures taken by the requisitioning commissions were foolish. No care was taken as to whether articles were really wanted or not. As a result ladies' footwear and hose were seized. The requisitioning of the country's stocks of flour and wheat threatened a national shortage in August; but conditions returned almost to normal in September. However, the minister of finance could not raise the necessary funds for the expenses of mobilization. Cavid threatened to resign if the constant proposals to divert the funds reserved for the payment of the instalments of the national debt were adopted. So at a meeting on 25 September, Enver's group proposed to ask Germany for credits. Opposing this Cavid argued that Berlin could only lend money upon Turkey's entry into war. It was therefore useless to press the issue, Enver however insisted and accordingly Muhtar Pasha, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin was instructed to tell Zimmerman, the general secretary of the German foreign ministry, that his government would like to borrow five million Turkish pounds in gold from German banks. Zimmerman's reply, that this could be arranged as soon as Turkey opened hostilities on the side of Germany, confirmed Cavid's arguments. To outmanoeuvre him, Zimmerman even suggested that the loan should be advanced by the German Treasury before the outbreak of hostilities but that the bulk of the money, four million Turkish lira, was to be paid in monthly instalments after Turkey's intervention.

Zimmerman's proposal had the approval of the German chancellor and the Treasury was ordered to make a quarter of a million Turkish lira available for shipment. Wangenheim, who had been opposed to involving Turkey in war, received firm instructions to effect rapid intervention. Enver welcomed the German readiness to help Turkey financially, as it

48 Irvin and Sellers, hardwood merchants, to Grey, 6 October 1914, F.O. 371/2143, file 56867.
51 Ibid., pp. 375–6.
removed the objections of the minister of finance. With the German credit the upkeep of the army could find an immediate solution and he would be ready to go into action with all his manpower. The minister of marine was now completely at his disposal; Talat and Halil were his other confidants. So these men announced to Wangenheim on 11 October that Souchon would receive orders to attack the Russian fleet as soon as the two million Turkish lira had been received. Thus the action party would confront the grand vizier with the alternative of collaboration or retirement. And until such time the plan was to be kept secret from Said Halim. Accordingly gold amounting to 1,900,000 Turkish lira came in two shipments, reaching Istanbul in record time, the first shipment on 16 October, the other on 21 October both via Roumania. The shipment was also known by the British and Russian intelligence though not the exact amount involved in the two shipments.

. . . It is probable that between 2 and 3 millions arrived altogether. This need not indicate immediate declaration of war, although it seems to fit in with the Russian ambassador’s recent information that the country being in financial ruin, money is essential to keep things going.

Great care was taken to keep Cavid completely in the dark about these financial arrangements and when learning it on 20 October he showed no reaction to it as it involved no intervention in his own budget.

Though a rupture was not effected before the beginning of November, relations between Turkey and Britain were becoming more and more strained, although both sides endeavoured to be polite and smooth in diplomatic contacts. First the anti-British campaign in the local press, which started with the seizure of the Sultan Osman and the Reshadiye, was intensified in October. A great many articles appeared supporting the German propaganda which aimed at subverting the Muslim peoples in the British Empire against the Entente, declaring that Britain and France were determined to efface Islam, whereas Germany was the good friend of the faithful.

53 Trumpener, 'Turkey's entry into world war I', p. 376.
54 Malet to Grey, 23 October 1914, tel. deciphered, F.O. 371/2139, file 62834.
As a consequence of the Breslau's and Goeben's escape into the Sea of Marmara the English fleet was patrolling the mouth of the Dardanelles. Consequently the Straits were effectively closed by mines, so that the question of reopening them was no longer a practical one. And on 7 October, the Porte announced that the Turkish skies were forbidden to foreign aeroplanes. In reply, the British fleet, assisted by some of the units of the French squadron, were instructed to stop all material of strategic nature from entering the Dardanelles. Particularly no coal was to be allowed to reach the Ottoman fleet on the ground that it was for use of German warships in Turkish waters. So all colliers had to be stopped.

This measure had its effect and the Turks began to feel a shortage of coal. Accordingly the statement made in the Istanbul press led by Terdjuman-i-Hakikut (The Observer) that the allied fleet outside the Dardanelles had prevented the importation of merchandise became accurate. Also Malet, the British ambassador, found it necessary to make representations to Talat that this was inexact and complained of the hostile attitude of the Turkish press which provoked public opinion against Britain: 'Your Highness has begged me not to attach too much importance to the newspapers. . . . I should have been in agreement with Your Highness . . . but it must be remembered that the Ottoman Empire is now under martial law, and that vigorous press censorship is enforced.'

On the question of coal Turkish efforts to induce the United States and the old English firm of Whitall in Istanbul to overcome the blockade were of no avail. Without it being necessary for Britain to make representations, the U.S. government agreed to hold up exports to Turkey as much as possible. As far as Whitall's were concerned they resisted the Turkish pressure, and warned London to watch the innocent transports destined for the ports of Smyrna and Dedeagatch. In addition the troop movements in Syria and Iraq in the middle of October had aroused the suspicion

56 Malet to Grey, 5 October 1914, no. 56212, F.O. 371/2142, file 5085. On September 26, the British naval forces in the Dardanelles had informed the Turkish naval authorities that henceforth all Turkish ships leaving the Straits would be treated as enemy forces. In reply, Enver ordered the closure of the Dardanelles to all foreign ships. Minesfields were laid by the Turks across the Dardanelles to reinforce this order. Trumpener, 'Turkey's entry into world war 1', p. 373 and footnotes 25 and 26.
57 Grey to Malet, 2 October 1914, tel. no. 635, F.O. 371/2143, file 5506.
58 Malet to Grey, 6 October 1914, enclosure, no. 626, F.O. 371/2413, file 60964.
59 G. P. Clarke's minutes, 6 October 1914, F.O. 371/2143, file 60948.
60 Malet to Grey, 20 October 1914, no. 1538, F.O. 371/2143, file 52000.
of Britain whilst a heated press campaign continued against Egypt. When Bompard met Cemal and asked about the situation in the Middle East, the latter said that England was treating Egypt as if it belonged to her, whereas it formed part of the Ottoman dominions. They felt about it as France did about Alsace-Lorraine. They would do nothing officially but would not shut their eyes to any moves leading to a definite English annexation of Egypt.61

Moreover, the British fleet had received instructions to stop the Turkish gunboats leaving Alexandretta on the ground that the Germans controlled the Turkish fleet and their crews remained in the Goeben and Breslau.62 This, in fact, meant the further blockade of the whole Syrian coast as far as Egypt. So with the British enforcement of economic and military blockade, London and Istanbul were on the verge of war. All that remained was to supply a match to explode the powder. In addition between 28 September and 21 October the British colonial office had made all the preparations to proclaim Cyprus a crown colony at the commencement of hostilities with Turkey.63

Thus it was obvious that Turkey’s entry into war would not take Britain by surprise. However, the front where the first shots would be exchanged remained open to conjecture. Malet thought that it would probably be in Egypt, though he believed that Turks did not stand a chance there, whereas Giers, the Russian ambassador, felt very much concerned about an attack on the Russian Black Sea fleet.64 By contrast with Giers’ anxieties, the atmosphere in Russia was quite bellicose regarding Turkey. The most influential member of the government, the minister of agriculture, had remarked to Buchanan, the British ambassador, on 24 September, that he personally would be glad if Turkey declared war on Russia, as then the Turkish question would finally be settled. Opinion was gaining ground that it could only be at the expense of Turkey that Russia would obtain some material advantage. For the acquisition of further territory on Russia’s western frontiers in Posen or Galicia was no longer regarded as adding to Russian strength. By contrast, Turkey was
the great attraction as she could be made to pay for her hostility on the termination of the war in coin that Russia would welcome.\textsuperscript{65}

The fears of Giers were to prove true, the attack was to come on the Black Sea. Needless to say the German defeat on the Marne in September 1914 had then had the effect of increasing German pressure on Turkey for her to enter the war. The Turkish need of a loan worked to the advantage of Germany, and on 11 October Wangenheim received secret assurances from Enver, Halil and Talat that the Porte would intervene very soon. However, in the cabinet meeting of those members informed of the German alliance that took place the following day (12 October), Halil had changed his mind and supported the motion that it would be better to wait until spring to enter the war, whereas Enver recommended immediate intervention. And Cavid threatened resignation if the country declared war. But the main purpose of the meeting for Enver was to test the grand vizier, who seemed to be confused and unable to give an opinion.\textsuperscript{66} So the only decision taken was that the Turkish military experts should be asked to report on the preparedness of the Ottoman forces for war. By this date however Berlin had lost patience. General von Sanders told Enver on 20 October that if Turkey delayed intervening any longer, then the shipment of money would be stopped. And on 21 October Bronzart and Enver got together and prepared the Turkish war plan. The Turkish fleet was to attack the Russian fleet in order to secure the mastery of the Black Sea, then the Caucasian and Egyptian fronts would be opened. The timing of the attack on the Russian Black Sea fleet was left to the discretion of Admiral Souchon. This strategy was cabled to Berlin and approved on 22 October.\textsuperscript{67}

On 21 October Karabekir and Sabis had delivered their report to the government indicating that Turkish military potential was inadequate for the commencement of hostilities. On the strength of this document, the cabinet in its meeting on 25 October decided to send Halil and Hafiz Hakki to Berlin to convince the German leaders of the need for another six months' delay.\textsuperscript{68} Hafiz Hakki left at once and Halil was to go

\textsuperscript{65} Buchanan to Grey, 25 September 1914, no. 456, very confidential, F.O. 371/2143, file 52082.


\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 37.

immediately after being present in the Court ceremonial celebrating the first day of the Bayram (religious holiday) on 29 October.

However, a comedy was being played, for Enver had already given a verbal instruction to Souchon, (since 24 September officially the commander-in-chief of the Ottoman fleet), of which the general headquarters was completely unaware, to attack the Russian fleet. But though Souchon came under his command, he was also a German admiral. For this reason Wangenheim sent Humann, the naval attaché, to the general headquarters. As the commander-in-chief was not in his office, Humann dictated a note to his aide-de-camp, Colonel Kâzım Bey. It was necessary for Enver to give a written instruction to Souchon, for in the event of failure in the action, it would mean a direct blow to German prestige. The Germans were right in asking for such a document, but Enver's written instruction to Souchon on 25 October, ('Attack the Russian fleet at a time that you find suitable'), put the full responsibility on his own shoulders.69

In these circumstances it was impossible for Cemal not to be informed of what was going on. For the senior Turkish naval officers knew as early as 27 October that there was to be action taken against Russia at 4 a.m. on 29 October.70 So the Turkish fleet congregated outside the Bosphorus in the early hours of 28 October, and, having received their orders from the Goeben, they set off for their different targets. Everything went according to the clock. Between 3.30 and 3.45 a.m. Odessa was attacked by the torpedo boats which sank one gunboat and heavily damaged another inside the breakwater, also a petroleum tank was set ablaze. The Goeben accompanied by a cruiser went to Sebastopol and set one part of the town

70 Malet to Grey, 12 November 1914, very confidential, enclosure 2-B (statement by Dr Shirley), F.O. 371/2145, file 71623. Dr Shirley, an American doctor, was the best neutral observer of the Turkish attack on the Black Sea, being on one of the torpedo boats which went to Odessa. He was asked to transfer at Messina from the German passenger ship, on which he worked, to the General that served as a hospital ship to the Goeben and Breslau. He accepted the change for the sake of humanity. The General followed the two warships and came to Istanbul before 14 August. 'But during my stay in General which became the ship of entertainment for the Goeben and Breslau and the Turkish fleet, I became on intimate terms with all who came on board. . . . The German commodore asked me if I should like to see a little fun which was about to start. I said to him I shall be glad to take care of the sick and wounded.'
on fire, destroyed the fortress and sunk several small gunboats. A Turkish transport, the *Samsun*, with many mines on board laid them around Sebastopol after the bombardment, absolutely cutting off the remainder of the Russian fleet. Moreover, the *Goeben*, after having sunk a Russian minelayer with 700 mines, took forty prisoners.\(^{71}\)

According to the plan, Souchon in his telegram to the general headquarters in the morning (29 October) attributed the whole affair to the provocation of the Russian fleet, as if they had harassed the Ottoman fleet whilst in practice. He reported, too, that a Russian minelayer with hostile intentions against the Bosphorus was also sunk. This information camouflaged Enver's secret dealings, for Souchon had the permission of the government to conduct manoeuvres on the Black Sea, as Enver had formally maintained that the presence of the fleet there would be a demonstration of strength against Bulgaria and Roumania so as to curb any intention on their part to enter the camp of the Entente.

When the news began to spread later in the day its immediate effect was to threaten a cabinet crisis. For nobody except Enver, Talat and Cemal knew of the incident beforehand. This came as a particular shock to the grand vizier and to the ministers of posts and telegraphs, agriculture, and public works, who had been unaware of the government's proceedings. Mahmud Pasha, the minister of public works, asked for an urgent cabinet meeting to discuss the subject, but was fobbed off by Talat. So there was no meeting on 29 October, but an extraordinary session of the government and the principal members of the Committee of Union and Progress was summoned for the following day. This was again the doing of Cemal, Enver and Talat, expressly planned to enlist the support of the bellicose members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who did not hold any office, against the more moderate ministers.\(^{72}\)

The grand vizier's immediate reaction was to order the cessation of hostilities, but as all the fleet had returned early on 30 October, there was no need to take further action. However, Said Halim's situation was quite painful when the ambassadors of the Triple Entente asked for their passports. He tried to be conciliatory in tone and told them that he would do

---


\(^{72}\) Bayur, vol. iii, p. 248.
Y. T. Kurat

his utmost to solve this crisis. All the ambassadors sympathized with him, but they knew that he could not alter the situation, though Said Halim had decided not to tender his resignation on condition that 'damage is repaired and an apology is given to Russia.' This was tacitly accepted by the war party, otherwise it would have proved a national disaster.

There was only one action that would have perhaps stopped the war, namely the dismissal of the German military mission and of Admiral Souchon. At the meeting of the Committee of Union and Progress, Cavid argued very strongly for this course; but the majority, including Halil, opposed him on the grounds that it would offend Germany; in addition they were bound by the alliance not to resort to such an alternative. Supporters of Turkey's entry into the war maintained that Turkey's return to neutrality would not leave the Straits completely under her control, for on the termination of hostilities Russia might attempt to occupy the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, disregarding the fact that the reopening of the Straits would provide her with military supplies and make her victorious in the war. Notwithstanding these arguments, the reality was that Turkey was too impotent to enforce a German withdrawal, and the flow of events made it certain that there was to be no going back.

However, as a sop to the grand vizier's worries, the meeting decided to address a note to St Petersburg. So a Turkish note was duly dispatched to St Petersburg, to the effect that although the incident on the Black Sea was provoked by the Russian fleet, the Porte was ready to settle the matter amicably by making all the necessary compensations. But this was far from being satisfactory to Sazonov, who repudiated the accusation that Russia was originally responsible. In actual fact, almost every member of the Turkish government thought that this apology would not assuage Russia. Sazonov told Fahrettin Bey, the Turkish chargé d'affaires, that it was too late to negotiate: nevertheless, if the Porte decided upon the immediate dismissal of all German military officers, it might be possible to consider the question. However, Sazonov knew very well that he was asking for the impossible. On 31 October when Bompard referred to such a possi-

73 Idem.
74 'Cavid Bey Hâturalı', Tarih, 22 November 1944.
76 Ibid., pp. 255–6.
77 Sazonov to Count Benckendorff, 1 November 1914, tel. confidential, F.O. 371/2145, file 66389.
lity, he could gather from Cavid’s attitude that the Porte was unable to take such a step.

Consequently the Entente ambassadors left Istanbul in the evening of 31 October and on 1 November. Then on 3 November, the Russians declared war and the British fleet bombarded the Dardanelles. So Turkey was at war, and Enver had attained his end. However, it would be unfair to condemn him as a traitor. There is no doubt of his patriotism. As far as his policy was concerned, he believed in German victory and did everything in his power to secure the alliance with Germany. To do this was not a simple matter; but it would have been impossible had Britain and France given material guarantees to Turkey against Russia and Greece. If they had done this, the Porte would have exercised a neutrality as recommended by the western powers, allowing freedom of passage in the Straits. In the absence of such a commitment, Turkey’s only hope of security seemed to lie with Germany. So Enver’s impetuous character and the German pressure on Turkey to make her enter the war paved the way for the fall of the Ottoman Empire.
As secretary of war Lord Kitchener was never so preoccupied with the conduct of the operations in the west as to lose interest in events in the east. He had a long and multifarious experience of those portions of British dominions in which Islam constituted the very basis of social solidarity among the local populations. His last appointment before the move to Whitehall had been in Egypt, a country under the formal suzerainty of Turkey. He was very much aware of the significance of the Ottoman Caliphate and Empire to British interests in the east. Among the War Council members of the Asquith cabinet, Kitchener was perhaps the one most interested in and most knowledgeable of things Turkish. As might be expected he had a word to say in the decisions which led, in 1915–16, to the projected partition of the Ottoman Empire among the Allies.

This has been made clear by both his biographers, Sir George Arthur and Sir Philip Magnus, though briefly and in rather general terms. The scarcity of first-hand sources has made the subject difficult to approach. Kitchener left a very limited number of personal notes on these last twenty-two months of his life. Only two or three significant cabinet memoranda written by him on the Turkish question were circulated among the War Council members. Outside the ministerial meetings he discussed the matter with very few persons. Even at the most critical stage of the negotiations that resulted in the Anglo-French agreement of 1916 he kept in touch with the situation mainly through his personal military secretary, Colonel O. A. G. FitzGerald, who perished with him in the catastrophe of H.M.S. Hampshire.
The public records now available make it possible to seek an answer to more specific questions on Kitchener’s rôle in dealing with Turkey. Some of them provide new material for the following discussion of the last phase of his eastern policy. An attempt has been made here to separate the war lord from the statesman and to consider how far his action and possible inaction were motivated by the necessities of the war on one hand, and by the needs for a future peace settlement on the other. The perplexing but inevitable dilemma of Kitchener’s responsibility for the conflicting pledges given to the French and Arabs in 1915–16 has also been approached, however incomplete the documentation in hand.

Lord Kitchener was never an anti-Turk as such. On the contrary, he had at times given expression to his friendly attitude toward the Turks and sincerely wished that the two empires could coexist on acceptable terms without interfering in each other’s internal affairs. Although in 1914, even before the Turks had actually entered the war, he approached the Arabs of the Hijaz in order to incite them to disobey the Constantinople government, six months as well as a quarter of a century earlier he had taken a quite different position as regards Arab aspirations.

When Turkey slipped into German hands the situation changed conclusively. Kitchener noticed it personally when he visited Constantinople in 1910. ‘We are out of it altogether,’ he wrote to a friend, ‘and the German is allowed to do as he likes.’ As a result of this development, Kitchener had been actively preparing himself for the worst, at least since

Asiatic Turkey, who gave this information in a personal letter to Sir George Arthur on 12 September 1916 (K[itchener] P[apers], P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], London, 30/57/91), took perhaps too exaggerated a view on the scarceness of source material: ‘Documents I think there are probably none, and unless I write betimes (even now memory fades), no one I expect will ever know whether Lord Kitchener had any influence in the shaping of the destiny of that part of the world or not.’

Jukka Nevakivi

1911 when he served as consul-general in Egypt. Large-scale reconnaissance operations, recommended by the Committee of Imperial Defence, were carried out in the Lebanon, Palestine and the Sinai–Negev area (here camouflaged as an expedition of the Palestine Exploration Fund for which Kitchener himself had conducted a map survey of western Palestine in 1874–77). During the same period his contacts with the Syrian nationalists fed increasing rumours to the effect that the British were making preparations for the seizure of Syria.  

Likewise in Cairo Kitchener made the acquaintance and gained the respect of various prominent Arab nationalists as well as of Emir ‘Abdullah. We are informed that he had conceived a ‘long–cherished idea of forming an independent Arab State in Arabia and in Syria’ and that even before leaving India in 1909 he seems to have contemplated the possibility of creating in western Arabia a new caliphate independent of Ottoman control and alien European influence.  

Consequently, when in the autumn of 1914 reports from Constantinople and Syria hinted at an immediate Turkish offensive against the Suez canal, and nervousness in Egypt reached its heights, it was quite natural that the new secretary of war should think anew of Emir ‘Abdullah, who had


Lord Kitchener and the Partition of the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916

proposed co-operation against the Turks less than six months earlier. According to Sir Ronald Storrs,11 who, with Captain G. H. Clayton,12 seems to have suggested the idea to their old chief, the first message sent upon the instructions of Kitchener, on 24 September 1914, was destined to secure the benevolent neutrality of the Arabs of the Hijaz and thus to persuade them not to deliver camels to the Turks, who were then preparing an advance westwards through the Sinai desert.13

After this first-aid measure, the emergency called for a bold effort of secret diplomacy, to make the Arabs change camp altogether: the enemy was then gaining control not only over the sultan-caliph but also over the Muslim Holy Places. The pilgrimage to Mecca was suspended, and a Turkish-sponsored jihad against the British, it was feared, might burst into flame any day. It was consequently necessary to induce the sharif of Mecca to co-operate actively against the Turks. If the Arabs assisted England, Kitchener cabled on 31 October in his second message to ‘Abdullah, they would be guaranteed against any intervention and foreign aggression, and the sharif could count on the British government’s recognition, if he were proclaimed caliph. In his answer, received in Cairo on 10 December, ‘Abdullah asked for time in order to await a favourable moment for the rupture with the Turks.14 But he had now definitely cast his lot with England and, as Antonius put it, with his reply ‘the first chapter in the Anglo-Arab conspiracy came to a close’.15

When the first soundings between the allies on their desiderata as regards the future settlement in Turkey indicated that some sort of partition would be inevitable, Kitchener set himself to formulating his theory of a ‘separate Muslim entity in Asiatic Turkey’. In a memorandum dated 16 March 1916 he wrote:

Should the partition of Turkey take place, it is to our interests to see an Arab kingdom established in Arabia under the auspices of England,

11 Oriental secretary to the consul-general in Egypt.
12 Later General Sir Gilbert Clayton, then agent of the Sudan government in Cairo.
13 Storrs, pp. 148–9, and Antonius, p. 130.
14 Storrs, p. 152.
15 Antonius, p. 134. The idea of using the Arabs against the Turks was suggested, in the autumn of 1914, also by Lord Cromer (in his letter of October 1914 to ‘Effendim’ alias Cromer’s former oriental secretary in Cairo, Cromer Papers, P.R.O., F.O. 633/18).
bounded on the north by the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, and
containing within it the chief Mohammedan Holy Places, Mecca,
Medina, and Kerbala. . . . This, in our position as the greatest of
Moslem States, would greatly enhance our prestige amongst the many
millions of our Mohommedan subjects.16

Among his former staff at the residency in Cairo, which Kitchener had
informed about his project, it was received with enthusiasm. 'A North
African or Near Eastern Vice-Royalty including Egypt and the Sudan and
across the way from Aden to Alexandretta,' Storrs exulted, 'would surely
compare in interest and complexity, if not in actual size, with India itself.'17
India, for her part, took a different view. Although admitting that it might
be possible 'by common consent of Islam' to revert the caliphate to the
descendants of the Prophet's family in Mecca, in other words to the family
of Sharif Husain, the secretary of the political department of the India
office was convinced that there was no material for an independent Arab
state in the proper sense of the word. For him, the actual British treaty
system with local rulers and chiefs along the Arabian coast from Kuwait to
Aden (which was being completed in 1915 by a treaty with Ibn Sa'ud)
seemed sufficient.18 The military department of the India office, in general
agreement with the viceroy (Lord Hardinge), went even further and con-
sidered that Turkey in Asia ought to be preserved and made as strong as
possible after the war.19

Kitchener objected strongly to that opinion when the question was
taken up at the war council meeting of 19 March. If the caliph remained
in Constantinople after the war, he warned, he might fall under Russian
domination, and Russian influence might then indirectly assert itself over
the Muslim populations of India. His stand probably conduced to the
endorsement by the council, at the same meeting, of the principle of 'the
preservation of a Moslem political entity and the maintenance of Moham-

16 'Alexandretta and Mesopotamia', a memorandum by 'K', 16 March 1915,
Cab[inet papers, P.R.O.] 24/1, G12, p. 2.
17 Storrs to FitzGerald, 8 March 1915, personal letter, K.P., P.R.O. 30/57/45,
QQ/18.
18 'Note by the Secretary, political and secret department, India office', 14 March
1915, Cab. 24/1, G15.
19 'Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of a War Council, held at 10 Downing Street
... March 19, 1915', Cab. 22/1/2.
median Holy Places', which was then presented to Russia and France as a desideratum of the British government.20

The Field-Marshal, we know, foresaw that the war would go on for a long time.21 He felt it imperative to avoid premature quarrelling on war rewards with the allies—especially with Russia. 'In doing this job you will make it clear to the Russians that it is to settle up the Entente as regards Turkey and not because we particularly desire to get anything for ourselves', he is reported to have said to Sykes when the latter left for Petrograd in the winter of 1916.22 Kitchener's solidarity with the Russian claims was evident even before the tsar had formally presented them. In a scheme for the partition of Turkey which, according to Sir Wyndham Deedes, he had presumably drawn up about the beginning of January 1915,23 Russia was given the Armenian Province and all the northern part of Anatolia up to the line Malatya-Kayseri-Afyon Kara Hisar to the sea about Mytilene. When Deedes submitted a scheme of his own entitled 'Plea for the retention of a Turkish sphere', the secretary of war did not like the proposal. Instead, on his partition map even Greece and Italy were assigned a portion each: the former the Aidin province up to the line Afyon-Isparta, and the islands of Mytilene and Chios, the latter the coast area west from Adalia (Antalya) bounded in the north by the Aidin Railway.

According to the scheme France was to have Syria, but only as far north as to Hamah. The northern part of Syria was reserved for Britain, which, having also all Mesopotamia and the province of Konya, occupied a lion-shaped zone with the tail in the Persian Gulf and the mouth around the Gulf of Iskenderun, the coveted titbit in the mouth being the harbour of Alexandretta.

Towards the end of 1914 Kitchener, urged by his friend General Maxwell,24 began to incline towards the idea that the best way to respond

21 See e.g. Magnus, p. 284, and Storrs, pp. 126-7, note 1.
22 Sykes to Arthur, 12 September 1916, K.P., P.R.O. 30/37/91.
23 Extracts from the diary of Sir Wyndham Deedes, 10-16 January 1915, pp. 2-4; the papers of Sir Wyndham Deedes, C.M.G., D.S.O. (in January 1915 serving in the military intelligence department at the war office). For permission to use these papers I must thank Mr William Deedes, M.P.
Jukka Nevakivi

to an evident Turkish threat against Egypt was to perform a landing operation at Alexandretta and to cut the enemy's railway communications with Syria at Aleppo. When the offensive was finally directed to the Dardanelles with the intention of bringing quick relief to Russia, the secretary of war went on defending his idea of a landing at Alexandretta as a minor but useful operation to lessen Turkish pressure against Egypt and to help the Russian situation in the Caucasus.25

We may conclude from what his scheme of partition of Turkey has shown to us that in Alexandretta Kitchener's aims were from their very inception political as well as strategical. Sir Henry McMahon gave them a proper interpretation when writing from Cairo on 4 February: 'Our interests as regards the forces attacking both Egypt and Baghdad would justify our occupying that port (Alexandretta); and . . . we might remain there. Its possession would appear to ensure the settlement of the Syrian question to our advantage in due course of time.'26 By that time the battle for Alexandretta was being fought in the cabinet on purely political grounds. Kitchener was bewildered by Sir Edward Grey's suggestion that Cyprus should be given to Greece in return for the latter's eventual declaration of war on Germany and Turkey.27 Thinking of the proximity of the island to the Suez Canal, he met Grey's proposal with strong objections: 'Another Heligoland in big words. . . .'28 Six weeks later, on 10 March, he was advocating the acquisition of Alexandretta for exactly the same strategical reason. The secretary of war surprisingly enough appeared to be thinking less about the success of the war and more about the attainment of an advantageous peace settlement than was the foreign secretary. 'With Russia in Constantinople, France in Syria and Italy on

25 Minutes of the war council, 8 January 1915, p. 8, Cab. 22/1/2.
26 McMahon to Kitchener, 4 February 1915, private letter, K.P., P.R.O. 30/57/45, QQ/15. The successor of Kitchener at the residency of Cairo had backed the Alexandretta plan since it was presented to the war council: a cable of his advocating the plan was read at the meeting of 8 January (minutes of the war council, 8 January 1915, Cab. 22/1/2).
27 The proposal was discussed at the cabinet meeting on 20 January: copies of Prime Minister Asquith's cabinet letters to the king, 1915–16; Asquith Papers (in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), Dep. Asquith 8, cabinet meeting, 20 January 1915. See also: Grey to Kitchener, 19 January 1915, private letter, K.P., P.R.O. 30/57/77. Kitchener had prepared a topographical survey of Cyprus shortly after the British had acquired it, and he much appreciated the new colony's strategical value.
28 Deedes diary, 10–16 January 1915, p. 4.
Rhodes', he warned, 'our position in Egypt would be untenable if any other Power held Alexandretta.' Churchill, then first lord of the admiralty, on the previous day had joined Kitchener in emphasizing that British interests did not require resistance to the Russian claims on the Turkish Straits, 'neither on military nor on naval grounds'; now he backed him up by emphasizing that Britain ought to be able to build up a Mediterranean fleet against France and Russia and to have a naval base at Alexandretta. A. J. Balfour then remarked that 'the War Office and the Admiralty appeared to be in complete agreement', and, seconded by Grey, asked how they expected to be able to defend the new territorial acquisitions they were proposing.

The cabinet was thus clearly divided upon the first topic when making up their minds as to what to do with Asiatic Turkey. 'We must put up a stiff fight for Alexandretta', Lord Fisher wrote to Kitchener on the following day. 'The politicians on both sides (Balfour the worst) want to pander to the French.' The first sea lord had made himself known as the most zealous partisan of a landing at Alexandretta. He did not disguise his motives, dreaming of a great harbour at Alexandretta 'made with less difficulty than Colombo or Cape Town' and of a future waterway connecting it with the Persian Gulf and 'the oil fields of the Garden of Eden (Mesopotamia)'. Kitchener's memorandum dated 16 March 1915, which gives his opinion on the question of Alexandretta, was couched in less colourful words. It was nevertheless a brilliant statement of the case, although, we may say, brilliantly contradictory. Kitchener's short but sharp campaign for the British acquisition of Alexandretta reflects his way of thinking in the last phase of his life: capable of striking flashes of insight, realistic despite an apparent excess of imagination, he was, in fact, puzzled when seeking justification for, and giving orderly structure to his imperial visions.

29 The following description of the discussion on 10 March is based on the minutes of the War Council, 10 March 1915, Cab. 22/1/2.
30 Cabinet meeting, 9 March 1915, copies of Asquith's cabinet letters to the king, 1915, A.P., Dep. Asquith 8.
32 Idem.
Jukka Nevakivi

After having defended the acquisition of Alexandretta at the war council meeting six days earlier by arguing that its occupation after the war was necessary for the defence of Egypt, he now switched argument:

The question of a British occupation of Alexandretta entirely depends upon the future of Mesopotamia, for, if there is no intention of acquiring the Euphrates Valley as a result of this war, the occupation of Alexandretta would mean the establishment of a dangerous outpost, and involve us in responsibilities with no commensurate advantage. But if the acquisition of Mesopotamia is contemplated, it at once becomes a necessity to hold Alexandretta with a British force.³⁴

The reasons why the holding of Alexandretta would then become a necessity were: (1) it would be possible in the case of an emergency to dispatch troops to Mesopotamia by rail from Alexandretta quicker than by sea via Suez; (2) thus, in ordinary times a smaller garrison would suffice in Mesopotamia; (3) the British would be in a favourable strategical position for countering any enemy (Russian) offensive against Mesopotamia; (4) the traffic of arms to the Arabs of Mesopotamia could be controlled at the Mediterranean as well as the Persian Gulf end.

On the other hand, Kitchener’s arguments for the acquisition of Mesopotamia complete ‘the portrait of an imperialist’: (1) if the British would not take Mesopotamia, the Russians would do it sooner or later, thus gaining an outlet to the Persian Gulf; (2) the possession of Mesopotamia would, in addition to the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Egypt, secure for the British all the approaches to the Muslim Holy Places; (3) Mesopotamia was a granary and its unsettled areas would be an ideal field of colonization for the surplus population of India; (4) it would be necessary to guard British interests in the oil fields, and to control the land route from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, another imperial lifeline of the future. In concluding his paper, Kitchener went so far as to state that ‘even a frontier co-terminous with Russia, with all its grave drawbacks, would be preferable to a Franco-Russian domination of the line from the Gulf of Iskenderun to the Persian Gulf’. This was contrary to the views expressed by the India office. While emphasizing that in the future Basra should be retained under British authority, they regarded the acquisition

³⁴ ‘Alexandretta and Mesopotamia’, Cab. 24/1, G12, p. 1.
of Alexandretta as being politically dangerous. General Barrow of the military department proposed that the British be content with the southern part of Syria, although including Damascus and Palmyra in a zone of their own and building an all-British strategic railway through these places from Acre or Haifa to Baghdad. This would not be, he stressed, ‘beyond our military capacity and likely to involve us in a conflict with France’.  

Suddenly one month later Kitchener appears to have changed his attitude on the advisability of having a common frontier with Russia. The most probable result of the war would be a Slavic expansion backed by Russia, he wrote on 21 April with the war game cleverness of a nineteenth-century staff officer who had to face any enemy and every eventuality: the French might form an alliance with Italy and the central powers, and England might become isolated.

As a result of his reconsideration he began to incline towards an acceptance of the solution put forward by the India office which foresaw the necessity of a French ‘buffer zone’ between the British and French dominions. This alternative was to be the one recommended by the committee under the chairmanship of Sir Maurice de Bunsen set up in April 1915 to consider the British desiderata in Asiatic Turkey. Yet, Kitchener was not easily convinced of the necessity to abandon Alexandretta. Sykes, who with Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell represented the war office in the Bunsen committee, later revealed that, during the deliberations of the committee, Alexandretta was the ‘only real point of difference’ between the field-marshal and himself, and that Kitchener was finally ‘reluctantly’ reconciled to Haifa.

In their report the Bunsen committee concluded that ‘the special interest of Great Britain in all future and existing enterprises in the region to the south of the line Haifa–Rowanduz should be formally recognized by the Treaty Powers’. They evidently agreed with Kitchener on the significance of Mesopotamia and of the Mediterranean–Persian Gulf connexion

---

25 ‘Notes and private telegram from the viceroy regarding the future settlement of eastern Turkey in Asia and in Arabia’, 14 March 1915, Cab. 24/1, G5.


27 Sykes to Arthur, 12 September 1916, K.P., P.R.O. 30/57/91.

28 ‘Report of the Committee on Asiatic Turkey, June 1915’, p. 27, Cab. 4/6/1, 220B.
Jukka Nevakivi

for the British Empire. The same accord of views applied to Palestine, the acquisition of which was suggested by Lloyd George. 'Palestine,' Kitchener had commented at the War Council meeting of 10 March, 'would be of no value to us whatsoever.'³⁹ In his memorandum of 16 March he completely omitted to mention Palestine. The Suez Canal, according to his conception, was to be protected by a deep defence reinforced by a base on the Syrian coast. There was a striking similarity here with the strategy for the defence of Egypt, which the committee of imperial defence had planned six years earlier.⁴⁰ The Bunsen committee, while reserving Haifa as the required British base and the terminus of a connecting line with Mesopotamia, pointed to the universal character of the Holy Land and concluded that 'it will be idle for His Majesty's Government to claim the retention of Palestine in their sphere'.⁴¹

It later appeared that Kitchener had somewhat underestimated the attachment of the French to Syria. Inspired perhaps by his Fashoda experience he seems to have imagined that their interest in expansion in Africa would be strong enough to induce them to give up Alexandretta if compensated 'generously' with former German colonies.⁴² At this juncture, too, he showed a talent for Bismarckian calculation. When commenting upon the question of the future of German colonies he had, indeed, cautioned against the British eventually acquiring them, as 'it would more than anything else interfere with the future establishment of goodwill between Germany and ourselves after the war'.⁴³

The settlement in Africa was finally never seriously considered during the negotiations that resulted in the Anglo-French agreement of 1916. Instead of forcing the French to abandon Alexandretta the British representatives had enough trouble to get them to accept the necessity of giving the Arabs their strongly claimed independence. The French did not display any great interest in an early agreement in this respect. Their attention was concentrated upon the Western Front, and being unable to send troops of

³⁹ Minutes of the war council, 10 March 1915, Cab. 22/1/2.
⁴⁰ 'Report of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the Military Requirements of the Empire as affected by Egypt and the Sudan', 11 March 1909, Cab. 16/12, C.I.D. 107/B.
⁴² 'Alexandretta and Mesopotamia', 16 March 1915, p. 4.
⁴³ Minutes of the war council, 10 March 1915, p. 6.
their own to Syria they were reluctant to accelerate the conquest of that country.\textsuperscript{44} They appear, however, to have been impressed by Kitchener's personal interest in reaching a quick solution, and that is why they finally gave up their claims to Palestine and Cyprus, the abandonment of which colony Kitchener did not want even to discuss.\textsuperscript{45}

For the most part, the Sykes-Picot partition that resulted from the Anglo-French negotiations in 1915 adhered to the Haifa-Palmyra-Deir-Zakhu-Ruwandiz line of British interests as suggested by the Bunsen committee. The only notable exception, the cession of Mosul to the French, was chiefly due to Kitchener's worrying that space should be provided between the future British and Russian territories.\textsuperscript{46} Still, his main argument when defending the Haifa-Ruwandiz line in the cabinet was the Arabs. 'These Arabs will come under our control', he said at the war council meeting on 16 December 1915, 'whereas if we are off the line we lose the control of the South.'\textsuperscript{47}

At that time, the development of the war in the east in general, and the failure of the operations in the Dardanelles in particular, had made it urgent to get the Arabs up in arms against Turkey. In Gallipoli there were numerous Arab troops among the enemy forces that held the allied landing in a deadlock. On the other hand, the eventual evacuation of Gallipoli, it was feared, would cause the British a serious loss of prestige: the secretary of war even apprehended that such a withdrawal would have rendered the Arab movement impossible.\textsuperscript{48} Presumably on the initiative of Kitchener, the foreign office handed over in June 1915 the task of inducing the shafir of Meccâ to take immediate action to the high commissioner in

\textsuperscript{44} When in the course of a conversation with prime minister Briand and General Gallieni in October 1915 Kitchener again emphasized the importance of urging on the Arab movement, the Frenchmen quite agreed, but said that they had no troops to help it forward (Arthur, vol. iii, pp. 260–1).


\textsuperscript{46} See e.g. a memorandum by A. J. Balfour, 9 September 1919 (art. 5); Documents on British foreign policy 1919–1939, edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, first series, vol. iv (H.M.S.O., London, 1952), p. 374.

\textsuperscript{47} War committee meeting held at 10 Downing Street, 16 December 1916, evidence of Lt.-Col. Sir Mark Sykes on the Arab question, p. 5, Cab. 22/3/1.

\textsuperscript{48} As it appears from a letter of his to the prime minister in October 1915, quoted by Arthur, vol. iii, p. 261.
Jukka Nevakivi

Cairo who seems to have carried out these negotiations 'without great wisdom'—a criticism levelled at McMahon even at the time.\(^49\)

Whereas he did not have a direct responsibility over that last phase of negotiations with the Arabs, Kitchener allegedly supervised the making of the Anglo-French agreement. In November 1915 he was able to influence it through a special committee set up to consider the policy to be followed in the negotiations. As a link between himself and the committee he had Lt.-Col. A. C. Parker, a nephew of his who was working at the war office.\(^50\) Another subordinate, Sir Mark Sykes, took over from the Foreign Office men the negotiations with Picot in December 1916. 'I worked through Picot the French-British agreement on Lord Kitchener's lines, every detail of which I discussed with FitzGerald nightly', Sykes later stated to the biographer of Kitchener. 'During this work I saw Lord Kitchener occasionally—about 3 times in all . . . one worked a sort of triangular equation, I acted, FitzGerald spoke, he inspired.'\(^51\)

When Husain, in his letter dated 1 January 1916, jibed at McMahon's reservation that the coastal portion of Syria and the Lebanon would not be included in the Arab State and threatened that these areas would be claimed 'at the first opportunity after this war was finished', the Sykes-Picot draft was being completed. On 4 February Kitchener, together with the foreign office and India office representatives, gave sanction to it, obviously paying no attention to the shairf's last letter. Consequently, Picot was answered that 'provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured and that the Arabs fulfil the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus, and Aleppo, the British Government would not object to the arrangement'.\(^52\)

Before participating in that decision Kitchener may not have had time to compare the two agreements. On this we have the evidence of Sir Vivian Gabriel.\(^53\) Kitchener would have had an opportunity of doing so while the Sykes-Picot draft and all the four most essential letters of Husain

\(^49\) Lord Crewe (then secretary of state for India) to Lord Bertie, ambassador in Paris, 17 December 1915, the papers of Sir Edward Grey, P.R.O., F.O. 800/58.


\(^51\) Sykes to Arthur, 12 September 1916, K.P., P.R.O. 3/57/91.

\(^52\) F.O. confidential note, 'Arab Question', dated 4 February 1916, Cab. 37/142/10, no. 248.

\(^53\) In his letter to The Times, 2 July 1922.
to McMahon presumably were at his disposal. The ultimate question forever unanswerable, is whether Kitchener, who throughout the exchange of ideas on the partition of Turkey had proved to be 'materially very nebulous but substantially very definite',\textsuperscript{54} and who at the beginning of 1916 was preoccupied with the idea of an approaching catastrophe in Gallipoli and desperately trying to counteract its eventual repercussions in the East, would have been able to think about the possible results of the discrepancies between the agreement with the French on the one hand and the negotiations with the Arabs on the other.

\textsuperscript{54} Sykes to Arthur, 12 September 1916, K.P., P.R.O. 30/57/91.
The intervention of the United States in World War I brought with it new problems of integrating the measures of economic warfare undertaken by the allied and associated powers against Germany and the lesser central powers. Prior to 1917 the blockade had been managed chiefly in London, a situation to which the French had generally acceded so long as negotiations with Switzerland were handled in Paris. The British government had carried out the major experiments in extending the rights of belligerents to hamper neutral trade with their enemies, often securing the tacit consent of the northern neutrals to these measures by stringent pressures. Given the protests which the United States had made against alleged violations of neutrals' rights, many mutual suspicions had to be cleared away before effective co-ordination of American, British, French, and Italian policies and activities was possible.

The Balfour mission and the French mission, headed by René Viviani and General Joseph J. C. Joffre, which were in Washington in late April and May 1917, did much to put the United States au courant both of the military and naval situation, and of the measures taken against the foreign trade of the central powers. Detailed information was given about the degree of inter-allied co-operation that already existed with respect to black-listing, embargoes, commodity controls (such as that exercised by the Inter-Allied Wheat Executive, established by the British, French, and Italians on 29 November 1916), and about the agreements made with neutral associations and governments.

The creation of inter-allied organizations to deal with other commodities and with shipping, and the establishment of new committees, councils and boards in the United States are too complicated to discuss in a short essay. However, the activities of the Inter-Allied Trade Committees in the
European neutral capitals and of their superior, the Allied Blockade Committee in London, offer interesting examples of the problems encountered in executing blockade measures. Here one can see difficulties over defining the functions of these organizations, problems of international administration and 'housekeeping', as well as instances of mutual suspicion among the allies at a time when they hoped to maintain a united front in dealing with the neutrals.

The tempo with which the United States acted in 1917 to control American foreign trade was regrettably slow, but by late August a more or less general embargo on exports was established, provision being made for issuing export licences for goods going to approved destinations. Only after this was done was the United States in a sound position for negotiating with European neutrals. This action provided the legal means of preventing exportation to anyone who was not established as a bona fide neutral, free of any suspicion of trading with the enemies of the United States. Moreover, only then did the British feel assured that the United States would really co-operate in economic controls. By October the War Trade Board was created to deal with export licences, enemy trade, and war trade intelligence. It also became the chief adviser on matters being negotiated with the European neutrals. Its representative in London, L. P. Sheldon, who had represented the United States Food Administration there since August, became the chief liaison between the United States, on the one hand, and the British and inter-allied organizations in London, on the other.

The need for establishing an organization to co-ordinate blockade policies became urgent late in 1917 when a new round of negotiations with the neutral governments reached a crucial stage. From the beginning the United States had hoped to maintain in Washington a close control over arrangements with neutrals, but it soon became clear that neither the negotiations nor the execution of the resulting agreements could be dealt with unless the vast amount of statistics and other information on neutral trade already gathered by the allies from such sources as cable and mail

---

1 The minutes of the Allied Blockade Committee and of the Inter-Allied Trade Committees in Stockholm, Christiania, Copenhagen, The Hague, and Berne are included in the papers of the United States War Trade Board at the National Archives, Washington, D.C. Unless otherwise specified, this essay is based on these documents. War Trade Board, Entry 56, Boxes 52-55.
Marion C. Siney
censorship were at hand. O. A. R. Simpkin of the British War Trade Intelligence Department pointed out that:

if it were desired to establish a central statistical control in the United States, I am afraid that the difficulties of transmitting our information with sufficient promptitude would be insuperable; and indeed it is not easy to see how statistics of trade converging from several sources to a single point of import could be kept elsewhere than at the focal point of convergence.

Referring to other evidence, he added:

We have here as you know an enormous mass of information derived from every part of the world accumulated during two and one-half years. Try as we might, we could never pass on the bulk of this information to your Authorities; and though, of course, we transmit to them all of our current information, of this much is unintelligible and very little is conclusive without reference to past records.

Simpkin therefore urged that London was the logical place to establish the organs of inter-allied control.²

Sheldon supported this proposal and cannily pointed out that this would be the United States’ only means of knowing what goods the British, for instance, were exporting.³ Since there had been charges that the British government had discriminated against American firms in controlling trade with the northern neutral countries, this was a fairly telling argument. Moreover, whether the United States liked it or not, the British had made arrangements with neutral trade associations to control the distribution of their imports and American shippers were required to comply. It would certainly be better from the American point of view if the United States were to help supervise these arrangements.

Simultaneously the creation of inter-allied committees in Scandinavia and the Netherlands was also proposed. In the summer of 1917 a committee which dealt with Swiss trade questions and generally supervised

² O. A. R. Simpkin to Donald Frothingham, 26 November 1917, United States Food Administration, Blockade and Censorship file, in the Archives of the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford, California.
the agreement made with the Société de Surveillance Suisse (S.S.S.) had been established in Berne, with representatives of the British, French, and Italian legations as its members. This committee was an adjunct of the Commission Permanente Internationale de Contingents in Paris, which regulated Swiss trade on behalf of the allies. In one sense the Berne Committee was a precedent for those established in northern Europe, although there is no evidence that it was seriously considered as such in 1917-18.

The War Trade Board suggested in mid-February 1918 that all applications for imports to the northern neutral countries should pass through the proposed local committees' hands and then be forwarded to the allied committee in London, which in turn would forward its recommendations concerning American exports to the War Trade Board through Sheldon. The War Trade Board would still have the right to overrule the decision taken in London, but it would do so only after consultation with the British. The American representative on the Allied Blockade Committee would similarly have the right to examine applications for exports made in Great Britain and no British licences would be granted without an exchange of views with him. It was expected that decisions of the London committee on applications by a neutral to import goods from another neutral would be final.4

By 4 March 1918, Sheldon informed the War Trade Board that the foreign office was in complete agreement on this plan of procedure, but he suggested that the French and Italian governments should also be invited to send representatives to the local committees.5 The Board agreed.

The greatest impetus to this decision arose from the state of negotiations with Sweden. After protracted negotiations for a general agreement, in which there was no hope for any immediate satisfactory conclusion, it had been decided in January 1918 to sign a temporary modus vivendi agreement, to cover a three-month period. Under it limited cargoes of fuel and illuminating oil, corn, oilcake and coffee, would be given facilities for export from overseas and British ports in return for Swedish permission to charter 100,000 tons of Swedish shipping to the allies for service in the war zone.6 Throughout these negotiations there was discussion of the

4 War Trade Board to Sheldon, 18 February 1918, ibid., vol. ii, pp. 963-5.
5 Sheldon to War Trade Board, 1 March 1918, ibid., vol. ii, p. 968; and Sheldon to War Trade Board, 4 March, 1918, ibid., vol. ii, p. 969.
Marion C. Siney

desirability of establishing in Sweden a permanent inter-allied body to deal with problems raised by the Swedish Handelskommission and the import associations which would be involved in the execution of the general agreement. On 5 February, the question was explored further at the foreign office in London by Sheldon and J. C. Charpentier, later the French representative on the Allied Blockade Committee.

Apparently the idea met with general approval, for on 1 March 1918 the four allied ministers in Stockholm met to discuss the establishment of an inter-allied committee. E. Thiebaut, the French minister, emphasized the necessity of presenting a united front, and deprecated the fact that the modus vivendi had been announced in the Swedish press as being an Anglo-Swedish agreement. The first meeting of the Inter-Allied Trade Committee (I.A.T.C.) was held at the American legation on 4 March 1918. Since the new Allied Blockade Committee (A.B.C.) had a preliminary meeting on 15 March and its first formal meeting on 19 March, it is apparent that allied action in Stockholm was slightly outrunning that in London. The arrangements in the other northern capitals proceeded more leisurely, for the first meeting of the I.A.T.C. in Christiania was held on 24 April, that in Copenhagen on 27 April, and a preliminary meeting in The Hague on 3 May. A delegation from the Stockholm committee visited Copenhagen to advise their colleagues on procedures.

The membership of the A.B.C. was heavily British, and its meetings were held in the conference room of the foreign office, with the latter providing the secretariat. The British Contraband Committee's services were at once available, and by September 1918, having been reinforced with representatives from the other allies, it became merged with the A.B.C. and acted as the A.B.C.'s executive body.7

In mid-February 1918 the British had proposed to Walter Hines Page,

7 Frederick Leverton Harris, under-secretary in the ministry of blockade, became chairman of the A.B.C. The foreign office was represented by Sir Eyre Crowe, W. Finlay, and A. R. Kennedy; the Restriction of Enemy Supply Department by William Mitchell-Thomson; and the War Trade Department by Harwood, Amery, and Bailey. The United States was represented by L. P. Sheldon; France by J. C. Charpentier; and Italy by Dr F. Giannini. The 'internationalization' of the Contraband Committee had been foretold by Monnet, the French member on the I.A.T.C. in Stockholm, as early as May. Monnet to Charpentier, 9 May 1918, enclosed in Zantzinger to McCormick, 9 May 1918, Food Administration, Blockade and Censorship file.
Marion C. Siney

and capable of acting only with approval of the latter? At one point the War Trade Board had still another idea: the local committees were sub-committees of the War Trade Board and similar blockade organizations in the separate allied states, and they were not, therefore, subordinate either to the A.B.C. or to the allied ministers, although relations with both were to be of the closest kind. The ease with which these matters were settled on an ad hoc basis at the local level—with rather ineffectual directions from the A.B.C.—determined how quickly the I.A.T.C.s actually functioned. The slowness of pace was attributable to an understandable reluctance of the members of the committees to outrun their own governments, or to compromise the positions their governments might eventually take. For instance, the Italian minister in Sweden on several occasions questioned the right of the I.A.T.C. to send telegrams to the A.B.C. before he had approved them, a position with which his colleague in Copenhagen agreed. In Copenhagen the Italian representative stated on 8 July that he did not consider the members of the I.A.T.C. competent to sign letters, ‘as they were not delegates but only nominees of the real delegates, the real delegates being the Ministers’. At the fourteenth meeting on 23 July there was still confusion over what action, if any, the committee was empowered to take; it therefore adjourned until the heads of mission met. The ministers, or their deputies, met the same day and decided to meet each week the day after the weekly meeting of the I.A.T.C. to examine their resolutions and to approve and act on them as the occasion required. The next week it was decided that communication to the A.B.C. would be made in turn by each of the delegates; since the British minister was the dean of the members at the meeting, the British legation should send the letters for the first month. The A.B.C. decided not to permit such nonsense; on 23 August it sent instructions that the British legation should continue to be the channel of communications through the foreign office, as was true of the other I.A.T.C.s. The Italian minister and the American chargé d’affaires did not quite give up: they asked the British to use a cypher that ‘could without inconvenience eventually be known to the Allies’.

The situation in The Hague was even more confused, one symptom being concern over the name of the committee. Until 24 September 1918, it was called ‘The Inter-Allied Committee of Blockade Sub-Committee of

The Hague'. Edwards, the American member at the twenty-second meeting, objected to this name, and by the twenty-fourth meeting it had been changed to 'Inter-Allied Trade Committee of The Hague'.

Common to all the committees were problems of acquiring staff, quarters and money to cover their expenses. Since the British legations had borne the major burden in dealing with blockade questions, it was natural that the new committees should rely heavily on the British staffs. In his report of a meeting of the allied ministers in Stockholm on 1 March 1918, Sir Esme Howard asked for authorization to spend 20,000 kronor and to lend two members of his staff. Losing no time, the I.A.T.C., at British suggestion, decided by 12 March to take over the quarters recently vacated by Transito A.B., a company that had dealt with goods in transit from the west to Russia via Sweden and Finland. There was some objection to using these premises 'because of the Transito's unsavoury reputation in Sweden'. However, since it was so difficult to find suitable quarters, the plunge was taken. The office at 5A Hofslagaregatan was occupied by 22 March 'at a rent of 4,000 kronor per year, without charge for the furniture'. There had been a formal inspection shortly before, during which the members dealt with the arrangement of furniture and telephone connections. From some points of view the historian can regret the speed exhibited by the Stockholm committee, since once it had its own offices and there were more frequent contacts among the members, there was less need for daily formal meetings. As time went on the minutes became much less detailed. Nonetheless, there are still many homely, day-to-day business touches in these documents: the constant need for enlarging the staff; the decision to hire a doorman (one applicant was an ex-U.S. Army sergeant then living as a pensioner in Malmö who was anxious 'to serve the American authorities in Sweden in whatever capacity he could'); and the salary of the office boy: should he be given a uniform? It was decided to pay him 100 kronor a month but no clothing or food allowance.

In contrast the I.A.T.C. in Copenhagen was very slow to solve its housing problem. Only in August did it request a credit of 40,000 kronor for establishing an office and defraying current expenses. By 17 September the French and Italian delegates had received credits of 17,000 francs and 10,000 kronor respectively, and eventually, on 25 October, the committee held a meeting at their own office at Peder Skramsgade 5. By then the great decision had been taken: the names over the entrance, on the
Marion C. Siney

notepaper, and on the endorsement stamp were to be in French, but the minutes and general correspondence were to be in English.

It appears that only the Stockholm I.A.T.C. functioned on a financially self-sustaining basis. It was much more active than its counterparts in the other neutral capitals in its direct dealings with the Handelskommission and the import associations set up in the wake of the general agreement of 29 May 1918. The Handelskommission sent in long lists of the permits it had issued to importers, and the I.A.T.C. transmitted these to London. For this service the I.A.T.C. made a small charge. By 8 July, the committee had collected enough to defray its current expenses and even to send cheques of 5,937 and 5,000 kronor to the American and Italian legations, respectively, to help offset the amounts they initially subscribed. However, when the I.A.T.C. in The Hague proposed to charge a similar fee, the A.B.C. refused its permission because those concerned had already paid the N.O.T. for its services.

One finds in the substantive matters dealt with by the I.A.T.C.s great variety and yet a certain sameness. There were proposals to reward firms and persons in the neutral countries who had proved friendly to the allied cause, particularly in Sweden where this phenomenon had been comparatively rare. The I.A.T.C. in Stockholm proposed as early as 17 April 1918, that a White List—in contrast to the Black List—should be created; the idea was generally approved by the A.B.C. on 7 May. Because of American opposition, however, the matter was not pursued, it being recommended that there be relaxations of the embargoes on non-essential goods in favour of such persons.

The case of greatest interest in that respect was that of Axel de Bildt, the chief of Transito A.B. He wanted two sorts of concessions: (1) permission to sell in Scandinavia goods in Transito’s hands which were originally intended for Russia and whose transit the allies now regarded as undesirable, and (2) permission to import from allied sources copper which he needed in another of his enterprises, the Vasby Verkstadter A.B. of Gothenburg.¹¹ Not only had de Bildt acted frequently in allied interests in his Transito operations, but he had also contributed to a new telegraph news bureau in Sweden which was expected to have some propaganda

¹¹ Materials on the de Bildt requests are to be found in documents in the United States Department of State Decimal Files (National Archives, Washington), 658.119, particularly in 658.119/250, 254, 347, 380, 467, and 493.
value for the allies. The copper which de Bildt wished to import, for which he had received Swedish import licences and British navicerts, had been purchased in the United States before either the American embargo or the general allied embargo of 17 October 1917 had been issued. Some of the copper was in warehouses in England and in France, and some—valued at £200,000—was still under American jurisdiction. Some of the latter had been bought and paid for in February, March, and April 1917, and had been on steamers in August 1917, although it was subsequently unloaded. A telegram on the subject sent by the War Trade Board to Stockholm on 16 May 1918, is of double interest because it was drafted by Captain John Foster Dulles, assistant to the chairman. It indicated that the War Trade Board was reluctant to authorize the export

since it appears that this action would be discriminatory and likely to provoke severe criticism in Sweden. There must be other persons in Sweden who are friendly to the Associated Governments, and who have rendered services to them. If the precedent is established of rewarding services by preferential action it seems difficult to know where the line should be drawn.

The note ended with the statement that if this was regarded as a special case, the War Trade Board was prepared to issue the licence.12

Both Ira Morris, the American minister, and Sir Esme Howard continued to urge that the facilities be given to de Bildt, and in late May the War Trade Board agreed on condition that the copper was included within the new ration set in the General Agreement. Morris, however, insisted that this would be no favour to de Bildt because it would be for the Swedish authorities to decide whether these shipments would be included in the ration. The War Trade Board agreed that part of the copper should go forward, but there were new delays because the American shipper failed to include de Bildt’s name on the formal request for release. It was only in July that the matter was settled, with 850 tons being charged to the ration and 450 tons sent outside it.

All the committees were sensitive to both the immediate and the post-war interests of allied companies in northern Europe. Sometimes it seemed difficult to preserve these interests and still carry out stringent blockade

12 Lansing to American Legation, Stockholm, 16 May 1918, ibid., 658.119/347.
controls. One example involved shipments of wine from Austria, Germany, Spain, and Portugal, to Scandinavia. A new Swedish law established, effective 31 December 1917, a monopoly on the sale of spirits and wines, in the hands of the organization usually spoken of as Systemet, headed by Dr Ivan Bratt. This innovation offered an impetus to allied wine producers to press the sale of their products. Even Warren G. Young, American consul in Stockholm, pointed out the splendid market for California wines, to offset the cheap Austrian wines which had been used as a base to be ‘flavoured’ into the style desired. The scarcity of wines in Sweden arose partly from the British refusal to permit imports to proceed from France and Italy, as well as from Spain and Portugal. Some consignments for Sweden were also being held in Norwegian and Danish warehouses. The British feared that these wines might be turned into alcohol and then re-exported to Germany. Young, however, asserted that the British had permitted large amounts of French brandy and Scotch whisky—both with a much higher alcoholic content—to reach Sweden. The I.A.T.C. believed that Systemet would provide adequate safeguards, and it recommended the release of the detained wines on the promise from Dr Bratt that ‘all trade designations attached to German and Austrian wines which gave the impression that they resemble Allied wines or are of Allied origin’ would be removed. The French government charged that the new Swedish law violated a Franco-Swedish agreement of 1908 not to change the laws affecting the sale of wines in Sweden, a limitation which had been given as a quid pro quo for opening the French bourse to Swedish securities. The I.A.T.C. believed that the law would not really interfere with the French wine trade in Sweden and, on the contrary, would be advantageous to it. It recommended that the French accept the situation lest by agitation they contribute to the campaign for complete prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages then being waged by liberal and socialist parties in northern Europe.

The French and Italians were still not satisfied with their position in the Swedish wine market, and in October requested permission to ship outside the ration to individuals and thus ‘make a certain discrimination in favour of those firms who acted friendly to the Allies.’ They argued that this would improve the foreign exchange situation for France and Italy, and it would help persuade ‘free ships’ from neutral countries to bring cargoes to

---

13 Young to Lansing, 9 February 1918, *ibid.*, 658.119/266.
The Machinery of Economic Warfare, 1917-1918

French and Italian ports when they were assured of return cargoes. Moreover, they stated, it would be better for such ships to carry wine than other goods such as sulphur and hemp from Italy, both of more importance should they reach the enemy. One can only remark that this was indeed a case of 'special pleading!'

On other occasions the A.B.C. and its subsidiaries showed concern about marketing films and printing supplies in neutral countries. In the first instance the aim was not only to keep raw film from going to Germany, but also to assure the showing of films of Allied origin which would have propaganda value.

Although petroleum products did not, perhaps, have the same importance during the first world war that they do now, American oil interests were involved on some occasions. The Standard Oil Company and the Asiatic Company had, according to the A.B.C. minutes of 8 October 1918, made arrangements to provide the total Swedish ration of mineral oils. There was fear that a separate Petroleum Association, like those established to distribute other imports, would be set up, and this would make it possible for their competitors who had no expensive storage tanks and distributing system, to undersell them. In the Netherlands the A.B.C. agreed on 21 June 1918, to re-establish the Continental Company to good standing as an importer of lubricating oil. This company was a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Texas Company, having its head office in Antwerp. There it had been taken over by the Germans, but the Rotterdam office had now cut all ties with Antwerp. It was very sensibly pointed out that if this permission were not given, rival firms would get all of the business.

It is possible to discern in the work of these committees not only the expected correct businesslike attitudes toward commercial matters directly concerned with impeding the war effort, but also a more warm-hearted approach to humanitarian causes and an appreciation of civilized living.

The A.B.C. dealt with requests for facilitating shipments of coco yarns to be used by Dutch blind workers, bandages for the Swedish Red Cross, cotton cloth for uniforms for the Swedish Crown Princess's Voluntary Committee (121,850 yards of it), and corn to be sent by 'influential South African residents' for poor relief in the Netherlands—permission being recommended in London 'on political grounds'.

The character, interests, and standards of life of members of the com-
mittee were partially revealed in their willingness to make possible the pursuit of sports. Special concessions were made to permit importation of ivory billiard balls (but not ivory blocks) to Denmark; fencing equipment for the Netherlands ('the number of pupils has greatly increased owing to the presence of interned British officers'); tennis equipment for the British vice-consul at Trondheim (but only after the matter was submitted to the Rubber and Tin Committee); boxing gloves for the Dutch navy; and two hundred dozen golf balls for the Nederlandsche Golf Comité, to be distributed among the seven golf clubs which had a membership of 840, only four of whom were Germans.

In the deliberations on economic warfare the signs that the war was coming to an end appeared very late. In September and October there was even talk of setting up an I.A.T.C. in Madrid. The first indication in the A.B.C. minutes that its attitude was in any way changing was shown in the position it took on 29 October when it was asked to express an opinion on an advertisement inserted by the Magasin du Louvre of Paris in the Norwegian press, offering to send parcels 'without formalities'. The committee decided there was no need to refer cases of bona fide private parcels to the A.B.C. and that licences could be issued by the appropriate authorities at the port of entry, it being understood that they could not cover embargoed goods or any imported for purposes of resale. The committee prefaced its decision with this: 'On the other hand, at the present stage of the war, the chances of such abuses assuming proportions detrimental to the Blockade, may not be considered very great.'

Inasmuch as the blockade machinery had become part of the organization for assuring the provisioning of the allies, whose needs would still have to be met, as well as for regulating neutral trade, it is not strange that no one had given much thought to the effect that the cessation of hostilities would have on the blockade. It also helps explain why the continuation of the blockade was written into the Armistice agreement with Germany.

Two days after the Armistice the A.B.C. admitted that the importance of certain film importations into Sweden had diminished. The minute went on to say that

whether all restrictions could be abandoned depended upon the question whether any, and if so what, trade was to be permitted during the period of the Armistice with Germany. Until a decision is reached
on this point, which is an important question of policy, the view of the meeting was that it was not desirable to abandon the machinery for controlling these importations which is at present in operation.

In keeping with this principle the A.B.C. recommended on 15 November that some temporary agreements with the Norwegian associations which technically expired on 10 November should be extended for two months. However, on 19 November it decided that it was not necessary to press for the conclusion of new 'branch agreements' with the Norwegians but to maintain the existing temporary ones for a period of, say, three months.

The neutrals were, of course, anxious to regain their freedom to trade, but the availability of supplies was the crucial difficulty. The Swedes, for instance, appealed for an immediate importation from the United Kingdom of 5,000 tons of American bacon and an unspecified amount of margarine and oilcake. It was decided by the A.B.C. on 19 November that 'owing to the requirements of the evacuated territories of Belgium and Northern France we are unable at present to promise any supplies of bacon or margarine but we understand bacon will be available from the United States and the Swedish Government had better purchase such requirements there. No oilcake is available.'

A strict view of the blockade was adopted when the Dutch asked to import lemons from London in order to combat influenza. The I.A.T.C. in The Hague recommended this against the better judgement of the Italian representative who believed it would only put money in the pockets of a small number of Hollanders. He preferred resuming shipments from Italy. The A.B.C. on 20 November denied the Dutch request on the ground that there was no ration set for fresh fruit, that at some seasons of the year there was a superabundance of fresh fruit in Holland and that almost all the surplus went to Germany, either fresh or as jam. Moreover, the minute continued, 'There appears to be no substantial proof that lemons are really a preventive cure for influenza. There can be no shortage of lemons in Italy and Spain, and yet these countries would appear to have been ravaged as much by this disease as any other parts of the world.'

In some quarters there was fear that a continuation of the blockade organization would unduly hamper American trade in the postwar period. George McFadden, War Trade Board representative in Paris, on 1 November had recommended the early termination of the controls over ships.
Marion C. Siney

exercised by the Inter-Allied Maritime Transport Council. He believed that the United States

on account of its control of many important raw materials and on account of its surplus production of certain merchandise will have a distinct advantage at the present time in competition with the Continental Powers for the colonial trade of the world provided the United States is not restricted therein by virtue of the continuation of the program committees.

He admitted the necessity of continuing the inter-allied bodies temporarily but he suggested that 'their sittings should be removed to Washington where they will be dominated by American influence or governmental agencies.'

Some of the problems in inter-allied co-operation stemmed from the 'red tape' approach of those managing the operation; others arose from difficulties in communication. The French representatives in the neutral capitals complained frequently that they did not receive the information which their British and American colleagues had about action taken by the A.B.C. Certainly the French and Italian legations worked under practical difficulties. In the 1960s we take international telephone service for granted. It may be useful to report that McFadden was particularly impressed by a trans-Channel conversation he had with Sheldon: he had 'no idea such excellent connections could be obtained between Paris and London' and suggested they ought to call each other again in order to exchange views quickly. McFadden also remarked about the slowness of parcel mails and asked Sheldon to arrange for the diplomatic courier to bring over to Paris two suits from his Savile Row tailor, because, he said, regular shipment would take anywhere from two to four months.

It is apparent from this consideration of the operation of one part of the blockade that not all decisions were taken on the highest plane, nor completely divorced from the self-interest of the individual states. The concern about their respective position in postwar markets was natural enough; there was bound to be some mutual suspicion. Given the fact that this was an experiment in a relatively new kind of international co-operation, the wonder is that it worked as smoothly as it did.

14 McFadden to Sheldon, 1 November 1918, War Trade Board, Entry 51, Paris office, Miscellaneous 1918, Sheldon file.
15 McFadden to Sheldon, 24 October 1918, ibid.
The leaders of the British Commonwealth, acting as a family team in pursuit of a Commonwealth policy, played the principal rôle in the founding of the League of Nations mandate system at Paris in 1919. The result they achieved was to have far-reaching and unforeseeable consequences. They had lit a slow burning fire that a generation later would play a part in consuming the empires of the free world and would help scores of new nations to spring, phoenix-like, into existence.

This aspect of the founding of the mandate system and the rôle of the chief actors merits more attention than it has been given. The richness of the documentary sources freely available in the United States has led inevitably to the fixing of the spotlight on the contribution of Woodrow Wilson. As a result, General Smuts, who was especially congenial to Wilson, has received in the United States more than his share of the spotlight. Lloyd George has been left too much in the shadows. Whilst W. M. Hughes was too much the enfant terrible for any serious attempt to be made by American, or even English, writers to examine critically his significant contribution.

About Wilson's rôle, little can be said here. His main contribution was to put his drive and prestige behind an idea, which he did not originate, and towards the realization of which his country had nothing of a practical kind to offer. He borrowed the idea from Smuts. He was anticipated by Great Britain in his suggestion that the system should be applied to the German colonies. He had only vague ideas about the nature and working of the system and added nothing in that respect to Commonwealth thinking. His country refused any mandates and played no part in the administration of the League system. The evidence given here suggests that the mandate system was saved, and annexation defeated, by the decision of the whole Commonwealth on 29 January 1919 to support a mandate solution;
and that one of the chief factors in that discussion was the realization by Hughes that Australia might be safer if Japan had a mandate with a ban on fortifications and bases. Lloyd George did far more than support mandates as policy. He brought the German colonies in Africa within the system, and carried Clemenceau with him. Theirs was a contribution of great practical importance, which it was not within Wilson's power to make.

Thus the setting up of the mandate system was not merely British foreign policy. It resulted from agreement on a Commonwealth foreign policy. This was not another example of 'a single foreign policy of the Empire', derived from foreign office thinking and drafting, and dominions acquiescence. It was a settlement resulting from long discussions and some disagreement in family council in London and Paris, as well as in the Peace Conference itself.

The discussions within the Commonwealth, as well as the combined Commonwealth–American discussions in Paris, thrashed out political conceptions, ideas and machinery; they also sought to reconcile conflicting national interests. The result was the series of compromises expressed in the mandates article of the Covenant (Article 22), which was almost exclusively a Commonwealth draft. The Covenant, like any great international compact, was full of such compromises, in which the nations—especially the United States, France and the Commonwealth countries—agreed to ride together under the League banner, but mounted on their own horses and carrying their own standards.

So far as Canada and the United States (and even to a large extent Great Britain) were concerned, national interest was a relatively minor factor in deciding what should be done about the captured German colonies and Turkish territories. No security issue was involved for Canada and the United States, safe as they then seemed behind their oceanic and polar spaces. Canada had no colonial interests. Those of the United States were confined to the Caribbean and the Pacific. Only at one point was its security involved, and there President Wilson was fully alert to the danger. American national interest demanded that Japan should be prevented from erecting a barrier of fortified islands across American communications with the Philippines and Guam. A Japanese mandate, with a ban on fortifications, seemed the best answer at that time, since it would reconcile both Wilsonian principles and national interest.1

1 Another answer was found in 1945–47, when the United States, having itself
Britain’s national security, including the protection of her vital lines of communication, could also be reconciled with the adoption of the mandate system. Both public opinion and official policy in the United Kingdom, favoured the idea of League mandates for captured overseas territories. The British government had had a long historical experience in dealing with international frontier problems. In seeking to avoid, wherever possible, the inflexibility and friction involved in annexation, it had resorted to such expedients as protectorates, spheres of influence, neutralized areas, and international régimes of various kinds, including some with mandatory features. To the southern dominions, on the other hand, which were small isolated nations with limited defence resources, mandates seemed at first to be a risky novelty. The contiguous ex-German territories they had captured had served in one war as bases for enemy attack. Hughes and Massey (and probably Botha) assumed that there would be other wars in the future, wars in which a mandatory power occupying the territory might well be an enemy at their doorstep. It was not the element of trusteeship for the wellbeing of the indigenous inhabitants that disturbed them. Australia, for example, had long since been applying in Papua the traditional British policy of national trusteeship.

What the policy of the Commonwealth should be in the matter of the disposal of the captured territories was discussed in the Imperial War Cabinet meetings of 14–15 August 1918. It was Smuts who raised it. Having no departmental responsibilities, he was free to air ideas, whilst others had to wait until policy had been thrashed out at the official level. He elaborated the idea of mandates in a paper on the League, prepared late in November 1918 at the request of Lloyd George, which was before the captured the islands, placed them under a 'strategic area' trusteeship with the right to fortify. On Wilson's apprehensions regarding Japan, see Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, Princeton, 1961, pp. 97–100. Wilson rejected the advice of his naval experts that on strategic grounds the United States should annex the German islands north of the Equator, giving Japan in return a free hand in Asia. On the problem of defence in mandates and trusteeships, and the illusions involved in the neutral theory of mandates, see H. Duncan Hall, *Mandates, dependencies and trusteeship*, London and New York, 1948, pp. 66–72; 279–80, 368.

---


3 H. Duncan Hall, chapter 1, 'The international frontier', pp. 110, 126, 129.
H. Duncan Hall

Imperial war cabinet early in December. His famous slim brochure on *The League of Nations, a practical suggestion*, was published in London on 16 December, and Lloyd George gave a copy of it to Wilson when they met after Christmas.\(^4\)

Meanwhile, the possibilities of a League mandate system were being explored departmentally by the foreign office and at the ministerial level by the British war cabinet’s Eastern Committee, at which only British ministers were present. The Eastern Committee held in December 1918 a series of important meetings to prepare for the Imperial War Cabinet discussions, and the talks Lloyd George was to have with Wilson after Christmas. It explored the application of the mandates idea to the territories taken from the Turks, especially Palestine.\(^5\) Foreign office preparations included a memorandum on the mandate idea prepared early in November, and a draft mandate,\(^6\) prepared in December, which was discussed with the dominions delegates in Paris in mid-January.

While most of the British ministers favoured a mandate solution for the African and Middle East territories which their forces had captured, there was no attempt at any stage to impose this solution on the dominions. Both the British government, and the dominions governments which had captured adjacent German colonies, assumed from the outset that the territories would continue to be held by the dominions after the war.\(^7\)

---


\(^5\) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 1142–55. The minutes of the British war cabinet’s Eastern Committee are with the Milner papers in New College, Oxford. The minutes of the Imperial war cabinet are with the papers of Sir Robert Borden and Sir George Foster in the Canadian National Archives. The Hughes papers contain the minutes of the 1918 meetings which Hughes attended.

\(^6\) The draftsman faced at the outset the problem: who gets what, when, and how? If the territories were to be mandated, title to them had first to be acquired. The draftsman began by saying that Germany renounced, ‘in favour of Great Britain, all rights whatsoever over . . . (South-West Africa, New Guinea and the islands south of the Equator).’ That was not a Commonwealth formula. Wilson thought vaguely in terms of renunciation in favour of the as yet unborn League. That idea filled Hughes with apprehension, for it meant indefinite postponement of the choice of mandatories and a dangerous hiatus of authority. The compromise, adopted early in Paris, was renunciation in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers. A memorandum by Lord Milner on mandates on 8 March used the formula, which found expression finally in Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles.

\(^7\) By an Anglo-Japanese exchange of Notes in February 1917, the two governments agreed to support each other’s claims in the Pacific—Japan to the islands north
That view became Commonwealth policy when it was adopted in April 1917 by the Imperial war cabinet’s Committee on Territorial Desiderata.⁸ Annexation by the dominions remained Commonwealth policy until Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, in the discussions in Paris on 28–29 January, devised the compromise which became known as the ‘C’ mandate. Up to that point Lloyd George, in his talks with President Wilson in London and Paris, and in the meetings of the Council of Ten at the Peace Conference, had been unwavering in his support of the annexation claims of the three dominions. Borden, likewise, had given steady support to their claims, both in the Imperial war cabinet discussions in London (e.g. on 20 December) and in the discussions in Paris. ‘All the cases’, he told the Council of Ten on 24 January, ‘rested upon the plea of security.’⁹

Borden had a hand in shaping another aspect of Commonwealth policy which for him, as a Canadian, had a special appeal. It was now becoming a cardinal feature of Canada’s foreign policy that everything possible must be done to cement closer relations between Britain and the United States. American acceptance of mandatory responsibilities in Africa and the Middle East might be a step in that direction. Borden therefore supported Balfour’s suggestion, made at the Imperial war cabinet meeting of 15 August 1918, that the United States should undertake some responsibility for captured German and Turkish territories. The idea was mentioned again at a meeting of the Imperial war cabinet on 28 November. It emerged again strongly in the meeting on 20 December, when Borden spoke again in favour of it, as did Lloyd George, Milner, and others on the British side. Possible American mandates, suggested during the discussion, included: East Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Constantinople and the Straits, and Armenia. Churchill saw danger in an American of the Equator and to German rights in Shantung, and the United Kingdom’s claims to islands south of the Equator.

⁸ L. S. Amery, My political life, London, 1953–55, vol. II, pp. 102–6, describes the work and background of this committee, of which he was secretary and Curzon chairman. The committee held its meetings in April and reported on 28 April. Its minutes and report are with the papers of Austen Chamberlain in Birmingham University.

Middle East mandate, since this might be an inducement to the United States to become the world’s greatest naval power. Whilst the cabinet came to no definite decision, Lloyd George inferred that, with the exception of Smuts, the cabinet would not be opposed to handing over to the United States the mandate for German East Africa, a course which he himself and Churchill favoured.\textsuperscript{10} Smuts wanted a British mandate in German East Africa if only because it would give the British Empire ‘through communication along the whole length of the continent.’ He would prefer, he added, ‘to see the United States in Palestine rather than East Africa.’\textsuperscript{11}

At an earlier stage Curzon had been inclined to support an American mandate for either Palestine or Mesopotamia; but he had come to the conclusion that such a step would be unwise. At a meeting of the British war cabinet’s Eastern Committee, referred to above, he analysed the formidable difficulties which any mandatory, whether British or American, would face in Palestine.\textsuperscript{12} The difficulties—including the growing conflict between Jews and Arabs, the preference of both for the United Kingdom as mandatory, the political and strategic complications of the intrusion of the United States into the Middle East—were so great that opinion in the British cabinet cooled against the idea of offering the Palestine mandate to the United States. In any case, the president (as Lloyd George discovered when he talked with him) was opposed to accepting mandatory responsibilities, and refused, in particular, any African mandate. A mandate over Armenia appealed more to his sympathies but he could get no support for the idea in the United States.\textsuperscript{13}

After Paris, and even in the later stages at Paris, mandates ceased to be treated as Commonwealth policy. The dominions neither participated in, nor showed interest in the long-drawn-out negotiations of 1919 to 1922 over a treaty with Turkey. Australia and New Zealand were interested in Egypt and the Suez Canal, and their troops had fought the Turks, but the


\textsuperscript{11} Lloyd George, vol. i, p. 120.

\textsuperscript{12} Most of the minutes of this important meeting, and its conclusions, together with the text of a foreign office memorandum, were reproduced by Lloyd George, vol. ii, pp. 1142–55.

\textsuperscript{13} Lloyd George, vol. ii, pp. 1254 ff.
matter was regarded as British foreign policy and was left to Lloyd George, Curzon and the Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{14} Likewise the dominions had no part in the intricate questions of frontier adjustments and conflicting claims between the British, French and Belgians, which had to be settled before the boundaries could be fixed for the British and French mandates of Togoland and the Cameroons and the mandate for East Africa. Nor did the dominions have any part in the discussions on the Belgian claims to a mandate over Ruanda and Urundi, which, partly because Belgian forces were already in military possession, they were able to carve out of German East Africa. The same was true of the discussions on Portuguese claims (which gave Portugal the Kionga Triangle, a small corner of German East Africa) and of the negotiations regarding the ‘equitable compensation’, promised by the Treaty of London to Italy, which brought her patches of desert and the valley of the Juba River. All this was left to Lord Milner whose papers in New College, Oxford, are full of the negotiations. Knowledge of them could have been for the dominions a rich education in the meaning of ‘the international frontier’, as they watched the many territorial and political changes made in the map of Africa as a result of the drawing up in Paris of the texts of half a dozen African mandates.\textsuperscript{15} Behind the façade they would have seen Ruanda and Urundi as compensation for the vain Belgian hope that Portugal might cede the south bank of the Congo; whilst behind the niggardly British response to Italian claims in Africa, they would have seen Milner’s fears of Italian encroachments on the integrity of Abyssinia, with all the international consequences that could involve.

The mandates system, as we know it, was made possible by the breaking of the deadlock that developed in the last ten days of January 1919 between President Wilson and the British dominions and Japan over the application of the system to the German colonies to which they laid claim. Wilson’s first (Paris) draft of the Covenant adopted Smuts’ mandatory principle, and applied it, as Smuts had carefully refrained from doing, to

\textsuperscript{14} The question of Turkish territories came up at two meetings of the British Empire delegation on 7 February and 3 April 1919. Indian Muslims opposed any carving up of Muslim Turkey. Montagu intervened on their behalf at the meeting of 3 April and received the promise that the Indian representatives would be invited to take part when the Council of Four discussed this issue.

\textsuperscript{15} H. Duncan Hall, chapter I, ‘The international frontier’.
all the German colonies in Africa and the Pacific. An exchange of American and British drafts of the Covenant took place after the Peace Conference opened on 18 January. Wilson then gave Smuts a copy of his draft and was shown, on 20 January, the British draft. The latter contained a mandates clause and referred to a convention which was to be annexed to the Covenant and would define the responsibilities of the mandatory states. A revised British draft, dated 24 January, added the Mandates Commission, and divided mandates into two classes: (1) 'assisted states' (which would become the 'A' mandates), and (2) 'vested territories' (which would be split later into two categories, the 'B' and 'C' mandates).

Discussions on the Covenant, and on its mandates provision, were taking place at this time in several different channels: in the American and British delegations, in the British Empire delegation, and in the Council of Ten. The latter had set up a League of Nations drafting commission of which Wilson was chairman, with Cecil and Smuts representing the Commonwealth countries. There was also some combined discussion between Cecil, Smuts, and Colonel House.

The British Empire delegation was the Imperial war cabinet under another name. With its secretariat under Hankey, it formed a clearing house on the Commonwealth side. It discussed mandates at its third meeting on 23 January and again at its fourth, fifth, and sixth meetings on 27, 28, and 29 January. Lloyd George reported back to the delegation on his informal talks with Wilson and Clemenceau, and also on the discussions in the Council of Ten. In the latter body on 24 January, the issue was joined on mandates, when by Lloyd George's arrangement, Hughes, Massey, and Smuts put their cases for annexation.

Lloyd George introduced them. He ended his statement with the words:

16 Smuts saw mandates in a different context, as an expedient to assure ultimate self-determination for the peoples of the collapsed empires in Europe and the Near East. The League must be the successor of the empires; acting through mandatories, it must prepare the territories for self-determination; but that was not a principle which in his view could be applied to colonies 'inhabited by barbarians.' This was Smuts's contribution to mandates. His conception of the League as the successor of the empires in Europe left little or no trace on the treaty settlement. Several League mandates were proposed, but only one, the Saar Territory, emerged. H. Duncan Hall, passim.


controlled them since the beginning of the war and with unanimous support of its public opinion 'claims definite possession of these Islands.'

Wilson, in reply, relied on two main lines of arguments: one was the growing world opinion against further annexations. 'If the process of annexation went on', he said, 'the League of Nations would be discredited from the beginning.' He said nothing about what, as we have seen, was one of his main preoccupations, that Japanese annexation would cut across the American navy's lines of communication with the Philippines. His second line of argument was directed towards winning over Botha and Smuts by minimizing the difference between a mandate and a colony. It was true that in the former, the open door would apply, and tariff preference would be excluded; but otherwise there would be 'no administrative difference between his scheme and annexation.' Under a mandate, he argued, the Union of South Africa would extend its laws to South-West Africa, 'and administer it as an annex to the Union.' He rang the changes on that idea, hinting at ultimate 'union' or 'marriage' between South Africa and South-West Africa when it became possible to learn the true wishes of the inhabitants. There was an idea, here, and phrases which the Commonwealth representatives would work into their compromise proposal some twenty-four hours later. The immediate result of Wilson's more conciliatory attitude, however seemed negative. Botha, who spoke next, presented a reasoned case for 'complete union' of South-West Africa with his country. Hughes followed with sharp queries, some of which looked less impertinent a generation later than they did in 1919. If, as Wilson argued, 'the world was against annexations', why not apply the ban to the whole peace settlement—for example, Alsace-Lorraine? Why apply the mandatory principle only to German and not American or British colonies?

Next morning 28 January the Council of Ten opened with a concession by Lloyd George. He told Wilson, in Council, what he had already told him in private: that the British government was ready to accept the mandate system for itself—for 'territories conquered by troops from the United Kingdom.' But he still supported the dominions' pleas for annexation, saying that theirs was a special case and he hoped Wilson would look

---

22 Ibid., pp. 740-1.
23 Ibid., p. 741.
24 Ibid., pp. 743-7.
into it again. Then (as if his mind was already playing with the compromise formula—for 'C' mandates—that would be hammered out that evening by members of the British Empire delegation) Lloyd George added: 'The contiguity of the territories in question to the Dominions claiming them suggested that they should form an integral part of those countries . . .'. He had begun by referring to the practical difficulties involved in a mandates scheme and remarked that he was 'trying to formulate a plan to overcome [them] and he had good hope of success.'

Though he gave no hint of the plan, we know he was negotiating with his fellow prime ministers and getting a draft made for a mandates article. Massey followed Lloyd George with a long speech that nettled Wilson by recalling the 'precedents of history', which showed how the nations had failed in their search for universal peace. Then came an impertinent reflection upon the belated application of Wilsonian principles: 'What would Washington have done had it been suggested to him that a mandatory power, or even the colonists themselves as mandatories of a League of Nations, should be given charge of the vast territories in North America not at that time colonized?' Massey never believed that this was the last war, or that Germany had changed. 'Unless these territories were annexed to some strong state the Germans would attempt to get them back;' and New Zealand would be 'strangled.' Wilson's replies to such fears, though intended to soothe, were not calculated to convince either Massey or Hughes, the hard-headed Ulsterman, or the 'Welsh tribesman.' Under the League, Wilson assured them, a nation that tried 'to take from a mandatory the country entrusted to it . . . would become an outlaw. . . . All the other nations would be pledged, with the United States in the lead, to take up arms for the mandatory. Therefore, all danger of bad neighbours was past.'

When the Council of Ten met again that afternoon, Wilson was irritated still further by a long and seemingly hostile speech by Simon, the French minister for colonies. So far, Wilson observed, the discussion had been 'a negation in detail—one case at a time—of the whole principle of

---

27 Hughes referred thus to himself in a conversation with the author in 1936, when congratulated on his stand over sanctions.
mandatorics.' At that point, only Britain had accepted mandates. Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Japan, France were all claiming sovereignty or a modified version of it.  

29 That, Wilson concluded, would make the League of nations 'impossible;' it would be 'a laughing stock.' Clemenceau eased the tension by a magnanimous speech in which he repudiated his own minister for colonies and expressed readiness to accept the mandatory principle for France. But the tension increased again when Borden and Lloyd George raised an issue which was the clue to much of the hostility Wilson was encountering. This was Wilson's indefinite postponement of the selection of mandatories. Borden perceived the need to remove this difficulty which he saw was likely to become acute. Lloyd George 'trusted that the President would not insist on postponing the selection until after the League was established; if that was unsettled everything would be unsettled.' There had been a studied vagueness in Wilson's reference to the identity of the mandatories which filled Hughes and Massey with uneasiness. He seemed bent on denying them what was now an urgent political necessity—confirmation of their control. Thus, after a reference, on the day before, to Australia as a possible mandatory, Wilson had added, 'as regards who should be the mandatory in New Guinea, his mind was absolutely open.'  

30 Since the Council of Ten seemed to be nearing an impasse, the discussion was adjourned. That evening Lloyd George convened a meeting of the British Empire delegation to discuss the situation. All the delegates were present and most (except the Canadians) took part in the discussion. The secretary (Clement Jones) was assisted by two Australians, Sir Robert Garran and Commander Latham. Lloyd George began by reporting a long personal talk he had had with President Wilson that morning. Wilson had brought up the two main points at issue—the naming of the mandatories and dominions insistence on annexation. He said that the League must name the mandatories and insisted that they could not be named in

29 Hughes annotated the passage from Lloyd George's book, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, vol. 1, p. 532 (where this part of Wilson's speech is quoted), with the words: 'Not so. Australia asks for a mandate—not sovereignty. But the British Cabinet some time before had agreed to give us that.' He clung to that offer more perhaps as a matter of tactics than of conviction. Though his cabinet (less well informed than he was) continued to oppose a mandate, he had begun to see that Australia would be better off under a mandate.

advance, since that meant dividing up the spoils. In that case, Lloyd George told him, none of the great powers would sign the peace. (That conversation was the background to the sharp tone of the speeches by Hughes and Massey in the Council earlier that day, as well as the vain appeal made by Lloyd George and Borden to Wilson to give way on the naming of the mandatories.) On the annexation issue Wilson emphasized to Lloyd George that if the dominions annexed the adjacent German colonies, Japan could not be prevented from doing the same. In the discussion in the Delegation the United Kingdom representatives, whilst agreeing to accept the mandate system for themselves, reaffirmed their support of the annexation claims of the dominions. Hughes had just received a cable saying that his cabinet was unanimously opposed to the mandate. The restrictions which mandates would involve were then re-examined. Hughes, Balfour, and Cecil queried the desirability of extending the principle of the ‘open door’ to include the right of free immigration into a mandated territory. Hughes objected that it would mean the colonization of New Guinea by the Germans and the Japanese within ten years.

The day’s events had made it clear that Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand had now to choose between accepting the consequences of a breach with President Wilson, or trying to work out some compromise. The task of finding such a compromise was handed over by the delegation to Hughes, Botha, and Massey, who became its committee on mandates. The delegation invited them to draft their own mandate plan. Next morning 29 January Lloyd George had in his hands a complete mandates draft. He secured the approval of the British Empire delegation at a hastily summoned meeting. Then he circulated the text to the great powers, and next day succeeded in securing its tentative acceptance by the Council of Ten. The draft prepared by the British Empire delegation proved to be the most durable part of all the early drafts of the Covenant. Apart from some minor drafting changes, the text remained intact to become, almost word for word, Article 22, paragraphs 1-7, of the Covenant. (The two short machinery paragraphs, 8 and 9, were added later.) It was an agreement which settled a controversial issue; and that was one reason why the draft, although it reads more like a political statement than a legal text, survived intact in the successive revisions of the Covenant.31

31 The text of the British Empire delegation’s draft is appended to the minutes of the Council of Four for 30 January 1919, For. Refs. U.S., Paris Peace Conference, vol. iii, 357
H. Duncan Hall

Tradition seems to point to General Smuts and Philip Kerr as responsible 'in the main' for the actual wording of the draft, at least up to the final paragraph containing the 'C' mandate formula. That formula, as we shall see, was drafted by a member of the Australian delegation. The interesting point was that the discussions of 28–29 January led not only to this formula which solved the deadlock, but also resulted in the drafting of the whole mandates article into which the formula fitted so neatly. The definitive draft was supplied by the British Empire delegation not only for themselves but also for Wilson and for all the other mandates and mandatories, French, Belgian and Japanese. The delegation's draft set out the principle of the 'sacred trust' (Burke's phrase); outlined the instrument of the mandate for the carrying out of that trust; analysed the circumstances that would determine the character of the mandate; and supplied a clear-cut outline of each of the three types of mandates. In the circumstances it was remarkable that all the absent parties, who had no part in the drafting—President Wilson, the French, and the Japanese—should have acquiesced in the text thus unexpectedly presented to them. President Wilson gained his chief objective—the placing of all the German colonies under League mandate. The French wanted more latitude in the matter of the military training of the native inhabitants, and Borden's amendment permitting training for 'the defence of territory' met them half way. The Japanese wanted the open door to be applied to all the 'C' mandates. But that was incompatible with treatment as an 'integral portion,' and a neat piece of drafting in the British Empire delegation's text had denied the open door to foreign states; the denial could not be undone. 'Equal

pp. 795–6. See also text in Lloyd George, vol. I, pp. 538–41. The first and second paragraphs in these texts (citing the German colonial record and Turkish mis-government) were not in the text adopted by the British Empire delegation on 29 January.

32 H. W. V. Temperley, A history of the Peace Conference of Paris, London, 1920, vol. vi, p. 501, described 'the actual wording' of the draft as 'due in the main to General Smuts and Mr Philip Kerr'. The latter, afterwards Lord Lothian, was Lloyd George's secretary. His biographer records Kerr's claim to have drafted the text with Smuts. The claim was made ten years later by Kerr in a letter which refers to Lloyd George having asked Smuts and himself to work on a draft 'after' the 27 January meeting of the Council of Ten. J. R. M. Butler, Lord Lothian, London, 1960, pp. 74–75.

opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League' was not construed as being amongst the safeguards for 'the indigenous population.'

The Australian origin of the 'C' mandate formula was not revealed until 1959. The author was Commander J. G. Latham, a young Australian official serving under Hughes in the Australian delegation. The 'C' mandate, Latham revealed, 'was not originated between Sir Cecil Hurst and myself [as Sir Robert Garran thought]. I drafted the clause and showed it to Sir Maurice Hankey, who immediately took it to Lloyd George, who, Hankey told me, approved it at once.'

The formula left one odd trace of its Australian origin: the reference to 'certain of the islands in the South Pacific', which a Japanese or an American spokesman, if he had been present, would hardly have allowed to pass. But the phrase may have been due also to a difficulty which confronted the draftsmen. They had to work on the mandate article without knowing just which territories would come under mandate, and into which class a particular territory would fall. Lloyd George, in the delegation's discussion on 29 January, seemed to think the Japanese would get a 'B' mandate. Five weeks later, when the Delegation discussed the matter again, the point was still uncertain. The occasion was the important memorandum, dated 8 March and drawn up by Lord Milner, on problems and obscurities

31 On Japan's later attempts to secure the open door in the 'C' mandates, see H. Duncan Hall, p. 131.

35 The text read as follows: '[Finally they consider that] there are territories, such as South-West Africa and certain of the islands in the South Pacific, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization, or their geographical contiguity to the mandatory [State] and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the mandatory [State] as integral portions [thereof] subject to the safeguards above-mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.' Words in brackets were omitted in the text of Article 22, which also substituted the phrase, 'of its territory', for the word 'thereof'. It read also, 'certain of the South Pacific Islands', and 'to the territory of the Mandatory . . .', after the word, 'contiguity'.

36 Review by Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of the High Court of the Commonwealth of Australia, of Sir Robert Garran's book, Prosper the Commonwealth, London, 1958. The review is in Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, vol. IX, no. 33, p. 105. As a file amongst the Hughes papers shows, he annotated the 'C' mandates formula, as printed in Lloyd George's Truth about the peace treaties (p. 540), with the remark: 'The C class mandate arose out of the flare-up between Lloyd George and me—there was Wilson's threat to leave the Conference. It was drafted by Bonar Law and Hankey.' It is unlikely Bonar Law had anything to do with it.
involved in the mandates system. The British Empire delegation discussed it that same day at its thirteenth meeting. Cecil referred to the insistence of the Japanese on the rights being the same for the territories both north and south of the Equator. Lloyd George was still thinking in terms of a 'B' mandate for Japan, since a 'B' mandate would ensure the 'open door' for Allied commerce. But Hughes and Massey thought a 'C' mandate was preferable; it was better to allow the Japanese to close the door in the north in order that they should be able to exclude the Japanese from the south. Thus the Pacific mandates came to mark an international frontier line between Japanese and British Commonwealth spheres of influence and proprietary rights, a line which in fact was based on the diplomatic agreement reached between the parties in 1917.

Some light is thrown on what happened on 28–29 January by two accounts on the British side, one by Hankey and the other written much later by Lloyd George. Hankey, in a private letter of 29 January wrote about the extreme difficulty of reconciling the views of the president and some of the dominions. 'It involved many meetings of the British Empire delegation, and an infinity of delicate negotiation . . . Hughes and Massey . . . are our principal difficulty, but President Wilson . . . is even more obstinate.' Hankey had been having most of his meals with Lloyd George 'in order to help him in squaring this or that party.' 37 Nothing is known of these private negotiations. 'Many meetings of the British Empire Delegation' seems an exaggeration, since there had only been meetings on 27, 28 and 29 January. But Hankey's account supports Lloyd George's own statement that he had spent part of the two days in consultation with the dominions prime ministers. Lloyd George urged them not to wreck the Conference over a principle which Britain herself accepted for her own territories. In the end, he relates, 'I obtained general agreement to a series of propositions' to be placed before Council of Ten when it resumed its discussion on mandates. 38

Neither Lloyd George nor Hankey had anything to say about the authorship of the 'series of propositions', nor do the minutes of the Peace Conference throw any light on this aspect. No doubt Lloyd George had earned the tribute Botha paid to him next day in the Council of Ten

38 Lloyd George, vol. 1, pp. 538 ff.
because of his rôle in negotiating the agreement.\textsuperscript{39} Smuts was absent from the meetings. As he was the British Empire’s representative with Cecil on the Commission of the League of Nations, it fell to him to introduce the British Empire delegation’s mandate text in the Commission on 8 February,\textsuperscript{40} as well as to move it as part of the League Covenant on 14 February. Though he seems to have had a hand in the drafting, he claimed no credit for it, and his biographers have not claimed that credit for him. Sir Keith Hancock contented himself with the cautious remark that Smuts had played a leading part in the ‘orderly retreat’ from annexation to mandates.\textsuperscript{41}

Lloyd George paid tribute to the help given by Borden in ‘abating the pugnacity of Mr Hughes and Mr Massey.’\textsuperscript{42} Borden played steadily the rôle of peacemaker and conciliator in Paris. But he disliked Hughes, and it is perhaps open to question whether he always fully appreciated the significance of what was happening. His well known diary account of the ‘warm scene’ between Hughes and Lloyd George, when the latter introduced the mandate draft in the British Empire delegation on the morning of 29 January, was missed by the minute writers. He represented Hughes as haggling over the draft, whereupon Lloyd George lost his temper and said, according to Borden, that he had fought Australia’s battle for three days and was not going to quarrel with the United States over the Solomon Islands.\textsuperscript{43}

Lloyd George introduced the draft at the meeting of the delegation with a plea for a rapid decision because Wilson was returning soon to the United States, adding that news of any disagreement in the delegation


\textsuperscript{40} It was the original form of the delegation’s text that Smuts introduced without the two initial paragraphs, citing misgovernment by Germany and Turkey, that had been added later. The draft presented on 8 February contained the two machinery paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Covenant’s Article 22.

\textsuperscript{41} W. K. Hancock, Smuts, vol. i, Cambridge 1962, pp. 507, 589. Less caution has been shown by some important recent accounts of aspects of the Peace Conference. The draft of the British Empire delegation as a whole, and the ‘C’ mandate compromise in particular, has been described as ‘Smuts’ plan’, ‘Smuts’ draft’, ‘Smuts formula’, ‘Smuts resolutions’, ‘Smuts famous compromise proposal’, ‘compromise . . . proposed and drafted by Smuts . . .’, e.g. Tillman, pp. 93–97; George Curry, ‘Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts and the Versailles Settlement’, American Historical Review, vol. lxvi, 1961–2, p. 981; Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol. iii, chapter 17, pp. 657–8.

\textsuperscript{42} Lloyd George, vol. i, pp. 538 ff.

\textsuperscript{43} Glazebrook, p. 92.
would create difficulties. While he pressed for agreement, he made it clear that he would do his best to secure what the three dominions wanted. The discussion on the draft appears to have gone quickly and smoothly, without encountering any serious opposition. Lloyd George repeated the point he had made earlier, after his talk with Wilson, that establishing the Australian case for annexation also established the Japanese case. Perhaps that was one reason why annexation no longer seemed to be the matter uppermost in Hughes’s mind. He was ready now, as his acquiescence in the mandate draft showed, to think in terms of a mandate. But he insisted at this meeting that Australia must know now that she was to be the mandatory and on what terms. He cabled the text of the draft to his government, which was still considering its reply when he had to face Wilson next day, 30 January, in the Council of Ten. He had to execute there the difficult manoeuvre of shifting his weight from annexation to mandate, whilst still unsure whether his government would agree, and uncertain whether in fact Australia would be given the mandate. It was Wilson’s studious evasion on the latter point—the allocation of the mandates—and not the terms of the compromise, which was the real focal point in the heated discussion which took place. Wilson had had time to study the text, since Lloyd George had sent him a copy immediately. In fact Wilson liked the whole mandate draft well enough to incorporate it textually in his own fourth draft of the Covenant which he wrote on 2 February.

Britain and the dominions, as Lloyd George explained to the Council in introducing the mandate draft on 30 January, had accepted the principle of mandates for all German colonies and captured Turkish territories. The draft was a compromise; the dominions had concurred—although the mandate solution was not wholly acceptable to them—in order to permit the Council to come to a decision on the issue. Hughes followed, endorsing what Lloyd George had said and explaining that when his government had learned that ‘the mandatory principle was to be imposed’, it asked for time to consider the details of the proposal. It was meeting that afternoon and he awaited its decision. Wilson thought the draft circulated by Lloyd George was ‘a very gratifying paper’ and brought them close to agreement. He went on to make a long rambling speech which Lloyd George said ‘filled him with despair;’ for it implied that no question could be decided finally until every other question had been settled. He urged Wilson to
accept the draft as a provisional settlement and Wilson agreed. But Hughes was not satisfied, and was convinced Australia would not be satisfied to leave unsettled the question who was to be the mandatory. It could be settled now, he suggested, for was not the *de facto* League of Nations already in existence in that room?  

In the afternoon meeting Massey complained that Wilson himself had not said he was ready to accept the 'C' mandate formula. He, Massey, was ready to accept it, though he still believed in direct annexation as the best solution. At this point Wilson's patience seems to have given way. He asked abruptly whether New Zealand and Australia were presenting an ultimatum to the Conference. First, they had come to the Conference to press their case for annexation. Then, 'after discussion amongst themselves they agreed to present to the Conference that proposal.' Was this their minimum concession? 'If they could not get that definitely now', were they going to do everything possible to prevent agreement? Massey and Hughes were taken by surprise by this sudden outburst. Massey said, 'No.' Hughes tried to answer, but the president interrupted and asked whether he had heard the question. Hughes replied in the negative, and the president repeated the question. Lloyd George described his tone and manner as 'hectoring' even 'dictatorial and somewhat arrogant.' Hughes's reply, as the Peace Conference minutes record it, was clear, temperate and reasonable. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa preferred direct control, he said, but since the Conference did not, they had agreed to the proposal set out in the draft. 'Speaking for himself, with great reluctance', he added that he agreed with the formula in the draft; he could not go further until he heard from his Cabinet; 'if they were prepared to go further he would offer no objection.'

---


45 *For. Rel. U.S. Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, pp. 799–800. For the debate as a whole, see pp. 785–817. I have followed here the official version of the minutes. The secondary accounts of the episode have usually obscured the essential reasonableness of Hughes's reply by concentrating attention on the picturesque story of Hughes's defiant retort to the president with which Lloyd George brightened his narrative twenty years later. *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 542. Such stories about Hughes relieved the tedium at Paris. But this one, which was not recorded by the minute writers, made no sense. For Hughes was made to say that Australia would defy the civilized world if the world appealed to Australia to agree to a mandate. Yet that morning he had indicated that he accepted the 'C' mandate compromise, and he repeated his acceptance after Wilson's outburst.
H. Duncan Hall

Hankey's account of what followed conveys the essentials: 'exasperated delegates, the feeling that there was some misunderstanding at bottom. At this moment Botha had one of his great moments.' Botha assured the president that there had been no threats in what the speakers had said. He appealed to both sides for reason and forbearance. His heartfelt eloquence changed the whole atmosphere. It became business-like and co-operative. Wilson suggested that the Council should say in the press communiqué that they had arrived at 'a satisfactory provisional arrangement.' Lloyd George took advantage of the idea of a provisional mandate suggested by Orlando to press for relief from the enormous burden of maintaining over a million troops in the Middle East, and in areas where the British did not have the slightest intention of being mandatories. Either the Conference would have to relieve them of that responsibility or he 'would really have to press very hard for a definite appointment of the mandatories.' In effect, he was repeating Hughes's plea that those who sat round the table in the Council, who would be sitting later in the League, could settle the business on the spot. But it was not until May that Lloyd George could get Wilson to face the issue of apportionment. Wilson agreed then that the issue could be regarded as settled; the three Dominions would get their mandates; but for the sake of appearances this was not to be regarded at this stage as a formal apportionment.

Meanwhile Hughes's earlier idea that Australia would be safer with a mandate than with annexation, had become a settled conviction. At the thirteenth meeting of the British Empire Delegation on 8 March, he made it clear that he was accepting a mandate in order to prevent Japan from annexing the islands north of the Equator, thus greatly extending her military power. The British Empire Delegation was examining at this meeting a preliminary draft of a New Zealand mandate for Samoa which had been drawn up at the beginning of February. Milner in his memorandum on mandates had taken this draft as a model for the 'C' mandates. Hughes objected to an article in the draft which permitted the incorporation of Samoa into New Zealand, if the Samoans should so desire and the League saw no obstacle. Such a clause in the Japanese mandate, Hughes pointed out, would be disastrous for Australia. For this would permit

Japan, by a similar process of incorporation, to secure release from the obligations of the mandate; she could then fortify the islands and establish bases; and that was a step to which Australia was unalterably opposed. As a result of this objection, the clause was dropped from the draft of the ‘C’ mandates as presented to the Milner Commission in July.\footnote{The task of drafting the mandate texts was given by the Allied Supreme Council on 28 June to a Commission of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers over which Milner presided.} A couple of months later Hughes had second thoughts about the wisdom of his opposition to incorporation. On 13 September he sent a telegram to Milner urging amendment of the ‘C’ mandate draft by reinstating the incorporation clause, but keeping the ban on fortifications. Milner replied that neither New Zealand nor South Africa had raised any objection to the ‘C’ mandate draft and that his Commission opposed any clause on incorporation. But there was always open the possibility of an appeal to the League to permit incorporation if there was a clear demand on the part of the native inhabitants for such a step.

In the case of most of the mandates, the main motive forces that determined the allocation of the mandate and shaped the arrangements, were political and strategic. The Pacific island of Nauru was an exception. Unlike any of the other mandates, it was an economic consideration that determined the arrangements. The strategic value of Nauru was minimal. The main operative factor within the framework of the mandate was an economic agreement, limiting to three Commonwealth countries the production and distribution to those countries of phosphates. Nauru was a phosphate mine, twelve miles in circumference, consisting of a central plateau of high grade phosphate and a narrow coastal fringe in which its population of a thousand people lived. When the Supreme Allied Council allocated the mandates on 7 May, it named a specific mandatory state for each. For Nauru, however, it said, ‘The mandate shall be given to the British Empire.’ This was not a gesture of solidarity on the part of the members of the Empire. It was simply the means adopted by them to defer a decision until the members could agree on which of them should exercise authority as the mandatory and what arrangements should be made to mine and distribute the phosphates.

Their differences on these points dated back to the beginning of 1919. Nauru had been captured by Australian troops in November 1914 and...
continuously occupied by them thereafter. The phosphates were exploited by a British company. When the war ended, British interests in the island were being looked after by a British phosphate commissioner and a British civil administrator under the high commissioner for the Western Pacific. The latter also administered Ocean Island, another phosphate island east of Nauru. In the British view, as explained by Lord Milner to the British Empire delegation on 8 March, these circumstances suggested that the United Kingdom should hold the mandate. In fact, when the draft mandates were drawn up by the foreign office at the beginning of February, the United Kingdom was shown as mandatory for Nauru. Australia and New Zealand, Milner explained, would be guaranteed their share of the phosphates.

This did not appeal to Hughes who put forward the case for Australia as mandatory some days later. There was still no settlement at the beginning of May on the eve of the allocation of the mandates. Hughes put his government's view in a letter to Milner on 3 May. His case was that Australia had taken the island, garrisoned it, needed the phosphates and must have the mandate. The United Kingdom's view was that the mandate should be administered by the high commissioner for the Western Pacific. The matter was discussed at a meeting of dominions prime ministers in Paris on 5 May when Massey claimed the mandate for New Zealand on the ground that New Zealand needed the phosphates more than Australia.50 There was still no agreement on 7 May and in the Allied Supreme Council it was agreed that the mandate should be allocated to the British Empire.

On 2 July Australia, Great Britain, and New Zealand settled their dispute by concluding a tripartite agreement dividing up the phosphates and vesting the administration of the island for five years in the Australian government. The rights of the company were bought by the three governments and vested in the British Phosphate Commission on which each was represented. The agreement gave the three governments the first claim on the use of the phosphates for their farming needs, any surplus being sold at market prices.

Smuts was still in London when the agreement was made. Just before

his departure for South Africa, he wrote to Milner, putting the question: should the resources of a mandate awarded to the British Empire be monopolized by three of its governments? Smuts thought not. His protest was followed by another in a telegram sent to Milner from South Africa in mid-September. The phosphates should be reserved for the dominions generally, and be available to them at the same prices if they wished to purchase. His protest arrived too late and Milner did not answer it; there would be enough phosphates for all, it was assumed, if South Africa wanted to buy. That the principle underlying the protest was valid was recognized however, when Nauru was discussed in the Third Assembly of the League. The governments of the British Empire, the League was informed, remained responsible for matters of major policy regarding Nauru. Since it was 'a matter of responsibility for the whole British Empire', all the British Commonwealth delegates at the Assembly met to discuss Nauru. The arrangements of 1919 proved durable and were carried forward into the Trusteeship Agreement of 1945. The United Nations Trusteeship Agreement for Nauru recognized 'the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom... as the joint authority which will exercise the administration of the Territory.'

The historical context from which the mandate system emerged was complex. Attempts to ascribe it to the upsurge of new historical forces, to the triumph of humanitarian sentiment, of liberalism and idealism over the forces of imperialism, smother the historical realities in an ideological smog. It is true that a revulsion of feeling and of conscience, due to the revelation of the immense forces of destruction inherent in all human society, played a part in the result ('the devil was sick; the devil a monk would be'); but other factors were more important. The precipitating factor was the practical problem that had to be solved at Paris and which could not be postponed: what to do about the various territories detached, as a result of the war, from the German and Turkish empires? Grandiose ideas of using mandates to stabilize territorial changes in the map of Europe fell to the ground, except for one small disputed area, the Saar Territory. Not all of the detached German and Turkish territories were converted into mandates. But it was on the mandate solution adopted for most of

them, that public attention was focused. As seen by the Commonwealth countries, a mandate was another means of realizing the goal of self-government envisaged for their own dependencies. That goal was part of their own national concept of the 'sacred trust', which their draftsmen duly incorporated in the text of Article 22 of the Covenant. The goals set for peoples under mandate, like those in their own dependences, were for them to learn 'to stand by themselves.' The international mandate was an old expedient used by the powers more than once as a solution for a disputed territory on the international frontier. The system adopted in Paris was an improved model, larger in its geographical scope, more elaborate in its arrangements, more pretentious in its ideological professions, and, most important of all, geared to the permanent international administration provided by the League of Nations. It was the Commonwealth which played the major part in reviving the old expedient of the mandate, widened its scope, drafted its provisions, geared it skilfully and effectively into the new international administration, and contributed the greater part of the territories—in the Near East, Africa and the South Pacific— which the League and its Mandates Commission were called on to administer.\footnote{Unpublished British papers of the colonial, foreign and cabinet offices, including minutes of the British Empire delegation, as well as papers from the Commonwealth archives in Canberra, including the Hughes papers, have been used in this account.}
The ending of the Anglo-Japanese alliance at the Washington conference of 1921 was accepted by the Japanese with the stoicism of the samurai. The alliance had been the mainstay of their foreign policy since it was originally concluded in 1902. It had been revised in 1905 and 1911. When it came up for consideration again in 1921, the subject was eagerly debated in Japan. In government circles and in the country at large, there were many who desired its continuation. But it was widely known that Britain was doubtful about this. What steps did the Japanese take to uphold the alliance? Most studies of the ending of the alliance rely heavily on American and British sources and have neglected an analysis of Japan's reactions. On the Japanese side, there are still many secrets to be uncovered about Japanese diplomacy at this time, though a number of important historical studies have appeared in the last few years.¹

The Japanese were aware that Britain, while recognizing that the alliance had served a useful purpose in the past, was dissident about renewing it as it stood because it was not pleasing to the United States whom Britain was anxious not to antagonize. This was no new issue and the Japanese had been trying to meet the American and British viewpoints for

¹ The most important of these are S. Yamamoto, 'Washinton kaigi to Nihon' (Washington conference and Japan), Kokusai Seiji, 1962, no. 3.4, pp. 59-73; S. Asada, 'Japan's "Special Interests" and the Washington conference, 1921-22', American Historical Review, vol. lxvi, 1961, pp. 62-70; K. Ohata, 'Washinton kaigi Nihon seifu kunrei ni tsuite no kosatsu—Nichi-Ei domei' (Reflections on the Japanese government's instructions for the Washington conference—Anglo-Japanese alliance), Waseda Hogaku, vol. xxxviii, 1962, pp. 105-23; and A. Iriye, After Imperialism, Cambridge, Mass., 1965. The most useful source material is to be found in Uchida Yasuya denki genko (Draft biography of Uchida Yasuya) which was made available to me by the courtesy of the library, Japanese Foreign Ministry, Tokyo. This article was written before the publication of Documents on British foreign policy, first series, vol. xiv, London, 1966.
at least a decade. They had been asked by Britain in 1911 to amend the alliance to make it clear that nothing in it entailed any obligation upon Britain to go to war with any power which had an arbitration treaty with her. By this circumlocution was intended the United States. But the general arbitration treaty which Britain signed with the United States was altered by the American Senate and consequently not ratified. So the clause in the alliance remained inoperative. In 1914 a peace commissions treaty was signed between Britain and the United States. Technically this was not an arbitration treaty because the reports of the commission were not binding on the parties to a dispute. But the British foreign secretary made it clear that in his interpretation it was equivalent to the earlier general arbitration treaty and therefore Japan could no longer expect British support against the United States under clause IV of the 1911 alliance.

The Japanese did not explicitly accept the British declaration—and for sound legalistic reasons. Nonetheless, they issued countless statements to soothe the Americans. These are well summed up by one they issued in Washington in June 1921:

Nor is it practically necessary to carry on the legal analysis of the question as to whether the Peace Commission Treaty . . . should be construed as a general arbitration treaty within the meaning of Article IV of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement. For, apart from that question, it was already well understood at the time of negotiating the existing Agreement that the Alliance should in no case be directed against the United States.²

However much the Japanese reiterated such assurances, there were those in America who found it convenient to ignore them; and attacks on the alliance centred on its anti-American character.

American, and to a lesser extent Chinese, opposition reached a peak during the premiership of Hara Kei, to which this essay is confined. Becoming 'Japan's first commoner prime minister' shortly before the armistice in Europe, Hara held office until he was assassinated in Tokyo just before the Washington conference opened. In general Hara was in favour of the alliance, of the League of Nations and of co-operation, if possible, with the United States. His view was that Japan, though she emerged

² N. Ujita, Shidehara Kijuro, Tokyo, 1958, pp. 228–9.
from the war as one of the strongest powers in the world, was really isolated and needed to retain the friendship of her wartime allies. In following this not always popular course, Hara was supported by the cabinet, his party the Seiyukai, and the genro (elder statesmen). Field-Marshall Yamagata, the most important of the genro, much as he detested party cabinets, was content to work along with him in the cause of cautious diplomacy. At this time a struggle was taking place between the civil and the military who had played some part in formulating policy over Shantung, China and Siberia. Thus Yamagata’s collaboration was invaluable to Hara in pursuing his liberal policies. Hara was also supported over the alliance by such eminent statesmen as Kato Takaaki, Okuma Shigenobu, Shibuzawa Eiichi and by the prominent daily, Jiji Shimpó.  

There were also important groups which opposed and criticized the alliance. There were extremists like Kita Ikki who criticized Britain as the ultra-imperialist power which kept all Asia, and in particular China, under her subjection. The nationalist and expansionist groups generally supported this view. They were among the sponsors of the anti-British campaign during the world war. More important because more influential were those officers who felt that Japan did not get enough British support out of the alliance. While the navy was in favour of the alliance, the army was divided. The General Staff, however, appears to have wanted it to continue after 1921. Thus General Fukuda, vice-chief of the General Staff, told the British military attaché that he was strongly in favour of continuing the alliance which the General Staff had been studying in autumn 1919, and that the minister for war, General Tanaka, shared his view. On the whole those associated with the government were consistently pro-alliance. 

The future of the alliance was to be studied by the newly appointed British ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Charles Eliot. Eliot had been high commissioner at Vladivostok (1918–19) and had returned home in October

---


4 T. Kita, Shina Kakumei gaiishi (The Chinese revolution of 1911), Tokyo, 1921.

5 Alston to Foreign Office, 10 October 1919, D.B.F.P., vol. vi, no. 528. There is no indication in Tanaka Giichi denki, Tokyo, 1960, that the war minister, General Tanaka, was as enthusiastic as this suggests.
1919 for briefing before taking up his new appointment. During his stay in London, he had received the views of the British foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, and had discussed his instructions generally with Viscount Chinda Sutemi, the Japanese ambassador in London, in February 1920. He indicated that the policy of the British government was to amend the alliance as necessary in the light of the League of Nations covenant but certainly to continue it. This was obviously pleasing to the Japanese. When Eliot reached Japan's shores, he was met and welcomed by the crown prince who was often called upon to act for the ailing Taisho emperor. This was quite exceptional and a special mark of honour.6

On 19 May the renewal of the alliance treaty was broached by Eliot at his interview with the foreign minister, Baron Uchida Yasuya, who indicated his personal sympathy. Two days later he obtained the sanction of the cabinet. On 22 May Eliot was informed that the 'Japanese Government are also in favour of its renewal.' It was a matter of no serious concern with them whether the negotiations took place in London or Tokyo. But the foreign ministry would be drawing up a draft of the revised treaty. Simultaneously Chinda was asked to enquire whether Japan could get a copy of Britain's draft of the amended alliance if it were already available.7 In fact the Japanese were not anxious to take the initiative in amending the alliance and thought that it was in their interest for things to continue as before; if Britain were prepared to open talks good and well, but they would themselves avoid encouraging any amendment.

This was a time when the Chinese were waging a campaign against the continuation of the alliance. Supporters of the League of Nations claimed that the alliance was inappropriate to the new world order. In order to anticipate this opposition, the allies thought it desirable to issue a statement of intent. The proposed joint statement was drafted by Britain and approved by the Japanese cabinet on 22 June. Ultimately the two powers informed the League on 8 July that 'if the said Agreement be continued after July 1921, it must be in a form which is not inconsistent with that Covenant (of the League)'. Evidently the prolongation of the alliance was

an ultimate possibility. But Britain claimed that she could not discuss it without consulting the dominions and the imperial conference which was due to be held could not be convened until the autumn or more probably the following summer. Japan was well suited by this delay.8

Meanwhile the Japanese government was doing some research into the implications of the League of Nations for the alliance. There was a committee of the privy council which was convened by its chairman, Field-Marshai Yamagata, to study this topic.9 It sought the comments of Dr Tachi Sakutaro, an eminent jurist, who had acted as Japan’s legal adviser at the Paris conference and later attended the Washington conference.10 The Japanese tended to feel that, so long as the League of Nations did not fulfill the high hopes with which it had originally been started, there was no reason why it should be used to justify the termination of an old-established alliance.

The Hara ministry was harassed in the diet by requests that it should make clear its policy on the alliance, but it declined to do so on grounds of diplomatic secrecy. In reality the reason probably was that the Japanese wanted to conceal their hand and see the reaction of the Americans and Chinese to their announcement. The Chinese reacted sharply and presented the Japanese minister in Peking on 23 July, with a stern warning.11

On 21 August 1920 Viscount Chinda, who had been weakened in health by the unremitting effort required at the Paris peace conference, left the London embassy for Japan. With Japanese punctilio he called on the prime minister and foreign secretary before his departure. He gathered from discussions with Lloyd George and Curzon that, while it was necessary to take into account the views of the dominions and the United States, the London view was that the alliance should be pursued as a matter of course. The prime minister mentioned the possibility of the United States becoming a contracting party to the alliance. This was the first time that this particular suggestion, which was of course a natural way out of Britain’s predicament, was exchanged between the two powers, even if on

8 Kajima, pp. 84-85; Nihon gaiko nempyo narabi ni shuyo bunsho (Chronology of Japanese foreign affairs together with important documents), vol. 1, p. 515 (hereafter cited as Nempyo).
9 J.F.M.A. microfilm, PVM 12-43, pp. 73-86.
10 J.F.M.A. microfilm, PVM 12-43, pp. 87-149.
11 China yearbook, 1921-22, Tientsin, 1921, p. 741.
an unofficial level. Chinda, who was one of Japan’s shrewdest and most experienced diplomats, gave his government the benefit of his private views on these conversations. He thought that the imperial conference would only be consultative and would not affect the decision of the home government. The proposal for a three-sided alliance with the United States seemed to Chinda to be far-fetched in the light of Anglo-American relations at that time and was only a British device to placate the United States in some way.\textsuperscript{12} This was welcome news for the Tokyo government for the alliance might have to continue if the state of Anglo-American and American-Japanese relations made a rapprochement impossible.

That the situation was not quite as favourable as the Japanese imagined can be seen from one of the first tasks that the new Japanese ambassador, Baron Hayashi Gonsuke, had to perform in London. Appointed in May, he eventually reached London on 4 September and found that Britain’s attitude towards Japan was cool. A leading article in \textit{The Times}\textsuperscript{13} discussed the view of the Americans that Britain was secretly in agreement with Japan to join her against them. These were damaging allegations to which the Japanese thought it was necessary to make a public rejoinder. Hayashi therefore issued a statement that was inserted in \textit{The Times}:

\begin{quote}
It was never in the mind of the Japanese Government to fight the United States at all, and moreover in the most improbable eventuality of such a war to which I refer merely for the sake of argument, Japan would not expect England to come to her help. Hence the Japanese and British Governments agreed to insert in the Agreement of Alliance Article 4 which would absolve Great Britain from her obligation to join Japan in a war against America. Only a general phraseology was selected in the Alliance Agreement for reasons of diplomatic nicety but what the negotiators of the Agreement had in mind is obvious. I must further state in refutation of the irresponsible and sensational utterances in the American press and elsewhere that there exists no special agreement between Japan and Great Britain.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} J.F.M.A. microfilm, PVM 12–43, pp. 56–61; \textit{The Times}, 4 January 1921.
Of course this did not in any way modify the attacks which descended on the alliance from many quarters in America and China. But Japan was mere worried that, under the influence of The Times, British opinion might become lukewarm and suspicious of the alliance; and it was the object of Hayashi's hard-hitting statement to prevent this.

The subject was still being anxiously debated in the Japanese diet. On 15 December 1920, foreign minister Uchida had stated that 'responsible people in government and opposition in both countries desire that the spirit of this valuable alliance may be long preserved. I do not doubt that it will accord with the very high objects of the League of Nations.' At the opening of the diet in January 1921, Uchida announced that the alliance would be continued with due regard for the need to make it consistent with the covenant of the League. On 24 January he declined to disclose the progress of negotiations concerning the alliance. These Japanese statements either for propaganda purposes or from conviction were much more pro-alliance than were those in Britain and had a more optimistic tone, though the language on both sides was ambiguous.

Meanwhile the Japanese took steps to let Britain know that they still valued the link with Britain. They arranged for the crown prince to visit Britain in the summer of 1921. It was the first time that anyone so elevated as the heir to the throne had gone overseas and the plan was criticized by conservatives like Yamagata. Former ambassador Chinda was involved in planning the trip and accompanying the prince. Setting off in March he undertook a leisurely cruise round the outlying colonies of the British Empire. He was in Britain over three weeks, receiving appropriate honours and being made an honorary general of the British army.

Later in the year the Japanese cabinet discussed the proposal that Lloyd George should visit Japan setting off about the beginning of August. Lloyd George had been seriously ill early in June and there was talk of his taking a cruise for convalescence. On 24 June the Japanese cabinet discussed even the hypothetical details about possible sailings to Japan and speculated that 'he could return to Britain in about two weeks as he had no business.' It is clear that the Japanese would have regarded it as a feather

16 Oka, pp. 189-92; Kikuchi, p. 235.
17 The Times, 6-16 June 1921.
18 Hara Kei niki (Diaries of Hara), vol. 9, Tokyo, 1950, p. 345: 24 June 1921 (hereafter cited as Hara).
in their caps to have had a visit from the British prime minister and that they thought this would have helped their cause. Probably the project was a non-starter, because Lloyd George was only able to take an interrupted holiday in late August in the north of Scotland. It is therefore odd that it should have gone as far as discussion by the cabinet. But it is one of the interesting by-ways of history.

While the Japanese were taking these steps to assure the British government of their goodwill, they were worried about the sentiments which the dominions were expressing in preparation for the imperial conference which was to be held from June to August. They could understand, even if they did not sympathize with, the attitude of the London government. But they took great pains to ferret out the assumed hostility of the dominions and were afraid that this might change the policy of the home government at the conference. Indeed the foreign minister asked his ambassador in London in April whether Japan should offer to open talks on the alliance unofficially regardless of the conference or to take part in an unofficial exchange of views which might ultimately serve as the basis of discussion at the imperial conference. But this was not encouraged in London. Meanwhile foreign ministry officials were exploring the possibility of a three-sided treaty which the United States could be induced to join. But this was confined to the secretariat and does not seem to have been taken up in the course of diplomacy with Britain or the United States.\(^{19}\)

It was Britain’s contention that the alliance would lapse in July 1921, that is, ten years after its last revision in July 1911. On 9 May Curzon proposed to the Japanese ambassador to extend it for three months to allow discussion of the issue by the dominions prime ministers. The Japanese cabinet was not opposed to its prolongation but disagreed with Britain’s assumption that the treaty would automatically lapse unless it was specifically renewed. It objected to the notion that the alliance was ‘self-extinguishing’, that is, that it expired automatically unless steps were taken to extend it, and tried to convince Britain on 30 May that the alliance continued unless it was explicitly renounced by one of the parties. Hara wrote at the time that he was sorry that Britain was so much concerned with American feelings and could not be sure what attitude she would ulti-

\(^{19}\) Kajima, pp. 415–16.
mately take. On 1 July the lord chancellor ruled against the British government and declared that the alliance continued so long as steps for cancellation were not taken. While the foreign office was apparently reluctant to accept this view, it gave up the idea of asking for three months’ extension. This had been a fundamental difference in outlook between the two allies.

When the imperial conference opened in London on 20 June, it was no secret that the future of the alliance was high on the agenda. It brought out many of the criticisms which had been smouldering. On the British side, these criticisms came from Canada, from the group of M.P.s which had been asking parliamentary questions on the subject at least since November 1920 and a larger group of one hundred and fifty members led by Lord Winterton who insisted that they should have the opportunity of discussing it in the House in advance of the conference opening. The Japanese were sensitive to these criticisms and received detailed reports.

The Japanese were similarly affected both from China and the United States. In June an anti-alliance movement had sprung up in China and the boycott of Japanese goods had reached formidable proportions. Similarly in the United States a wave of protest broke. On 24 June the Chinese minister in Washington, Alfred Sze, spoke out against the alliance. The prime minister minuted in his diary that 'though the renewal of the alliance was of course no business of the United States, there were various rumours going around. The cabinet therefore agreed that it should get Shidehara to publish a reassuring statement in the United States just as Hayashi had earlier done in Britain.' When Shidehara received these instructions, he visited the United States secretary of state and asked for his approval in advance. Hughes, however, asked for it to be solely Japan’s initiative. Thus on 4 July, a well chosen day, Shidehara published his famous assurance:

Negotiations looking to the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance have not yet begun. In the meantime, a campaign seems to be actively at work misrepresenting the possible effect of the Alliance upon the United States. By no stretch of the imagination can it be honestly

20 Hara, vol. ix, p. 320; 27 May 1921.
22 Hara, vol. ix, p. 345; 24 June 1921.
stated that the Alliance was ever designed or remotely intended as an instrument of hostility or even defence against the United States.

Japan is naturally anxious to strengthen the ties of friendship and loyal co-operation between herself and the British Empire, which she regards as of the most utmost importance to the stability of the Far East. At the same time, it is the firm and fixed determination of Japan to permit nothing to hamper her traditional relations of goodwill and good understanding with the United States. She is satisfied that these two affiliations are in no way incompatible, but, on the contrary, complementary and even essential to each other.  

The intention was to disabuse prejudiced American and Canadian opinion which was being worked up by the press.

To emphasize their good intentions also towards the League covenant, the Japanese joined the British in their declaration to the League on 7 July 1921. This stated that ‘if any situation arises whilst the Agreement remains in force in which the procedure prescribed by the terms of the Agreement is inconsistent with the procedure prescribed by the Covenant of the League of Nations, then the procedure prescribed by the said Covenant shall be adopted, and shall prevail over that prescribed by the Agreement’. This statement, despite its meekness of tone, made clear that the alliance would not immediately lapse.

It is not necessary in a study of the formulation of Japanese policy to get involved in details of British policy. Suffice it to say that the cabinet on 30 May decided to discuss with the Empire prime ministers the possibility that the United States president should be invited to convene a conference for discussion of Pacific questions but ‘only after it had been made quite clear to Japan and to other Powers concerned that we had no intention of dropping the Alliance’; it felt that conversations about the renewal of the alliance should be entered into with the United States and China. Even before these ideas were thoroughly discussed at the imperial conference, they were scouted abroad in various forms. Thus the Japanese ambassador in London was told by Curzon on 4 July that he wanted to propose a Pacific conference.

23 Ujita, pp. 228–9.
25 British cabinet minutes, 30 May 1921, Austen Chamberlain Papers, University of Birmingham Library.
Before Britain could pilot this through, the United States on 11 July unofficially proposed a conference at Washington to discuss the limitations of armaments and far eastern problems. The proposal, though still very ill-defined, was much broader in scope than the British one. After an exchange of clarifications Japan replied on 26 July that she would take part in the proposed conference but hoped that it would not discuss special problems between nations, by which she obviously intended the alliance, or *faits accomplis*, thereby implying Japan’s acquired rights in China. Waiving these objections, the United States president on 13 August officially invited Japan to the conference and ten days later the Japanese accepted. As the Japanese ambassador in Washington observed, the British project for a limited conference had been rejected and the American proposal for a broad-based Pacific and disarmament conference had triumphed.²⁶

The Japanese shared the concern of the British that the issue of the alliance should not be thrown to an open conference but should be discussed between interested parties in advance. On 27 July the foreign secretary proposed to Baron Hayashi an advance discussion on an unofficial basis between Japan, Britain and the United States but the idea had to be withdrawn on account of American opposition. Behind Curzon’s idea was the British desire for a ‘preliminary conference with [Harding and Hughes] and Japan and China, so as to prepare the way for disarmament by reaching an agreement about the Pacific and China before all the world was there to join in, hinder and render impossible what could probably only be done à trois ou en parti carré’.²⁷

The Japanese were anxious to conceal their hand behind Britain’s initiative but fully approved and encouraged the various proposals. They were naturally apprehensive about the conference contemplated where it seemed likely that Japan would be arraigned before a world tribunal and deprived of her wartime gains. Over the alliance which was in a different position, they were dependent on Britain’s decision and influence with the United States. But could the Japanese trust Britain who was inclined to work along with the United States rather than her ally? Opinion was divided. According to Sir Charles Eliot: ‘When the proposal for a Conference was first brought forward, the feeling towards Great Britain was one of great bitterness and almost unfriendliness. Things grew better when

²⁶ Ujita, pp. 202 ff.
²⁷ Austen to Mary Chamberlain, 27 August 1921, Chamberlain Papers.

379
it was announced that Lloyd George had said we would either maintain the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, or substitute something better for it.\textsuperscript{28}

It was in these circumstances that the anglophil Baron Kato, leader of the opposition 
\textit{Kenseikai} party, wrote in the Tokyo \textit{Asahi} for 20 July 1921: 'Up till now [Britain and Japan] have acted together like relatives; for various reasons this should continue. It is vital that we should not end up utter strangers. Since however circumstances have changed, if Britain says that on several grounds she is no longer interested in the fate of the alliance, it would be best to bring it to an end.'\textsuperscript{29} Kato seemed to be leaving it all to Britain to decide but it should not be imagined that all Japanese took such a negative attitude. Even the most sanguine recognized that Britain was not going to stand her ground.\textsuperscript{30}

It was essential for Japan to be ready for the next American move whether it took the form of a Pacific 'Big Three' meeting or the full conference itself. July to October were months of tremendous activity. In July the Foreign Ministry was still drafting the form of an Anglo-American-Japanese agreement to replace the existing alliance, which could contain something of the original alliance but also other clauses safeguarding Japan's newly acquired interests. The next spate of activity took place after the official invitation came on 13 August. The army and navy ministries which were averse to co-operating in the proposed conference were called in along with the foreign ministry, and the matter came before the cabinet.

Japan's attitude was straightforward: she preferred the alliance as it stood but would consent to a tripartite agreement with America. This the foreign ministry made clear to their delegates, who were appointed late in September and were given elaborate instructions which had been sifted by the cabinet and its advisory committees at numerous sessions in October. The instructions on the subject of the alliance which were handed to them when they left on 15 October read:

\textsuperscript{30} The Japanese were hopeful of winning over the goodwill of influential British leaders, such as Lord Northcliffe, owner of \textit{The Times} and \textit{Daily Mail}, who visited Japan in November 1921. According to \textit{Northcliffe}, pp. 813–15, Hara was desperate to see him, even though it meant travelling to western Japan to do so.
In considering the continuation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in relation to the proposed three-power convention (United States, Britain and Japan), Japan has no objection to the alliance continuing as it stands or to its being brought into line with the new treaty. If Britain wishes to substitute the above treaty for the alliance, there can be no objection to our agreeing to it.\footnote{Neumpyo, vol. 1, p. 530; paraphrased in Ujita, pp. 208–9.}

Despite the argument which had gone into their preparation, the delegates were not given instructions of a positive nature and were left a wide discretion. There was the underlying implication that they should bow to Britain's wishes. Japan, they were told, was indifferent to the continuance of the alliance; if Britain wanted to replace it by a treaty taking in the United States, Japan would not be opposed. The Japanese had by force of circumstances been persuaded that they could not hold out for an unaltered alliance. Indeed they were made aware that the alliance was merely one among many vital national problems and, being an issue to which the United States took exception, was a convenient device for Japan to make graceful concessions.

While the expected preliminary conference did not take place, there was opportunity for private discussion among the delegates just before the conference started on 12 November. The day before the chief British delegate, Lord Balfour, had put forward to the American secretary of state the advantages of having two separate arrangements to carry on the alliance. One would deal with China; the other, a tripartite treaty, with the wider \textit{status quo}. But Hughes was once again adamant against any suggestion of the United States taking part in any treaty which resembled the alliance. One of the Japanese delegates, the Japanese ambassador to Washington, Baron Shidehara Kijuro, thought it was improper for Balfour to approach Hughes without consulting Japan and enquiries were made. It turned out not to be the sign of Anglo-American collusion which Shidehara evidently suspected. The misunderstanding was soon rectified and on 22 November Balfour passed over to the Japanese delegation the text of the draft Anglo-American-Japanese treaty which he had earlier given to Hughes. After studying the British draft, Shidehara considered that it 'was a scheme for a political association between Japan, Britain and
America almost the same as an alliance.' It struck him that it would be
difficult for America to accept.\textsuperscript{32}

The delegates admitted that they would have to resort to a completely
new form of settlement. It was left to Shidehara who was confined to bed
with a serious illness at the start of the conference, to prepare the first draft
of a new three-power treaty to fill the gap. Shidehara described his draft
agreement as being in the nature of a consultative pact rather than a
military alliance. The Japanese cabinet at its meeting on 6 December
accepted this agreement in replacement of the alliance and authorized
Shidehara to put forward his draft to the other plenipotentiaries. Balfour
made only minor verbal amendments and withdrew his own draft. The
‘Shidehara draft’ came to be accepted as the basis of a new agreement. It
laid down that, if the interests of the parties were threatened by the
aggression of any third power, the parties would communicate with one
another as to the most efficient measures; and that, if there were disputes
between the parties, it should be open to one to invite the other to a joint
conference. Perhaps this represented the highest measure of agreement
between the powers; but it is odd to find the formula coming from the pen
of a Japanese delegate.\textsuperscript{33}

France was invited to join the powers and a four-power treaty was
signed on 13 December 1921. When this was ratified, the Anglo-Japanese
alliance came to an end.

It may be said by way of conclusion that, left to themselves, the Japanese
would probably have wanted the alliance to continue beyond 1921. It had
served them well; and, though the situation might differ from that in 1911,
it could still serve their purposes. Curzon, in reporting to the cabinet, had
a shrewd appreciation of their views: ‘Although there might be dissentients
in Japan, and although they knew that the Alliance would not assist them
in a war with America, he himself had no doubt that the great addition
which the Alliance gave to their prestige made Japanese statesmen pre-
disposed to favour its renewal.’\textsuperscript{34} This was probably true. In fact there was
remarkably little difference of view about renewal within Japan. Both the

\textsuperscript{32} Ujita, pp. 228–9.

\textsuperscript{33} M. Kajima, \textit{Nichi-Bei gaikoshi} (history of American–Japanese diplomacy),

\textsuperscript{34} British cabinet minutes, 30 May 1921.
Japan and the Ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

military and the civilians who were prone to differ on many other issues of foreign policy, saw merits in the alliance. On the other hand, its renewal could only be approached in the knowledge that over a wide range of policies there were marked disagreements with Britain. The Japanese could not ignore the differences which had arisen over the Chinese banking consortium and Korea, over Shantung and Siberia. In short, Britain had become distrustful of Japan’s actions on the Asian mainland. They no longer had the substantial common interests which the alliance contemplated.

The Japanese government appreciated Britain’s dilemma over the alliance. As early as 1913 the Japanese ambassador in London had concluded that Britain would rather throw over the Japanese alliance than antagonize the United States. In the postwar period, this dilemma had become even more serious for financial and imperial reasons. The Japanese complained that there were no positive steps they could take to improve the position. It was futile to call for the alliance to be renewed as it stood. As one statesman wrote: ‘Even if the Japanese government were on this occasion to ask strongly for the continuation of the alliance, it would only cause the British government embarrassment and therefore be purposeless and undignified.’

This being so, what amendments were possible? Curzon was probably right in his judgement that ‘the Japanese were ready to accept any modifications rather than drop the Alliance.’

The main object of modifications suggested over the previous few years had been to lessen American suspicions; but these had been uniformly unsuccessful. The obvious solution was to inveigle the United States into the alliance and Japan had prepared drafts and issued propaganda to this end. But many Japanese recognized that it was not likely to be more effective. Thus Shidehara, who was best in a position to judge American reactions, wrote:

America from the founding of the Union has made it a national principle not to join any country in alliance. In view of this, there was no possibility that any proposals for a triple alliance would ever become a topic for negotiation. At least as far as I was concerned, I did not consider them to be a practical proposition.

\[36\] Ujita, pp. 228–9.
\[37\] British cabinet minutes, 30 May 1921.
Unquestionably they were disappointed with Britain. There was a feeling that Britain, out of deference to America, had let down her ally. There was even mistrust: Sir Charles Eliot, the ambassador in Tokyo, wrote to Balfour: 'In spite of our desire to discuss the agenda proposed for the Conference fully and frankly with Japan, I could not induce the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take part in such an exchange of views: they seemed to prefer not to be too intimate with England for fear of offending America.'\textsuperscript{38} It may be that Eliot was wrong in his analysis and that Japan might have welcomed any sign of Britain standing firm and making a common front at the conference and might have been quite ready to stand up to America. But at every stage of the negotiations the Japanese thought it tactful to shelter behind Britain over the alliance and avoid a confrontation with America. However disappointed or distressed the Japanese were with Britain, they did not attribute the blame for ending the alliance to her so much as to the United States.

There was perhaps less regret over its passing than might have been expected. The clue to this may be found in two circumstances. One is that for once in their recent history, the Japanese found themselves intent on maintaining the status quo represented in this case by the alliance. To delay any change they realized that they could only fight a rearguard action. They did not fight strongly and failed. Ironically the Washington four-power treaty, which later generations have come to regard as timid and ineffectual, had been prepared and introduced on the initiative of a Japanese delegate. The other is illustrated in one of Balfour's speeches at the conference—a summary of the predicament in which the delegates found themselves: 'The only possible solution was that we should annul, merge, destroy, as it were, this ancient and outworn and unnecessary agreement, and replace it with something new, something effective.'\textsuperscript{39} The fact was that the Japanese in common with most of the other participants did not know whether as a result of their handiwork the alliance had been annulled and destroyed or merged into something more effective. In such circumstances stoicism is not difficult.

\textsuperscript{38} Dugdale, vol. ii, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{39} Dugdale, vol. ii, p. 330.
NILS ØRVIK


To most people Scandinavia presents the image of a homogeneous region, rather than that of a collection of separate national states. With the exception of Finnish, the Nordic languages differ no more than do local dialects in most other countries. For most of the past thousand years the traditions of the Scandinavian states have run parallel. Their cultures, religions and basic ideologies follow the same patterns; so do currencies, measures of weight, and that all-important factor, their ways of life. With all this speaking in favour of close co-ordination, they would seem bound to go into a closely integrated regional system where all major issues are dealt with jointly.

All this being true, one cannot fail to observe that, in spite of a considerable number of joint enterprises, they have so far been unable to cooperate effectively in matters of national security. In periods of crisis, when parts of the Nordic area have been threatened by great powers, the Scandinavian countries have not provided assistance to those of their neighbours whose security was endangered. The first such incident occurred in 1864 when Denmark had to face Bismarck’s armies with her own national forces. Sweden, then with Norway under a kind of home rule, did not want to be involved. Finland, at that time a grand duchy of Russia, had no option.

Another test came with the first world war, when all Scandinavian states followed policies of neutrality. A Swedish proposal for joint measures met with little response. Except for some co-ordination on the diplomatic level, each country preferred to look after its own security.¹

¹ One should also consider the 1814 union between Norway and Sweden. The arrangement with all armed forces put under supreme Swedish command offered a rational solution to the security problems of both countries. Nevertheless, in 1905
As we shall see in more detail, the same attitude prevailed prior to the second world war.

The ineptness of this go-it-alone policy soon became evident. In 1939 Finland, gallantly but unsuccessfully, tried to hold off the Soviet Union on her own, with no official military assistance from any of her Nordic neighbours. When a few months later Norway and Denmark were attacked and overrun, the Swedes remained passive spectators.

In the opening phases of the cold war in 1948–49, when the security of the region once again seemed endangered, the Swedish government tried in vain to persuade Norway and Denmark to join in a Scandinavian defence pact. Once again the three countries preferred separate roads, with Norway and Denmark turning to the western alliance while Sweden remained neutral.²

This essay does not pretend to deal with the whole range of problems involved in the unsuccessful attempt to establish a joint or co-ordinated defence of the Nordic region. Of the many factors that may serve to explain this series of unsuccessful attempts for Nordic joint defence arrangements, only two will be dealt with. One is the perception of the threat. If each of the four countries held divergent views of the most pressing dangers to their national security, it would be very hard for them to agree on co-ordinated measures of defence. The second major factor is the impact of special relationships. For reasons of geography, trade and traditions, the Nordic countries all have developed special relationships with different great powers outside the Nordic region. For the Danes, Germany has for the last hundred years been the decisive country. For the Finns, Russia always required special attention. The Norwegians depended for trade and security on Great Britain, while Sweden, the ‘core area’ of the north, had to divide its attention between all three of the great powers in the area.

This web of perceived threat and special relationship has contributed both to the stabilizing and to the disturbance of the Nordic area for more than a century. Here we will only deal with one special case—the influence

---


² The term ‘Scandinavia’ generally applies to Norway, Denmark and Sweden only. When Finland (and Iceland) are included, ‘Nordic’ has become the usual name for the whole area.
of these factors on the attempt to reach effective military co-operation between the countries in the late 1930s.

The interwar period seems particularly interesting as an object for study. The League of Nations introduced the principle of collective security and it has been generally assumed that most small countries joined in order to obtain protection. The Nordic nations had, however, fairly good experiences with their traditional policies of neutrality which at any rate had kept them out of war. It was not for them a matter of course to join the League. In 1920 they discovered that Germany and Russia, always feared as potential aggressors, were crushed and unable to threaten them in the foreseeable future. The threat no longer existed. On the other hand there emerged an overwhelming constellation of western powers, identifying themselves with the League and offering all the advantages on the world scale that went with their victory. Therefore, rather than seeing the collective security of the League as a means for improving their own security, their incentive to join the League was stimulated by its enormous superiority. If there was no one to challenge its hegemony, there was little risk that its mutual assistance clauses would ever be invoked. This seemed to remove the prevailing fear that, in offering its protection to them, the League might drag the Nordic states into great power conflicts which were none of their concern.

While, during the twenties, this view was shared by all the states within the Nordic region, the changed situation of the next decade brought out the traditional differences in their individual perceptions of the threat as well as in their special relationships outside the Nordic region.

By the middle thirties, with Germany and Japan building up military strength and openly challenging the League, collective security took on a different aspect. Far from being a guarantor for peace, collective sanctions against any of these potential aggressor states might mean involvement in wars which would endanger rather than safeguard their national security. The numb and feeble attempt of the League to stop Italian aggression, followed by the massive Fascist and Communist intervention in the Spanish Civil War, provided eloquent illustrations of the perils of the new situation. At an early stage the Nordic nations appeared convinced that increasing international tension would lead to an ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the Fascist régimes in Germany and Italy. With Russia as a member of the League, the principle of collective security

387
might bring them all into a war which most Scandinavians felt to be none of their concern. Once they had reached this conclusion, withdrawal from the League system would have seemed the rational and logical answer. As early as 1934 the Norwegian foreign minister J. L. Mowinckel, had in fact spoken for a revaluation of the Nordic states' membership in the League of Nations. Halvdan Koht, who succeeded him as foreign minister, continued to press the issue.

Among the Nordic countries, a Russo-German conflict would seem particularly dangerous to Denmark. To Th. Stauning, the prime minister, and Peter Munch, minister of external affairs, the withdrawal of Germany from the League of Nations became the first major indication that the situation had changed. As early as 17 October 1933, Stauning in one of his public speeches made an explicit reference to the assumed solidarity between the Nordic nations: 'Our southern border is the border of the North, and aggression here will be the concern of the whole Nordic area.'

Neither Norway nor Sweden responded in a way that might raise hopes of a joint defence to meet the dangers of a new Germany.

The Danish government could hardly have been surprised at the negative Norwegian and Swedish reaction. Since 1864, when Denmark chose to fight the German armies alone and was thoroughly defeated, the Danes had been very sceptical of any joint Nordic defence arrangement. The lack of a Nordic response in 1933 was more of a confirmation of an attitude which had become traditional. Therefore, as early as 1933 it was possible to define the Danish security problem in fairly concrete and clear terms. The new, militant, expansive Germany that emerged under Hitler's leadership could not be kept at bay by Danish national forces. With any prospect of effective armed assistance from their fellow Scandinavians ruled out, only one hope of security remained: guaranteed help from Great Britain. No other nation seemed able to muster enough strength to counterbalance the German threat.

For many reasons such British assistance could not be a matter of course. First, Britain's military weakness was very evident by the middle thirties. Secondly, it could not be taken for granted that the British government wanted to use what power it had to curb the expansive tendencies of the new Germany.

The first indication that Britain might not be thoroughly committed to controlling German expansion came with the Anglo-German naval treaty of 18 June 1935, which permitted the German navy to hold fairly strong forces in the Baltic Sea. This agreement caused great concern in all Scandinavian countries. Dr Munch, the Danish foreign minister, saw it as a clear sign of a more disinterested British attitude. It might mean that the British government no longer wanted to engage themselves directly in the Baltic and its entrances, but rather preferred the Germans to take over the control of those waters. The naval treaty was not to be taken as a final answer to their doubts, but it underlined the need for the Danes to find out what Britain’s position actually was in relation to the German threat to the Nordic area. This question acquired major importance during the autumn of 1935, when the League Council decided to apply sanctions against Italy to stop its aggression in Ethiopia. The Nordic nations had explicitly reserved their position on the question of military sanctions, but in a joint meeting of the foreign ministers in August they decided to take part in economic sanctions against Italy, provided the British joined. ‘Our first and foremost condition is British participation,’ the Swedish foreign minister, R. Sandler, said.

It is interesting to note that up to the end of 1935, when Britain still appeared to give wholehearted support to the League system, there was no mention of a Nordic defence arrangement. It was not until a year later, when the foreign ministers met in Copenhagen in August 1936, that the question of a regional Nordic defence arrangement arose. None of the ministers went into details, but Munch again made a special reference to Britain. If Great Britain contributed actively to a regional arrangement, it might work. Without British support, it was useless. He thought, however, that recent events like the 1935 naval treaty gave little hope of British policy turning in such a direction.

By this time, August 1936, British attitudes to the League and to the growing international tension had taken a clearer form. During the spring months of that year, the Nordic nations had come to realize that the

4 Lönroth, pp. 145, 168–94. Also Erik Scavenius, Forhandlingspolitikken under besættelsen, Copenhagen, 1945, p. 17.
sanctions system had failed miserably. The Norwegians now played a leading rôle in pressing for more definite reservations against Nordic participation in future League actions. Dr Koht wanted a move to make the mutual assistance obligations (Article XVI of the Covenant of the League of Nations) dependent on fulfilment of the corresponding clause (Article VIII) on disarmament.\(^7\) One should not be enforced without the other. His colleagues held back. Significantly, it was the Danish foreign minister who stressed over and over again: No break with the sanctions system before we know what the British will do! If the British government indicated that it would not insist on fulfilment of Article XVI of the Covenant, only then could the Scandinavians safely proceed in their efforts to liberate themselves from its obligations.\(^8\) The official confirmation of the British position on sanctions came on 10 June. Three weeks later the Nordic countries, together with three other small states, issued a press communiqué in Geneva which, in deliberately vague terms, expressed their reservations along the lines the Norwegians had argued for since 1934.\(^9\) Among the nations of the north, the Finnish government had been the least willing to weaken its obligations under the League system. But the implications for the area of a possible change in the British attitude to the League could no longer be ignored. The Finns had all along been in favour of regional arrangements, and in the autumn of 1936 General Mannerheim went to London, on behalf of the Finnish government, to explore British views on a Nordic defence arrangement. The foreign secretary, Eden, saw nothing objectionable in regional groupings—provided they were within the framework of the League—but even so, he warned they could count on no support from Great Britain.\(^10\)

The Swedish government also tended to go slow in the Nordic drive to dilute the obligation to take part in sanctions. Richard Sandler, who headed the Swedish foreign ministry, supported fully the Danish view that some sort of British guarantee was a necessary requirement for a Nordic security arrangement. But at that stage he did not share Munch's pessimistic


\(^8\) Idem.


\(^10\) Gustav Mannerheim, Minnen, Helsinki, 1951, vol. II.
evaluation of the trends in British foreign policy. Sandler felt that the British rearmament programmes, which finally got under way in 1936, expressed a new and more active interest in the north European area also. Early in 1937 he went to London to find out for himself. Sandler found the conversations which he had with the British foreign secretary rather encouraging. The British government had not after all written off the Baltic and the north. They might yet come to the rescue of a League member who had fallen prey to aggression. Therefore, one might still hope for British support for a regional defence arrangement of the Nordic states.

Only a few weeks after Sandler’s visit, the Danish prime minister, Stauning, went to England for talks with Baldwin and Eden. He told them that Denmark was very concerned about the threat from Germany and wanted to know whether it might expect any form of British support in case of a German attack. The foreign secretary assured him that Britain was following Danish-German relations with great interest. But he appreciated, Eden said, the fact that Stauning had not asked for explicit promises: ‘. . . Britain would not be able to promise support to meet the dangers that possibly might threaten from the German side.’ This view Stauning reported, had been further confirmed by other British politicians he had met in London.

Stauning’s conversations in London left him with the definite impression that so far as Denmark was concerned, the British could not be counted on to give effective assistance in case of German aggression. Seen in relation to the Anglo-German naval treaty and recent British attitudes to the League sanctions system, this assumption no longer seemed doubtful. Therefore, in the spring of 1937, the Danish government reached the conclusion that Denmark could not realistically count on outside assistance, either through the League of Nations or directly from Great Britain—and without British support, certainly none would come from the Scandinavian neighbours. Only one road remained open: security through a conscious, determined policy of good will and good relations with Germany! As a consequence the Danish prime minister in July 1937 indicated to the

11 Lönnroth, passim.
12 Minutes from foreign minister’s meeting in Helsinki, 20–22 April 1937, Sik. pol. vol. II, p. 25.
13 Betaenkning til Folketinget, Bilag I, Copenhagen, 1945, p. 579.
German minister, G. Renthe-Fink, that Denmark might consider a non-aggression pact with Germany.\textsuperscript{14}

This move followed in principle the policy which the then Danish government had initiated in the period prior to the first world war.\textsuperscript{15} If Britain's support could not be made available in any concrete form, all efforts should be directed to gaining Germany's confidence and friendship. The modest rearmament programme which the Danish \textit{Folketing} agreed on in 1937 should therefore be seen not as the building up of a defence against Germany, but as an attempt to convince the Germans of Denmark's determination to carry out a credible policy of neutrality and to repel possible 'third force' intruders. The Germans, who by that time were under no illusions as to British willingness to engage in support of the Nordic region, saw no pressing need for stirring up the calm by entering into a separate non-aggression arrangement with Denmark.\textsuperscript{16} Stauding's invitation was therefore not followed up. While it was hard to refute the logic of this reasoning, it is harder to explain the negative Danish attitude to a Nordic defence arrangement. Even when admitting that it would not be fully credible without British support, it might still seem preferable to isolated defence systems by each of the four countries. From the summer of 1936, the Swedish foreign minister had taken an increasing interest in exploring the possibilities of a Nordic defence arrangement. One which comprised all four countries would have been preferable, but even a larger degree of co-ordination between Sweden, Finland and Norway would improve the situation. However, in a series of speeches in Sweden and Norway in March 1937, prime minister Stauding violently attacked the idea of a Nordic arrangement for a joint economic policy as well as for defence. It was Utopian, with no basis in reality.\textsuperscript{17} With Denmark's special position next door to Germany and with Britain's recent attitude to the

\textsuperscript{14} Lönroth, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{15} Troels Fink, \textit{Spillet om dansk neutralitet 1905–1909}, Århus, 1959, pp. 26 ff.
\textsuperscript{16} For a short period in 1937 the Germans seemed somewhat concerned by the sudden activity with Nordic top politicians visiting Britain and Lord Plymouth touring Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. However, they very soon learned what was actually happening and then seemed to lose interest in the matter. Lönroth, p. 234. See also leading German newspapers, April–May 1937.
\textsuperscript{17} Speeches in Sweden, 8 and 11 March 1937; in Norway, 21 March 1937. In both countries prominent members of government were present at the lecture. Cf. \textit{Sik. pol.} vol. II, pp. 26–36.
Baltic, one can see why Denmark should take pains to prepare for a policy of strict neutrality and refrain from participation in a regional co-operation which might raise suspicions in Germany. But why should a Danish prime minister go to the extreme of actively campaigning in Norway and Sweden against the whole area? Stauning never spelled out his motives in detail. But the answer seems implicit from his statements and the Danish strategic situation. If the three countries on the Scandinavian peninsula turned that area into a jointly defended unit, it would serve to stress Denmark’s isolation and thus make it even more exposed to German pressure. The ‘North’ or the Nordic region was an established concept in international affairs. Danish interests would seem better served by all four operating independently. With no tightly organized regional defence it would be easier to maintain the popular notion of Nordic unity. In 1937 many still retained their hopes of the deterrent effect of world opinion. Even if an unorganized Nordic group meant little in terms of hard facts of power, as a recognized concept it might still have some moral value. From a Danish point of view, the illusion of Nordic solidarity seemed preferable to the isolation that might result from any co-operative arrangement of the three other Nordic countries.

In Norway the Nygaardsvold–Koht government had been more concerned about weakening the legal obligation to support sanctions than discussing ‘what to do next’. The public debate in Denmark and Sweden was reflected in the Norwegian press. The intensity of the debate increased gradually but the government for a long time restrained from any comment on a joint Nordic defence alternative. In February 1937 the arrest of a Soviet spy in northern Norway caused a new outburst of traditional fears of Russia, which in turn brought joint Nordic defence measures into focus. Some newspapers spoke very strongly in favour of a Nordic ‘bloc’ or a Norwegian–Swedish arrangement to stave off possible aggression from the Soviet Union.

The government very emphatically denied that they were considering such a course. In an answer to the Soviet minister to Norway, Koht went so far as to say that ‘as long as I am foreign minister’ there would be no question of Norway taking part in any form of Nordic alliance. ‘No responsible people had discussed such ideas.’18 The prime minister, Nygaardsvold, shortly after issued a similar declaration. Norway wanted

friendly relations with her Nordic neighbours, as with other states. She was ready to take part in extensive co-operation in non-military matters, but not in any measure that might involve military obligations. These views, which were repeated over and over again, were warmly supported by leading politicians of the opposition parties as well.

The major objective for the Norwegian government in this period continued to be to concentrate on a final break with the sanctions system and an eventual return to an acknowledged policy of neutrality. The considerable support which the joint Nordic defence alternative received in Sweden caused great concern in political quarters in Denmark and Norway. The atmosphere got particularly tense when Sandler, in a radio broadcast in April 1938, explicitly recommended, 'a certain co-ordination' of the defence capabilities of the Nordic countries to keep them out of war. At the next regular meeting of the Nordic foreign ministers in April 1938, Koht very bluntly pointed out to his Swedish colleague that a majority of the political parties in Norway did not favour an extended military co-operation with their neighbours. The Danish foreign minister spoke to the same effect, and asked Sandler to say what kind of co-ordination he had in mind. Only the Finnish foreign minister, R. Holsti, supported the Swedish view. Sandler never explained what joint measures he had referred to in his speech. In view of the determined Danish–Norwegian opposition it served little point to press the issue any further. The co-ordination that all the ministers finally were able to agree on was therefore of a very modest character. The most important item was transit rights for facilitating transfer of supplies in case of a blockade or other emergence. There were also some provisions for mutual exchange of naval intelligence and standardization of maps for military aircraft. Nothing was done in the way of co-ordinating military operations. The bulk of joint measures were safely within the civilian sector.

The crucial question which continued to occupy the Nordic foreign ministries all through 1937–38, was their relations to the League and the obligations laid down in Article XVI. By that time the governments and

19 Stortingstidende, 1937, p. 1343.
20 Ibid., p. 1647.
22 N.F.M. archives, ibid., pp. 54–56.
Nordic Security, Great Britain and the League of Nations

parliamentary bodies in all Nordic countries were solidly convinced that a de facto neutrality was the right course. But the same people appeared just as determined not to withdraw from the League. The ideal thing was a compromise such as the one they had initiated two years earlier. The question they kept asking was whether the rather vague 1936 reservations were sufficient to prevent involvement on legal grounds or whether more explicit denials were needed.

When international tension rose and the likelihood of a Russo-German conflict became even greater, the pressure for further clarification increased. As in the years before 1936, the main cause of hesitation was lack of knowledge as to the reaction of the leading League powers. Would they tolerate a clear-cut neutral policy on the part of the Nordic nations or could they be expected to force them either to resign their membership or to fulfil their obligations?

Among the major powers still members of the League, the Soviet Union had made collective security the cardinal point of its foreign policy. It raged indiscriminately against all forms of neutrality and modifications of the League system. But at that moment the Russian reaction caused little worry among the Nordic powers. Nor did they pay much attention to the French response, which was expected to be moderately negative. So far as the Nordic nations were concerned, what mattered was the British position.

The conversations which Nordic statesmen had had with representatives of the British government in 1937 had given clear indications as to what the British position would be. It was highly unlikely that Britain would assist any victim of future aggression when vital British interests did not coincide with the principle of collective security. Numerous unofficial statements supported this. Sir Robert Vansittart was quoted as having warned the small nations against putting too much faith in the League system. They should rather increase their armaments.23 But for a long time there was no public official statement of the British position to which open reference could be made. The public statements made by Eden and Lord Cranborne in committees at Geneva pointed rather in the opposite direction.24 Then, on 20 February 1938, Eden resigned and was replaced as foreign secretary by Lord Halifax. Two days later the prime minister,

Neville Chamberlain, declared in the House of Commons that the sanctions system would not be applied. The member states ought no longer to count on the collective measures for security, which it had once been hoped the League of Nations would provide.

In Norway Chamberlain's statement was triumphantly paraded by those who pressed for traditional neutrality. At long last, here was the final proof that so far as Britain was concerned, the system of collective security had ceased to exist. The Liberal party leader, J. L. Mowinckel, prime minister and foreign minister in several previous governments, read the declaration to mean that the British government had given 'a free way' to Hitler for taking over Austria (as he did on 11 March). As this had increased the danger of war, it had become more urgent than ever for Norway to return to a clear-cut neutral policy. On 31 May 1938 this recommendation was unanimously carried by the Storting.

As had been the case all along, the three others, the Danish, Finnish and Swedish governments, had a more cautious approach to the same problem. The Swedes were particularly strong in insisting on even more specific British declarations. If these were forthcoming the Nordic states ought to press for a formal recognition in the September session of the League assembly of their option not to take part in sanctions. All through the summer of 1938 Sandler kept sounding out the British position. Further confirmations by Lord Halifax, Sir Alexander Cadogan and others made it clear beyond doubt that Chamberlain's statement of February accurately expressed official British policy toward the sanctions system. When the Scandinavians brought the matter up in Geneva, their point was supported by separate declarations from a total of twenty-seven members, among them nineteen European states. No one could any longer question the permissive character of the sanctions system.

While the League assembly was discussing these matters in Geneva in mid-September 1938, the Munich crisis began unfolding with explosive rapidity. The Nordic delegates suddenly found themselves discussing war as a contingency that might occur within weeks, perhaps even days. In these circumstances Sandler, who had played a leading rôle in the final stage of clarifying the permissive character of Article XVI, again took the initiative. With European war as a near probability he felt an urgent need.

---

for the Nordic governments to agree on common measures to meet the foreseeable as well as the unexpected problems which open hostilities might pose for the neutrals. With the negative outcome of his earlier moves for military co-operation fresh in mind, he now stressed the importance of a common trade policy. One government should not submit to belligerent demands for control which were unacceptable to the other countries in the area. By agreeing in advance on a set of common rules and principles, the Nordic countries would increase their bargaining power towards the warring states and avoid being singled out for special treatment and picked off separately. In order to achieve such co-ordination and to demonstrate the importance of the issue, Sandler wanted a Nordic meeting, attended not only by the foreign ministers, but by all the prime ministers as well, possibly also by the Scandinavian kings and the Finnish president.  

This time the Norwegians took the lead in opposing the Swedish proposal. With the exception of a joint declaration of neutrality, Koht wanted agreed rules for common Nordic behaviour in trade as little as he did in security matters. One would have to solve the problems as they arose. A joint meeting was unnecessary; ‘Everybody knows the Nordic states will co-operate in a friendly way, whatever happens.’ Sandler was clearly very concerned about the situation and evidently determined not to be brushed off so easily. In November he returned to the need for joint agreement about a policy of neutrality and the urgency of its implementation. He still wanted a Nordic meeting with extended representation. As usual Sandler got the unqualified support of the Finnish government. Somewhat unexpectedly the Danish foreign minister also came out arguing Sandler’s case. Munch felt that not only the prime ministers, but delegations of parliamentarians should be present. Instead of the customary two days set for meetings of foreign ministers, the proposed conferences ought to last for a week in order to deal more thoroughly with the problems of common concern. 

Again the Norwegians raised objections. Koht openly opposed the idea of having parliamentarians taking part in a conference of this kind. Nor did he see any advantage in regular attendance by prime ministers, although

---

27 Ibid., p. 276.
28 This proposal in fact became the blueprint for the postwar Nordic Council.
on this point he was less specific. Finally, he did not think there should be any set rule even for the customary meetings of foreign ministers: 'In Norway we think regular meetings are unnecessary unless there is a special reason for them.' On these grounds he would not agree to any conference arrangement that went beyond the already existing practices of Nordic consultation in foreign affairs.

With the Norwegians taking this very negative position, there was little the others could do. The meeting in Helsinki in February 1939 was attended by the foreign ministers only. From the beginning Kohl remained very sceptical and reserved towards the more active line put forward by the Swedish and the Finnish foreign ministers. In concrete issues, Munch was on the whole supported by Kohl.

Looking back on the series of contacts and negotiations for some kind of joint Nordic security arrangement, it is hard to pinpoint exactly why it did not succeed. What one can do is to point at certain trends, which seem likely to have influenced the policies of the countries involved in the attempt to build a platform of regional security.

There can be little doubt that Great Britain loomed as a very important factor in the process. Three of the countries concerned, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, made it emphatically clear that their actions one way or other would be greatly influenced by the direction of British foreign policy. The sincerity of their concern about the British position seems unquestionable. On the other hand, there is hardly enough evidence to support a conclusion that, given British support and active leadership, the Nordic nations would either have stuck to their obligations to participate in sanctions or established an effective Nordic defence union. Such assumptions are as yet much too hypothetical. What seems established is that the Nordic nations did not initiate any major step in their gradual de facto withdrawal from the sanctions system, until they were certain that the British government would not raise any objections. This took place only after they became convinced that Britain would not actively check and restrict German policy in the Baltic and the adjoining Nordic area.

29 The official reason given by the Norwegian foreign ministry was that the prime minister was too sick to stand a trip to Helsinki during winter.
31 Idem.
Nordic Security, Great Britain and the League of Nations

It is interesting to note that the Danish, Finnish and Swedish governments from the very first saw British commitment, support or guarantees in one form or other, as a necessary requirement for a viable Nordic defence arrangement. This was particularly important for the Danish position. But it does not explain why Sandler and Holsti failed to induce Norway to opt for a closely co-ordinated defence of the Scandinavian peninsula, which seems to have been Sandler’s second choice. The failure to bring about a joint Nordic security arrangement seems mainly due to domestic problems and traditional arguments on the different views of the Nordic countries about their special relationships and to their different perceptions of the threat.

The Danish position offers few problems. The core of their policy was to cultivate good relations with Germany as the last resort of their security policy. This basic line was not confused by Munch’s belated effort to have Nordic parliamentarians and prime ministers attend sessions on common policy. This might have increased the moral impact of Nordic solidarity, which the Danes considered an important point. Meetings with so many politicians in attendance were not likely to result in any actions that might endanger Denmark’s relations with Germany.

The Finnish attitude was perhaps the most consistent. Finland was the last of the Nordic countries to admit the failure to get an effective implementation of the League’s security system. When the Finns reluctantly gave up that idea together with the hopes for western commitments they put their hope in some kind of joint Nordic defence. They rarely missed a chance to raise this matter. When Norway and Denmark continued to be uninterested, they leaned even more strongly toward Sweden, hoping that the Swedish government might go along with Sandler’s suggestion for an effective co-ordination of defence measures.

One can see how Finland, halfway closed in by the Soviet Union, would be grasping for any form of outside support to adjust the imbalance. It is harder to understand why Sweden, the largest and strongest of the Nordic nations, should be so consistently pressing for joint defence measures.

There are several possible reasons why Sweden should take the lead in a drive for Nordic co-operation. Sweden, as a medium-sized country, was accustomed to acting in foreign policy rather than merely reacting. Sandler’s personal views were no doubt instrumental in these matters. An even more important explanation might be found in the strategic situation.
As Sweden had no common borders with the great powers, she might have seen a better chance of avoiding involvement. But the fortunate position of being the 'country in the middle' with protective 'buffers' in Denmark, Finland and Norway, also had the disadvantage of making Sweden dependent upon the determination and ability of her neighbours to resist foreign influence. Even if Sweden were bristling with military capabilities of all sorts, it would matter little if her Nordic neighbours, by creating military vacuums, tempted aggressors to move in and take over the controls. An isolated Nordic defensive arrangement would certainly not solve such problems, but it might put Sweden in a better position to influence the defence postures of her neighbours. Their security was indirectly also Sweden's security.

Considering Norway's exposed strategic position, her small population and relatively weak economy, her consistent refusal to take part in effective Nordic defence measures seems bound to raise questions. Part of the answer must be sought in her inferiority complex, developed during centuries of Danish and Swedish dominance. The most important reasons seem to relate to the categories: perception of the threat and the special relationships. In a Russo-German war, which was generally thought to be the most likely, if not the only possible contingency, Norway felt less exposed than her neighbours. The battles between those two land powers would be fought in central and eastern Europe. There seemed no rational reason why belligerent activities should spread to remote Norway. Therefore, any link or 'entangling alliance' tying Norway to her neighbours would increase the risk of indirect involvement and endanger, rather than improve, her security. Further, the Norwegian political leaders looked upon strong defence measures and effective rearmament partly as a provocation and partly as a temptation to invite rather than to deter aggression. The more fortifications, weapons and forces, the greater the risks of being attacked by great powers at war.32 Finally, Norway's special relationship to Britain was perhaps the most important single factor. Among the Nordic countries, Norway was the only one which did not send her prime and foreign ministers to London to sound out the possibilities for British support.33 To Norway the Anglo-Norwegian community of interest was

33 Koht in fact did not visit Britain officially before he arrived there as a member of an exile government.
a matter of course. It was clearly within the Home Fleet's capabilities to invade Norway any time the British government might want. But it was just as clear that because an occupation of Norway would not serve British interests better than the special relationship, it would not do so. Nor would Britain, in her own interest, permit any other power to attack Norway. On such basic assumptions, a Nordic defence arrangement, with all the imponderabilities involved in terms of mutual responsibility, could hardly be an attractive alternative to the Norwegians.34

34 It should be kept in mind that these conclusions are drawn from the very special situation that existed prior to the second world war. They do not necessarily bear a wider implication for Nordic security arrangements at other times and under different circumstances. This particular case, however, does illustrate some of the problems involved.
In his famous address to his generals on 5 November 1937, recorded for us in the ‘Hosbach Memorandum’, Hitler gave it as his belief that developments on the imperial scene were weakening Britain and would make it unlikely, if not impossible, for Britain to oppose Germany if she acted to solve the Czechoslovak crisis. The Führer, so General Hosbach recorded, did not share the view that the Empire was unshakeable . . . The emphasis on the British Crown as the symbol of the unity of the Empire was already an admission that, in the long run, the Empire could not maintain its position by power politics. Significant indications of this were:

(a) The struggle of Ireland for independence.
(b) The constitutional struggles in India where Britain’s half measures had given to the Indians the opportunity of using, later on, as a weapon against Britain the non-fulfilment of her promises regarding a constitution.
(c) The weakening by Japan of Britain’s position in the Far East.
(d) The rivalry in the Mediterranean with Italy . . .

As a result, the Führer believed:

that almost certainly Britain . . . had already tacitly written off the Czechs and was reconciled to the fact that this question would be cleared up in due course by Germany. Difficulties connected with the Empire, and the prospect of being once more entangled in a protracted

---

1 Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, series D, vol. 1, no. 19.
South African Attempts to Mediate Between Britain and Germany

European war, were decisive considerations for Britain against participation in a war against Germany.

Hitler was, as so often, perceptive, well-informed, and somewhat at error where the time-scale was concerned. Only in his conviction that dominions’ pressure would restrain British counter-action if Germany used force against Czechoslovakia was he completely accurate; and here, it must be remembered, he was talking of possible action in the years 1943–45. The question is: whence did he draw the evidence on which he had reached his conviction? The Canadian premier, Mackenzie King, warned Hitler in June 1937, on his visit to Germany, that the dominions’ could not be expected to stand aside if Britain were involved in a European war. Communications from Sydney and Auckland in the German foreign ministry files are scanty and ill-informed. Hitler’s main evidence, it is now clear, came from South Africa. Indeed, his references to dominions’ resistance to the return of Germany’s former African colonies in the Hossbach memorandum, make it clear that he was thoroughly well informed on the South African position.

In itself, this is hardly surprising. The former German colony of South-West Africa had retained a substantial number of its original German settlers. From 1933 onwards, the Deutsche Bund, the German party, had been active in local politics. In October 1934 the South African authorities had banned the Nazi organization whose formation had followed the ascent of Hitler to power in Germany. In 1935 the Deutsche Bund had been captured by the Nazis and had played an effective part in German propaganda for the return of her colonies. In December 1936 the Union authorities made concessions in recognizing German as an official language and sanctioned the formation of purely cultural associations. In April 1937, however, by the South-West Africa proclamation, it limited membership of any association to British subjects, excluding the recent German immigrants who had played so large a rôle in the Nazi organizations, forbade British subjects to take an oath to any foreign sovereign, government or organization, and took powers to deport any foreigner who indulged in

3 See the memorandum of his conversation with Hitler printed in James Eayrs, In defence of Canada: appeasement and rearmament, Toronto, 1965, appendix, document 3.
illegal political propaganda. South Africa was not, it declared, prepared to consider the transfer of the mandate to another power. Through the Auslandsorganisation of the Nazi party, which became part of the foreign ministry in 1937, Hitler was no doubt kept informed of all this.

Hitler had, however, other and better sources of information. There was, after all, a South African minister, Johannes Gie, in Berlin. The German consulate-general in Cape Town was raised to the position of a legation and staffed by a German diplomatist of considerable standing, Herr Wiehl, to whom South African leaders spoke with considerable frankness and several of whose reports were, in the period 1936–37, submitted to Hitler. Above all, there was the peripatetic South African minister of defence, Oswald Pirow, grandson of a German missionary, German-speaking and very pro-German. When he visited Germany in 1933 he saw Hitler and was, so the German minister believed, greatly pleased by Hitler’s comment, which was relayed to him, that of all foreign visitors he was the one remembered with most warmth. Pirow stood very close to the South African premier, General Hertzog, whose biographer he was later to become. In the mid-1930s he was, with the possible exception of Smuts, the most active member of the Fusionist ministry in the field of external affairs. In the eyes of the German minister in Cape Town, he was the most likely successor to Hertzog as leader of the Fusionist party. As he was to play a leading part in the attempts at mediation between Germany and Great Britain here examined, it is worth looking a little closer at his ideas of South African external policy.

These were governed by a mixture of racialism and nationalism—racialism in the determination to maintain a white dominated Africa, nationalism in the determination to direct South Africa’s external policy entirely in her own national interests. His racialism led him to endorse for a time the idea of an African Monroe doctrine aimed particularly at the powers of Asia. It made him hostile to the Italian attack on Abyssinia

---

South African Attempts to Mediate Between Britain and Germany

because of his distrust of Italy's employment of native troops. (He remained apparently equally hostile to France's African policy for the same reasons.) It made him, too, the prime mover in the moves to strengthen the white communities north of the Zambesi, and in the conferences on African health, communications and transportation held in South Africa in 1935-36. It was this policy which was to take him in 1937 on a 7,000 mile goodwill tour of Africa south of the Equator and drove him greatly to improve South Africa's relations with Belgium, Portugal and, in the winter of 1938, with France and Spain. The Italian victory over Abyssinia in May 1936 led him apparently even to contemplate a re-establishment of German colonialism in Tanganyika. In May 1936 Wichl reported him as driven by fear of an Italian negro army that would one day unite with French African units to march against the white communities in southern Africa, to argue that a German colony in Tanganyika would be welcome as a counter-balance, Germany's native policy being much more akin to that of South Africa than the liberal policy pursued by Britain in central Africa.

But Pirow's racialism was to lead him further afield than this. Concern for the future of White Africa made him rabidly anti-communist. And it was his anti-communism rather than his German origins which turned him towards Nazi Germany. He came to see Nazi Germany as the bulwark against Bolshevism, and to believe that a deal was possible between Britain and Germany by which German hegemony in eastern Europe could be conceded in return for abandonment, after a token satisfaction of German colonial claims, of German expansionism overseas. On South-West Africa his position was for a time equivocal. In October 1936 Wichl reported that he was considering a return of South-West Africa to Germany as part of South Africa's contribution to a general settlement. On the spread of Nazi activities in German South-West Africa and among the German communities in South Africa, Pirow was in full support of his government's policy, and did his best to get the German government to control its Nazi extremists. In February 1937 Wichl reported him complaining personally of the Nazification of all German cultural activities in South

---

7 Wichl to Dieckhoff, 17 May 1936, loc. cit.
8 The information on his views actually came from one of his closest confidants. Wichl report, 28 October 1936, G.F.M., 554/241290-92.
Africa as something which was making his participation in them completely impossible.\(^9\)

In relying on South Africa to act as a restraining force on Britain, Hitler and his advisers were basing themselves on detailed information from Pirow and other members of the South African government, including Hertzog himself, on South African activities in four specific cases: at the time of the Stresa conference of April 1935, during the crisis which followed the occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936, over Pirow’s activity in London in June 1936, and at the imperial conference in London in May 1937. This information was provided to them in a way designed essentially to demonstrate not only South African but also British goodwill, as an examination of the circumstances of each will show.

The Stresa conference between representatives of Britain, France and Italy was held on the initiative of the last two powers in April 1935 to concert action against Germany as a result of Hitler’s action the previous month in denouncing the military restrictions placed on German armaments by the Treaty of Versailles. In time it coincided with the arrival in London of a number of dominions statesmen for the Jubilee celebrations of King George V. Advantage was subsequently taken of their presence to hold a kind of extraordinary imperial conference. In April 1937 General Hertzog told Wiehl personally that two years previously he had roundly berated Sir John Simon, then British foreign secretary, for his failure to prevent the Stresa conference ending with a communiqué directly hostile in tone towards Germany. In Hertzog’s version, Simon had replied that the original French draft would have certainly led to immediate war with Germany, and that it was a considerable success for Britain to have secured its transformation. At that date Britain, *pace* Hertzog’s version of Simon’s reply, was completely in France’s hands, as France’s superiority in the air made it possible for her at any moment to bombard London.\(^10\) It is difficult to be sure at what point this somewhat unusual version of Stresa crept into the record, but Hertzog’s relation of it to Wiehl was clearly meant to justify not only South Africa but also Britain.

During the Rhineland crisis the South African government apparently brought considerable pressure to bear on the British government to urge

---


them not to support any French action against Germany but rather to take up the offer of a new security settlement with which Hitler accompanied the announcement of German reoccupation. Te Water, the South African high commissioner, is reported by his Canadian colleague, Vincent Massey, as receiving a document calling for 'a constructive policy', 'disassociating South Africa from the legalistic attitude which may well involve the country in war'. Hertzog himself sent a message to the German foreign minister pledging South African support. On 14 March, he telegraphed to the Canadians his view that 'if Great Britain cannot restrain France, she can at least keep out of the fatal mischief and decline to share the terrible responsibility before the world'.

The South African legation in Berlin put out a 'feeler' for a mediatory scheme by South Africa—or so, at least, the German foreign ministry construed it. All this Wiehl reported, though to describe it as Wiehl later did as 'decisive' is greatly to misconstrue the possibilities of action open to the British government at that time; but no doubt it reinforced the diplomatic justification made at the time by British statesmen for Britain's inactivity.

The Rhineland crisis coincided in time with the Abyssinian conflict. It posed, in an acute form, the question of European security and the possible involvement of Britain in a European war, impinging at once on the whole question of South Africa's external policy and obligations. British statesmen found themselves faced with the twofold problem of assessing Germany's future intentions in the light of the various offers to negotiate new security arrangements with which Hitler had accompanied the reoccupation of the Rhineland and the concurrent denunciation of the treaty of Locarno, and of attempting to negotiate themselves out of the impasse with Italy created by the palpable failure of the policy of sanctions, adopted in part at their instance by the League of Nations, to prevent the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. The position was made much worse by the final

---

11 Vincent Massey, diary entry of 14 March 1936, cited in Eayrs, p. 56.
12 Cited in Eayrs, p. 52.
13 German foreign ministry memorandum, 23 March 1936, G.F.M., 5731/415784–85.
15 In his annual report on South Africa in 1936, 4 January 1937, G.F.M., 554/241301–06.
D. C. Watt

Italian victory and occupation of Addis Ababa on 8 May 1936, shortly before the rainy season began.

The success of the Italian attack on Abyssinia was greeted with intense alarm by that small section of opinion in South Africa which was really concerned with external affairs. The tenor of their reaction may be illustrated by an editorial in the Cape Times shortly before the Italian entry into Addis Ababa, which stated baldly: 16

There are still not many who realize how dangerously the vulnerability of South Africa has increased as a result of the Abyssinia war. It is hardly too much to say that Johannesburg is within the reach of bombing aeroplanes ultimately based on European centres.

Pirow himself echoed their alarm in his speech of 22 May in the South African lower house when he spoke of events in North Africa altering the strategic position of Cape Town in relation to Africa and the imperial ocean and air routes. 17 And it was no accident that a new Five Year Defence Plan was announced from his department that same month, a plan which envisaged a standing army of 15,000 men, a Territorial army of 40,000 recruited by conscription, and a mixture of some 90,000 third-line riflemen, organized in the popular rifle clubs. The plan also envisaged the expansion of the South African Air Force to four squadrons of fighters, twelve squadrons of bombers and a thousand trained pilots. 18

The collapse of the League and its inglorious abandonment of sanctions against Italy, despite South African pressure, 19 faced the Union with the need to adopt a new policy of South Africa first. An important element in this, as in ensuring support for the Defence plan, was the reassuring of Afrikaner opinion that South Africa was not automatically committed to supporting Britain in a European war. An equally important element, especially in the eyes of Hertzog’s Fusionist cabinet, was the encouragement of Anglo-German understanding.

It was in these circumstances, which clearly demanded both a major re-armament effort on Britain’s part, as well as a new diplomatic offensive,

16 Quoted in The Times, 2 May 1936.
17 The Times, 23 May 1936.
18 The Observer, 8 June 1936.
that Pirow announced his intention of visiting Britain. The main aim of his visit was believed by the Germans to be the encouragement of a new British initiative towards Germany and the discouragement of any British desire to abandon the policy of sanctions against Italy. In accordance with the first aim he took the trouble, with Hertzog's approval, to make a public statement of South Africa's position, both as a means of calming Afrikaner opinion and of setting the stage for his visit. In successive speeches on 8 May and 26 May 1936, he made it plain that South Africa would not take part in any war except where South Africa's interests made this inevitable and that South Africa was not 'in any way whatever' obliged to help Britain or any other power in war.

This paper is not concerned with the progress of Pirow's visit to London, except to note that Wiehl wrote privately about it to Dieckhoff, head of Department III of the German foreign ministry, responsible for German relations with Britain and all other overseas countries excluding the Far East. Wiehl's aim seems to have been to alert Dieckhoff to the possibility of Pirow's visiting Germany. Dieckhoff did not, in fact, reply, and there is no trace in the German foreign ministry files of this date of any inclination to extend to Pirow any invitation to visit Germany. Pirow was to take that initiative himself.

On 11 June 1936 Gie, the South African minister in Berlin sought an urgent interview with Dieckhoff. According to the latter's record, Gie told him that Pirow had telephoned Gie from London to say that the position in London made it seem highly desirable that an Anglo-German meeting at a high level should take place as soon as possible. At that very moment a new directive for British foreign policy was being formulated, which made it greatly desirable that the issues between Britain and Germany should be clarified. He (Pirow) suggested that the German government should invite him and Lord Halifax, the British lord privy seal, to visit Germany for talks with Hitler and the German foreign minister. Dieckhoff replied that at the moment the occasion for such a visit did not seem to have come.

The following day, Gie telephoned Dieckhoff to say that Pirow had

22 Letter of 17 May 1936, loc. cit.
once again been pressing him in the most urgent manner from London. In Pirow’s view, the whole course of future developments depended on such a meeting taking place. Dieckhoff again showed considerable reserve. Pirow seems, therefore, to have turned to Cape Town and to the South African press as a means of pressure. On 13 June the London correspondent of the Cape Times reported (it is a reasonable assumption that Pirow was the source of his information) that: ‘Those responsible for directing British foreign policy are convinced of the necessity of reconstituting the Stresa Front against Germany. . . . They are convinced that Germany is just playing with the British questionnaire.’

The same day, the senior civil servant in the South African department of external affairs, Bodenstein, called Wiehl to his office and read to him an official Note Verbale prepared on General Hertzog’s instructions. In the Note’s words, ‘We learn that it is most definite that the present policies of the United Kingdom government are being dictated by the United Kingdom’s anxiety caused by dread and ignorance of the German government’s intentions.” Bodenstein added, so Wiehl telegraphed, that it was rumoured that Germany was building more cruisers than had been agreed with Britain. If there was any truth in this rumour, it would give rise to the impression that Germany’s word could not be relied on. The situation, Wiehl reported Bodenstein as saying, was serious, if not critical.

Bodenstein returned to the charge four days later. On 17 June Wiehl reported by telegraph a further interview in which Bodenstein said that the position was still very serious. Apart from the German failure to answer the British questionnaire (on which see below), Britain’s anxiety as to German intentions had only been strengthened by the German reply (given by Dieckhoff to Gie on 11 June) that they saw no need for Halifax to visit Germany at that time. Dieckhoff had already telegraphed to Wiehl that he had told Gie he found all this nervousness on Pirow’s part very difficult to understand. He now telegraphed again, advising the greatest reserve. Pirow’s mediating activities were highly unfortunate and based on a very one-sided set of assumptions about the current state of

24 Idem.
26 Wiehl telegram 43 of 13 June, G.F.M., 6982/E521674.
27 Telegram of 17 June 1936, G.F.M., 6982/E521690.
28 Dieckhoff to Wiehl, telegram of 15 June 1936, G.F.M., 6982/E521684-85.
29 Dieckhoff to Wiehl, telegram of 19 June 1936, G.F.M., 6982/E521703-04.
South African Attempts to Mediate Between Britain and Germany

Anglo-German relations. Pirow’s influence in London seemed, in any case, to be very weak, as was shown by his failure to secure a continuation of sanctions against Italy.

It is far from impossible to sympathize with Dieckhoff’s bewilderment. The two concrete issues raised in this correspondence were the question of German cruiser construction and that of the German failure to reply to the British ‘questionnaire’. This latter, which constituted an attempt by Anthony Eden to clear up some of the obscurities in the German proposals of 24 and 31 March for a new security system on Germany’s western frontiers to replace the treaty of Locarno, denounced by Hitler when the Rhineland was ren militarized, had only been received on 8 May. The British government received no reply to this questionnaire; but it was not for another month or so that the realization that they were being temporized with began to make itself felt in London.

As for the cruiser question, it is true that the German government had in May 1936 declared its intention of constructing two new ten-thousand ton cruisers with guns of a calibre of which the other naval powers had agreed to declare a construction ‘holiday’. The typ e was one on the elimination of which the British authorities set a good deal of store, and the building holiday was one of the few positive achievements of the London naval disarmament conference of November 1935–March 1936, which had resulted in the naval disarmament treaty of 26 March 1936. The German decision represented a deliberate breach of assurances given by them to the British on a number of occasions at and following the Anglo-German naval agreement of 18 June 1935, and there had been several stormy meetings between British ministers and German diplomatic representatives on this issue. It is true, too, that one of the motives for the conclusion of the 1935 naval agreement on Britain’s side had been the belief that German observance of its terms could be used as a yardstick for Germany’s intentions. But the German government had already decided to yield to British pressure so far as to conceal their intention to arm the cruisers with the prohibited guns until the time came for the guns to be

30 German Note of 4 May 1936, G.F.M., 7790/E562576–81.
installed. And, on 11 June, a German note announcing their decision was communicated to the British government—that is before Pirow’s dramatic telephone call to Berlin.

It is thus very difficult to avoid the impression that the whole affair was a product of the peculiar nervousness which Pirow and the Hertzog element in the Fusionist party showed towards Anglo-German relations. They were, as will be shown, to go to extraordinary lengths to reassure Germany as to their unwillingness to support Britain in an Anglo-German war in Europe, particularly in supplying Wiehl with a detailed account, both before and after the event, of South Africa’s rôle at the imperial conference in 1937.

The first move here was taken by Bodenstein in October 1936. On 9 October, Wiehl reported him as saying that the greater part of the Boer people were against a war with Germany in any circumstances. It was unlikely, in his view, that South Africa would take part in an Anglo-German war. Wiehl reported him saying in so many words: ‘The British government know perfectly well that we are not going to war with Germany on the existing issues.’ Wiehl, at least, seems to have remained unconvincing. In his annual report of 4 January 1937, on South Africa in 1936, he paid due credit to South African support of Germany’s campaign to revise the treaty of Versailles. He continued, however, to say that

Despite this increasing understanding [for German revisionism] on South Africa’s position in the case of a possible war arising from Germany’s revisionist demands . . . the Union, so far as a prophecy is possible, will only take part in a war against Germany if she is compelled by her obligations to the League of Nations or if her own interests are endangered, and especially if the danger exists of a victorious Germany establishing herself in South-West [Africa] or in Mozambique. Should England take part in a war with Germany, the

---

33 German Note of 9 June 1936, G.F.M., 7790/E562685–86, 7790/E562608.
34 In August 1936 Sir Robert Vansittart, permanent under-secretary in the British Foreign Office, told Dieckhoff that the whole thing was purely Pirow’s idea and that a visit by Lord Halifax to Berlin had never been contemplated by the British government. Dieckhoff memorandum, 13 August 1936, G.F.M., 554/241289.
37 Loc. cit.
Union will follow her completely. She could hardly remain neutral with the British naval station at Simonstown.

This view did not prevent him from tackling Hertzog before the latter left for the imperial conference of May 1937, to express the hope that South African influence would be used to secure a more sympathetic British attitude for Germany. He received strong reassurances not only from Hertzog but also from Smuts, who spoke of the necessity of the great powers bringing Germany from her isolation. 'Germany has sinned, but we have sinned more', Wiehl reported Smuts as saying. Wiehl spoke also with Pirow, Havenga, the minister of finance, and Fourie, the minister of trade, all of whom gave him similar reassurances.38 These reassurances were repeated in even greater detail in July 1937 when Wiehl, whose tour of duty in South Africa was ending, had farewell audiences with Hertzog, Pirow and Smuts. General Hertzog had just returned from London. To Wiehl's enquiry about the course of the conference, Hertzog replied with a disquisition of such length and interest that Wiehl's report39 of his remarks is worth quoting in some detail.

General Hertzog began by saying, according to Wiehl's record, that before he had gone to London he had been inclined to see the British rearmament effort essentially as directed against Germany, as a coherent part of a policy of encircling Germany, of which the Franco-Soviet pact of 1935 was also a part. During his visit to London, he had been convinced that this was not so. Britain's rearmament effort, in the opinion of the British government, was partly inspired by the intention of regaining for Britain freedom of initiative in negotiation vis-à-vis France, a freedom of negotiation which had been notably lacking to them over most of the period since 1919 by reason of the strength of the French armed forces.

In London, so Wiehl made General Hertzog continue, he had argued that Germany had good reason to complain of Britain's attitude to her, especially for the way Britain, together with France, had protected Germany's eastern neighbours against German action stemming from their treatment of their German minorities. This was 'unjustified, unnecessary and damaging, and dangerous for Anglo-German relations. He had left [the British] in no doubt that, in the case of any conflict which might arise

38 Wiehl report of 16 April 1937, loc. cit.
from this attitude of Britain, they could not rely on the support of South Africa.'

Of Neville Chamberlain, who had succeeded Baldwin as premier during the course of the imperial conference, Hertzog said that he had grown considerably in his power of leadership since 1935, and had freed himself from his previous Francophilia. He could not be described as Germanophil, but in matters of Britain's relations with France and Germany his attitude was completely objective. His personal position was now so strong that he could carry his own views in the cabinet and in the Conservative party without difficulty. He was convinced of the necessity of the policy Hertzog advocated. He wanted a general settlement with Germany which would include a settlement of Germany's dispute with her eastern neighbours, to be negotiated in a round table conference between Britain, France, Germany and, perhaps, Italy. This report was sent to Hitler on 13 August.\(^{40}\) From the parallels between Hertzog's remarks on the return of Germany's east African colonies (not here recorded) in the course of the same conversation and Hitler's remarks at the Hossbach conference on the same subject, it is clear that he must have read this with interest and attention.

Wiehl's memoranda\(^{41}\) on his conversations with Pirow and Smuts are of less interest than this. The conversation with Smuts is of interest mainly for Wiehl's attempt to urge Smuts to use all his influence to counter the efforts of the Francophils in Britain, and for Smuts's reply that he did not yet feel the time was ripe for this. The discussion with Pirow also revealed the latter's obsession with the idea of South African leadership in Africa south of the Sahara, and the limitation of Indian immigration into east Africa as a threat to white supremacy.\(^{42}\) That with Pirow revealed the latter's obsession with the idea of giving Germany a free hand in the east in return for a new agreement on a western security pact. Wiehl interpreted this as involving less a formal proposal of this kind than as a general agreement between the dominions on the disinterest of the British Empire in

\(^{40}\) German Foreign Ministry, minute of 13 August 1937, G.F.M., 554/241346.

\(^{41}\) Wiehl forwarded these to Berlin as annexes to a report of 4 August 1937, G.F.M., 554/241347-52.

\(^{42}\) See also his remarks cited in Mansergh, p. 240, on the alleged way in which, in his view the European populations of central and eastern Africa "look to South Africa for the maintenance of White Civilization even though there is no military bond or obligation on our part to assist".
the question of Germany's eastern frontiers, of which the British government would have to take notice. Hertzog had, after all, spent some time making it clear to Wiehl that part of any Anglo-German discussions of a general settlement in east central Europe would have to be a German undertaking not to use force to secure her aims. General Hertzog's stand at the imperial conference of 1937 led directly to the South African equivocation during the Munich crisis of September 1938 which has been dealt with elsewhere. His stand was, so far as is known at present, strongly supported by General Smuts and by Pirow himself. The news of Hertzog's stand in fact became fairly widely known immediately after Munich, and was certainly known in Berlin. The way was thus eased for Pirow's second attempt to mediate between Germany and Britain, during his visit to Europe in October and November 1938.

This visit was designed apparently to serve three purposes. Its ostensible purpose, the discussion of British aid for South Africa's defence effort, came first. Second came Pirow's efforts to further his aim of establishing South African leadership south of the Sahara, by negotiations with Portugal and Belgium. Third was Pirow's idea of an Anglo-German agreement by which Germany would be awarded a free hand in the east in return for an undertaking to leave Britain's imperial position undisturbed.

Of the ostensible side of the mission little need be said and there is in any case little documentation. The second point was to assume far more importance since, in the public mind at any rate, it became inextricably entangled with the third. Pirow had conceived the idea of building up the white communities of central Africa, both of the British colonies and of their Portuguese and Belgian neighbours, into a barrier to the growth of African nationalism, in the years 1935-36. It was a peculiar feature of his nationalist, racist outlook, though not one in which he was unique, that

---

43 D. C. Watt, Personalities and policies, Essay 8.


45 What follows is an amplification of D. C. Watt, 'Pirow's mission to Berlin in November 1938', Wiener Library Bulletin, vol. xii, 1958, nos. 5-6, p. 53.

46 South Africa, unlike the other members of the wartime Commonwealth, has published no official history of her war effort.
he saw the biggest threat to the white presence in Africa as stemming from
the French and Italian colonial empires with their widespread use of
African troops. What distinction he drew between these and the British
African units, for example the King's African Rifles, is not very clear. But
it is worth noting that in the case of possible Italian recruitment of a
colonial army from its conquered territories in Abyssinia, his anxiety was
sufficiently supported in London (no doubt on purely strategic grounds) as
to lead the British negotiators to insist on an Italian undertaking not to
recruit such an army being included in the Anglo-Italian agreements of
16 April 1938 by which Britain finally recognized the Italian conquest of
Abyssinia.

His first steps in this direction had been taken on his return from Britain
in 1936 and were foreshadowed in an interview given at Nairobi on the
journey home; in this he said that the former German colony of Tangan-
yika was vital to the interests of South Africa and Rhodesia, and urged the
necessity of common policies on defence, native affairs and customs
between the east African and central African territories and South Africa.
This was followed by the efforts made in 1937 to improve air communica-
tions with eastern and central Africa mentioned above. This aspect of his
policy was to be the most successful part of his European visit; though it
was not apparently one which he bothered to discuss with his colleagues
in the South African cabinet.

It was, however, the third purpose of his visit on which he himself laid
most emphasis. According to his own account the idea of mediation
between Britain and Germany was suggested to him by Smuts with the
words 'You are persona grata with Hitler. You should offer your services to
Chamberlain as a mediator.' He discussed the suggestion with General
Hertzog who agreed, adding that he should make a thorough investigation
of the whole European situation. He then approached the German chargé
d'affaires with the request that he would arrange for an interview with
Hitler.

His mission to Europe was to be fraught with misunderstandings and

47 The Times, 23 May 1936, states that the 'potential danger of "black countries"
in the north is his constant preoccupation'.
48 See D. C. Watt, 'Gli accordi mediterranei anglo-italiana del 1938', Rivista di
Studi Politici Internazionali, anno XXVI, 1959, pp. 51-76.
49 Pirow, pp. 227-8, 233-41.
alarums. It coincided with a great deal of speculation in the British press as to the need to appease Germany's colonial ambitions. This discussion was nothing new. It had been in progress since the beginning of the German colonial offensive in 1936. But, as so often with discussions in Britain on a general settlement, the pundits of the British press had shown a charming readiness to discuss the disposition of the property of nations other than their own. And the governments of Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands had been rendered particularly worried by the freedom with which British press discussion had covered a possible redistribution of their colonial territories in Africa and elsewhere. It is no coincidence therefore that the first public announcement of Pirow's visit to London and Lisbon was greeted with alarm by the Portuguese authorities, who instructed their representatives in London and Pretoria to try to discover the object and motives for his visit.  

These gentlemen drew a general blank in their inquiries, except as to the purpose of Pirow's visit to London. Inquiries at the foreign office in London produced only the reply that the foreign office was in the dark despite its own inquiries. The dominions were very jealous of their independence and very sparing in what they told London. It was therefore most unfortunate that the first news of Pirow's plans should be learnt from the press. On 25 October Pirow landed at Marseilles to be interviewed by the press. Reuter's correspondent interpreted his answers to questions to imply that he had entered proposals for the satisfaction of Germany's colonial claims which he proposed first of all to discuss with the Portuguese government, and then to report to the British government and finally to discuss with Hitler. This report was immediately linked with a more far-ranging report in the Daily Herald. According to this, political circles in London were discussing a plan for satisfying German colonial demands which would restore to her the former colonies of Togoland and

50 Salazar to London, 8 October 1938, P.D.D., vol. ii, no. 417. See also the anxieties of the Dutch ambassador to London reported by the Portuguese ambassador to London the previous day, ibid., no. 411.
52 Manchester Guardian, 26 October 1938. Pirow's account makes no reference to this incident, and indeed would seem to rule it out entirely, since he alleges he flew from Genoa to Lisbon by the German airline, Lufthansa, stopping only for ten minutes in Toulon, after his plane had been ordered down by the French Air Force for allegedly overflying a prohibited area. Pirow, pp. 229–30.
the Cameroons, and grant her compensation for Tanganyika and South-West Africa in Portuguese Angola and possibly the Belgian Congo. The suggestion was that the British government would purchase the necessary parts of Angola or the Congo before transferring them to Germany. These reports had already reached Pretoria, and caused very considerable alarm both in Lisbon and Brussels. Pirow himself made no move publicly to deny the truth of these reports, though they were denied in Pretoria.

Pirow was probably influenced by the immediacy of his visit to Lisbon. In fact he saw Salazar for a lengthy meeting on 27 October and again on 28 October. He immediately denied the truth of the press reports on his Marseilles interview. He spent a great part of the two interviews he had with Salazar, discussing the importance of Lourenço Marques for the defence of South Africa; he in fact offered assistance in the provision of ammunition and the training of Portuguese pilots in South Africa. He also discussed and won Portuguese approval for the establishment of a triangular air link between Angola, the Belgian Congo (Leopoldville) and South Africa. On the colonial issue he confined himself simply to remarking that Germany would have to be given some of her colonies back again, but that South Africa was determined not to part with South-West Africa.

The South African denial of the Marseilles reports, in the meantime, seemed neither to have allayed the anxieties felt in Brussels, nor to have registered with the British press. The gist of the Daily Herald's report was repeated and elaborated in the Evening Standard on 2 November in a manner extremely offensive to the Portuguese. Some idea of the alarm felt in Brussels may be gathered from a report by the Portuguese minister of 31 October 1938, according to which the Belgians were expecting the summoning of an international conference on colonial issues, and a British

53 Daily Herald, 26 October 1938. See also Le Temps of the same date.
55 The Portuguese minister in Brussels reported M. Spaak, the Belgian Foreign Minister, expressing his surprise at such reports to the South African minister, who denied the truth of these reports. Portuguese minister in Brussels to Lisbon, 27 October 1938, P.D.D., II, no. 432.
57 This account is based on: Salazar to London, 27 October 1938; the same to the same, 28 October 1938; Salazar to Pretoria, 29 October 1938, P.D.D., vol. II, nos. 429, 434, 448.
scheme to buy Germany off with Nigeria and the Gold Coast as well as Togo and the Cameroons; failing this, parts of the Congo were to be added as an extra.\textsuperscript{58}

In the meantime Pirow continued on his visit to London. His trip, it was to transpire, was far from having been co-ordinated with the South African Department of External Affairs, the under-secretary of which, Bodenstein, expressed himself in the most forcible terms to the Portuguese chargé d'affaires in Pretoria on learning of Pirow's activities in Lisbon. General Hertzog on the other hand seemed less perturbed; though he was very angry about the press reports on Pirow's alleged plans which he described as 'all the work of the Jews.'\textsuperscript{59}

In London Pirow saw Chamberlain and plunged immediately into the third purpose of his visit. He found the British premier very exercised over the German anti-Jewish measures. From his conversation with Chamberlain and a visit from a parliamentary delegation concerned with measures to ease the emigration of German Jewish refugees by making it possible for them to take out some of their property, the value of the remainder to be covered by an international loan, he concocted a plan to use the settlement of this issue for a lead in to other problems. At his second interview with Chamberlain he broached the question of a \textit{quid pro quo} to be offered Hitler, receiving in reply a lengthy disquisition on Danzig and eastern Europe. From this he formed the notion that in return for a German appeasement on the Jewish issue, Britain would be prepared to grant Hitler 'a free hand in the East.'

On 7 November, however, occurred the pogrom with which Germany answered the murder of a minor official of the German embassy in Paris by a Jewish assailant. The reaction in Britain was so strong as to force the British government to recall the British ambassador in Berlin for consultations. After his own consultations with the South African minister in Berlin, Johannes Gie, Pirow determined to proceed on his mission, though on his own account Chamberlain made it plain to him that Britain could not accord him even semi-official status. 'He would still like me to acquaint


Hitler with his views on the Jewish question and Danzig; in other words I might still hold out to the Führer some hope of a free hand in eastern Europe subject to an equitable solution of the emigration of the Jews from the Reich. The gloss was Pirow’s own as was the basic concept of an Anglo-German deal on these lines. With this Pirow left for Berlin, passing through Brussels on his way. On 17 November he arrived in Berlin.

In Germany Pirow saw Goering, Ribbentrop and Hitler. His meeting with Hitler took place at Berchtesgaden on 24 November. The two accounts we have of the meeting, by Pirow and by Hewel, of Ribbentrop’s staff agree as to the general basis of the conversation, and show Pirow as attempting, not altogether unskilfully, to broach the main purpose of his meeting and to put the deal he had evolved to Hitler. What he had not bargained for was the depth of Hitler’s Anglophobia. Hitler displayed a bitterness against Britain which was only marginally less virulent than his antisemitic comments. It is, perhaps, not without significance that it was only two days later that he signed a directive for staff talks with Italy which assumed as their basis: ‘war by Germany and Italy against Britain and France with the object first of knocking out France. That would also hit Britain, as she would lose her bases for carrying on the war on the continent and would then find the whole power of Germany and Italy directed against herself alone.’

It was, therefore, in vain for Pirow to suggest that Hitler help Chamberlain and Halifax against ‘the war party’ by helping them on the Jewish question, even when he said bluntly that Chamberlain would have to change his policy unless the Jewish question was solved. The comment merely provoked Hitler to new anti-British diatribes: ‘He had sent his best man, namely Ribbentrop to London . . . no one had been more basely treated by Britain than he, the Führer. He had received nothing but kicks. Sad at heart he had finally decided to liquidate the work of his youth when he saw that Britain would not co-operate.’

The German record shows that Pirow still continued to attempt to get his point across, though at no point does it record his broaching the question of British encouragement for German ambitions in the east, though according to his own version he ended his remarks by saying, ‘I

---

60 Pirow, p. 235.
give you my solemn assurance that if you meet Chamberlain on the Jewish questions, you will be given a free hand in the East'. Perhaps he never got the chance to make this, to him, vital point. Perhaps it did not suit Ribbentrop's book to record him as so doing.

Pirow returned to London profoundly depressed. He returned via Brussels and The Hague, where he succeeded in allaying the Belgian and Dutch anxieties and obtaining agreement to his projected air line. He also visited Rome where he and Count Ciano duly failed to impress one another. In his report to Chamberlain he still urged the need to allow Germany a free hand against Russia so that Britain might intervene when the two powers had exhausted one another, to secure a real and lasting peace. But his real impressions, as shown by the public statement he issued on his return to London, are amply confirmed by his conversation with the Portuguese minister in Pretoria on his return to South Africa. Europe, he said, was 'a madhouse.' In his statement to the press he said,

Europe is drifting into war, a war which no nation wants and against which every nation is preparing. Unless there is a complete change of outlook within the next month or two international tension will reach breaking point in the spring of next year. The tragedy of the situation is that since the settlement of the Czechoslovak issue there is no principle at stake which would excuse a war let alone make it inevitable. The drift to war is caused purely by psychological factors.

This last effort of Piow's to intervene between Britain and Germany makes it clear that the idea of South African mediation was unwelcome to Germany and embarrassing to the British government. Even through Piow's narrative one can sense the caution and distaste with which Chamberlain treated his unwelcome visitor, and the replies given to parliamentary questions at this time went about as far as they could to disassociate the British government from his visit to Berlin and Lisbon, and to deny any knowledge of his aims.

63 The Times, 2 December 1938; Le Temps, 3 December 1938.
64 German ambassador in Rome to Berlin, 28 November 1938, D.G.F.P., series D, vol. iv, no. 272; Pirow, p. 239.
65 Pirow, pp. 239-40.
67 Daily Telegraph, 6 December 1938.
The German records on which this paper is based make it possible to speak with some certainty of the effects South African intervention in Britain's relations with Germany had on Hitler's assessment of the possibilities of action open to Germany in the years after 1937.⁶⁸ They would seem to point, too, as has been argued elsewhere,⁶⁹ to the intervention of the dominions as a whole at the imperial conference of 1937 having a considerable influence on the policy of attempting a new initiative to secure a general satisfaction of German claims in eastern Europe, adopted by the new prime minister of Britain in the summer of 1937. On the question of South African motives they are of rather less guidance. They would seem to confirm the version of his policy put forward by Pirow in his biography of Hertzog, with which they are completely consistent: the fear of African racialism, the desire to strengthen white rule in sub-Saharan Africa, and the desire to make South Africa the principal power in that area for the same purpose. In such a policy, South Africa's refusal to envisage a return of Germany's presence either to South-West or to eastern Africa would seem a logical part. But the absence of any reliable account of General Hertzog's views or of the discussions within the Fusionist cabinet after 1934 make certain pronouncement impossible. The idea that South Africa's attitude was governed solely by Boer isolationism, the feeling of kinship with Germany, and a conviction of the injustice of Versailles would seem somehow to be weakened by the evidence here cited.

The actions of the South African statesmen here examined were both futile in conception and perilous in consequence. If, as is here suggested, they sprang from white racist motives and from an early phase in the present confrontation across the Zambesi, they illustrate, even at this stage, the impotence of South Africa and her failure to evolve a viable external policy capable of securing for her the dominance and security in Africa her leaders were seeking.

⁶⁸ To judge from Hitler's addresses to his military commanders on 23 May and 22 August 1939, it must have played a part in Hitler's conviction that Imperial considerations would play their part in preventing Britain from intervening in his assault on Poland. See D.G.F.P., series D, vol. vi, no. 433, and vol. vii, nos. 192 and 193.
⁶⁹ In D. C. Watt, Personlities and policies, essay 8. This view is very strongly supported by the picture of the 1937 imperial conference painted from Canadian sources in Eyrs, pp. 59–60.
The relations between the German and French economies during the
second world war were first considered, in the most general way, by Pro-
fessor L. Baudin in 1945. Since then no further overall assessment has been
made. The tendency has been to assume that Germany's policy towards
the French economy was merely to 'exploit' it in her own interests. This
view of the problem is certainly too simple. What exactly were German
interests? And which of the many different ways of 'exploitation' should
Germany choose? Should Germany invest in the French economy, partic-
ularly in the agricultural sector, in the hope of increasing output and thus
the share which she herself could take? Or should she merely loot the
French economy taking what she could as booty? Owing to deficiencies
in investment in armaments industries before 1942 Germany's own armaments-producing capacity was fairly low until 1943. Should she
therefore use French plant to increase this capacity? And if so, should she
do this only when it was absolutely necessary and as a temporary measure?
Or should she incorporate the economy of occupied France, and even
Vichy France, into her own war economy, forming what Jean Bichelonne,
secretary of state for industrial production in the Vichy government after
April 1942, was to call the 'European war economy'? Or should she

1 The author would like to express his thanks for the friendly and helpful co-
operation of Dr L. Kahn and Miss A. Raspin of the Foreign Documents Centre of the
Imperial War Museum. The system of documentary reference used here is the same
as that in the catalogue of the Imperial War Museum, and the references are, for the
most part, to the archives of the Wirtschaftsabteilung of the German High Command
in France (Militärbefehlsabt in Frankreich).
2 L. Baudin, 
3 Although several valuable monographs have appeared; see for instance, P.
4 Bichelonne to Speer, 15 July 1943, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.
transfer, in as large quantities as possible, the factors of production from France to Germany, turning France into a rump state, a primary producer like the General-government of Poland? What fate was reserved for France in the 'New Order'?

The mimeographed studies of the Institut für Besatzungsfragen have attempted a more detailed investigation of certain special aspects of German policy towards France. Weinmann has attempted a revision of the estimates for the quantities of foodstuffs which Germany was able to draw, either by payment or seizure, from the French economy. These estimates were first made by Brandt and his associates. Although Weinmann does not attempt to deny that German policy towards French agriculture was conceived wholly in the German interest, he also argues that in the long run Germany did no fundamental harm to French agricultural productivity. Similarly Kistenmacher points out that the failure of postwar French governments to sustain the food supply of the French state was more marked than that of the German military government during the war. Munz uses a similar argument as a partial defence of German policy towards French finances during the war. On the whole these studies have been markedly restrained in their treatment of German policy towards France. The small amount of documentary evidence on which they are based also restricts their usefulness if we are looking for any satisfying answers to the more important questions concerning the relationships between the two economies.

But the biggest fault of these studies is that they take no account of the many changes in German policy during the war. The question of how occupied economies could best be exploited was never answered. Indeed the answer seemed to recede as the war progressed. The American scholar, Alexander Dallin, has shown how in the German occupation of Russia

6 K. Brandt et al., The Management of Agriculture and Food in Fortress-Europe, Stanford University Food Research Institute, Stanford, Cal., 1953.
8 A. Munz, Die Auswirkung der deutschen Besetzung auf Währung und Finanzen Frankreichs, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Besatzungsfragen, 6, Tübingen, 1957.
German Economic Policy towards France

administrative disputes led to virtual economic paralysis. Such disputes often had their origins in wide divergencies of economic thought. The conflicting strains of economic thought in National Socialism spanned the whole range from anti-capitalist, or even pre-capitalist, millenarianism to the ruthless advocacy of the businessman’s right to dominate all economic policy. These gross differences of opinion were never better shown than in German economic policy in occupied countries.

Of all economies which Germany controlled during the second world war that of France was the most significant. It was so because it was the largest highly developed economy to be occupied for a long and uninterrupted period. In the U.S.S.R. the fluctuating battle fronts meant that, however important the possession, even for a brief period, of the oil wells of Mariupol, or the manganese of Nikopol, it was impossible to plan their output rationally. In France the economy was controlled for a sufficient length of time to allow us to examine the plans and motives of those who controlled it.

Until January 1942 Germany had no intention of expanding her own war effort. So great were the reserves in her own economy and so resolute Hitler’s intention to fight only a short war, that there was no thought of the French economy other than as a useful source of foodstuffs and certain raw materials which, owing to the allied blockade, had become scarce. Hence the isolation and ignorance of German intentions in which the Vichy government were left. The economic machinery which the Germans installed in France had as its main function to secure supplies for Germany. The economic staff of the commander-in-chief devoted a great deal of its time to that first priority. It was the failure of the Blitzkrieg on Russia and the constantly growing demand for armaments which was to raise the question of whether it was economic sense to treat France and Belgium in the same way as Poland, the Ukraine, or Yugoslavia, a mere reservoir of primary produce. And as war output increased so did German economic policy change. The policy of extending to France on a larger scale, the manufacture of armaments was associated with the rise to power in Germany of the Reichs ministry for armaments and munitions, later the Reichs ministry of armaments and war production. Speer, the minister, and his officials, were eager to utilize factories and floor space wherever the might be. This change of policy received its seal of approval in the

agreements that were negotiated between Speer and Bichelonne in September 1943. Its apogee was the decree of 3 December of the Reichs minister for war production.\textsuperscript{10}

The primary cause of this change in German policy was the need to produce greater quantities of war material. It was the logical continuation of that policy of creating a full war economy in Germany which had begun in January 1942 that manufacturing capacity outside the frontiers of the Reich proper should also be deployed. But the pressure to utilize such capacity did not become strong until spring 1943 when the overall index of German armaments production ceased to rise. From May 1943 to February 1944 the index prepared by Planungsamt fluctuated at about the same level.\textsuperscript{11} Although the expansion of German armaments production in 1944 showed how many reserves were available in the economy, this was not so clear in 1943.

As the German economy came increasingly to be controlled by the Reichs ministry of war production and its minister, Speer, so most of the institutional and emotional obstacles to incorporating the French economy more fully into the German war economy disappeared. Speer, unlike Göring or Sauckel, saw the problem primarily as one of increasing output, by whatever means, rather than as a problem of punishing the former enemies of the Reich. His long-term plans foresaw, once the war was over, a European economy in which France would be able to play her part. The German coal and iron cartels would be extended to embrace France, Italy and Belgium. There would then be a ‘European planning’ organization which would have the same relationship to the production organizations as did ‘Zentrale Planung’ to the ‘rings’ and committees which controlled German war production.\textsuperscript{12}

I was of the opinion that, if the military developments had not brought any further setbacks, the other countries, such as Sweden, Switzerland and Portugal, would at least have their feelers in this organization. An organization of this sort could have settled more political disagreements in a short time than all diplomatic attempts.

\textsuperscript{10} Der Reichsminister für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion, ‘Erlass über die Auftragsverlagerung in die besetzten Westgebiete von 3 Dezember 1943’, FD 2627/44.
German Economic Policy towards France

When for example I have a unified plan for ores in a unified tariff zone, and the ore is therefore distributed everywhere according to the requirements, then minette is no longer a bone of contention for a war.

It would have been the supposition that the tariff was lifted from this large economic area and through this a mutual production was really achieved. For any deeply-thinking individual it is clear that the tariffs which we have in Western Europe are unbearable. So the possibility for producing on a large scale only exists through this scheme.\textsuperscript{13}

Such a change of policy was more than welcome to the French. Laval and Bichelonne feared the fate of Poland above all else. Laval had never hidden his scorn for Pétain’s ‘National Revolution’ with its insistence on agriculture as the means to France’s social and spiritual regeneration. The possibility of a reconstruction of the French industrial economy seemed to be presenting itself. Speer soon found that Bichelonne, his fellow technocrat, was of a like mind to himself. The finest mathematician of the Ecole Polytechnique, endowed with an outstanding memory and capacity for work, Bichelonne, like Speer, was inclined to think of politics as a matter which could be regulated by rational calculation and efficiency. Like Speer he had become a minister from outside the political ranks, by the chance of war. Like Speer he was also young for the position he held. He had made a reputation in the business world for his efficiency and lack of interest in human beings. From 1940 Bichelonne seems to have been convinced that the war would be won by Germany and that it was therefore essential for France to ensure her future in the new European economy. He went to Sigmaringen in August 1944 with the last diehard bunch of ‘collaborators’, adjuring those colleagues he was leaving behind ‘not to compromise with the allies, we shall be back in a few weeks’.\textsuperscript{14}

‘In 1943’, said Speer, ‘I gave Bichelonne, the French production minister at that time, complete power to work independently in his country. Bichelonne was of the same age as myself, and we understood each other very well. I had confidence that he would keep his agreement.’\textsuperscript{15} Indeed Speer and Bichelonne discussed their future plans for Europe. ‘The French production minister, Bichelonne, with whom I spoke about these matters,

\textsuperscript{13} Speer Report No. 30, Intelligence Report EF/AM/6, Interrogation of Albert Speer 21 July 1945. The curious English is the official record of the interrogation.


\textsuperscript{15} Speer Report no. 30.
and I myself, thought further ahead. The next phase interested us already at that time. We said, we're both young and we must strive for a solution which is a rational, permanent affair.\textsuperscript{16}

But the removal of these emotional and political obstacles to a war economy in France and the growing need for armaments were by no means the only roots of this change of policy. The agreement in outlook between Speer and Bichelonne was only an island in a sea of blank hostility in Franco-German relations. There were several other important economic and strategic factors driving Germany towards this reversal of her policy.

First, the growing effectiveness of the strategic air offensive, with the almost insuperable strain which it put on the transport of raw materials and partial manufactures to Germany, pushed the ministry of war production towards a new policy to ease the transport situation and to reduce the risk of air attack on the Reich. Secondly, those social motives which had caused Hitler to opt for a \textit{Blitzkrieg}, rather than a long war, were not dead. There was a widespread reluctance to increase working hours and cut down living standards in Germany. Could not hours of work be increased and consumption decreased in France, instead? The French economy had been at half-steam since the disruption of 1940, and in spite of the high number of French prisoners-of-war in Germany, employment was slack.\textsuperscript{17} Thirdly, the earlier policy of using France merely as a source of supply of certain factors of production was proving increasingly difficult to implement. After July 1943 the number of Frenchmen transported to Germany fell steeply despite all efforts to reverse the trend. Finally, the increasing problems of the labour draft swung the military government in France firmly behind Speer in demanding a change of policy. The more men detailed for work in Germany the less actually crossed the border. The growing residue became partisans and terrorists. By September 1943 the executive had become unable to remedy this situation. As their fears of invasion mounted the Army's opposition to the activities of Sauckel, the plenipotentiary general for labour, mounted also. They blamed the antagonization of the civilian population on the policy of labour drafting and welcomed Speer's new policy with open arms.

From time to time other arguments were used by the ministry of war

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{17} J. Billig, 'Le rôle des prisonniers de guerre dans l'économie du IIIe Reich', \textit{Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale}, vol. xxxvii, 1960, pp. 53–76.
German Economic Policy towards France

production. When Hans Kehrl, head of Plamningsamt, submitted a memorandum to his minister before the vital Führer conference on labour of 4 January 1944 he argued that it was no longer possible to provide the building capacity for barracks to house foreign labour in Germany.18 While it is true that timber for building purposes became a serious matter of dispute in Germany,19 this argument has the air of being dredged from the bottom of the barrel to avoid other arguments that Hitler might not care to hear. It never appeared again after 4 January. Nor did the argument that Germany’s power output was incapable of being any further extended.20 If these two arguments for a change of policy are weak the others were strong; they were based on common sense and experience. The argument that war production should take place in France to avoid the risks and delays due to air raids was advanced on 30 July 1943 by the head of the Speer ministry’s central office in France in a memorandum to the central administrative division of the military government.21 It was already clear that the allies would not refrain from bombing French factories if war production were carried on there, but this was no argument against the transfer of production to France as it was equally clear that the weight of allied air attacks on Germany would increase whatever the future policy, and anything which reduced them, however slightly, was to be tried.

Such arguments could not comfortably be used to Hitler or indeed to other less realistic ministries, but Kehrl in a secret memorandum of 23 November 1943 showed how important they were in the formulation of policy.22 The bases of German war production were the Ruhr and Upper Silesia. Due to air attacks there the monthly production of crude steel had fallen from 3,150,000 tons to 2,900,000 tons.23 With fuller utilization of the productive capacity of the occupied territories it should be possible to reach 3,670,000 tons a month, sufficient to maintain the desired level of armaments output, and, indeed, to better any previous

18 Kehrl memorandum at FHQ, 4 January 1944, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.
20 Kehrl memorandum, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.
22 Kehrl to Dorn and Humbert, 23 November 1943, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.
23 The word ‘ton’ is used throughout to mean ‘metric ton’.

429
monthly output figure. Such an increase would be obtained mainly from the French steel industry with some help from the Italian.\textsuperscript{24} Therefore it was also necessary to increase the output of coal and pig-iron in France, the supply of pit-props from the Ardennes and the number of miners in France. There was now an urgent need of more than one million men in war production in the occupied western territories. In the year 1944 the most important path to production increases will have to be the whole-hearted utilization of the still unutilized, or only partly utilized, capacity of the occupied European territories.\textsuperscript{25} The transport of raw materials and labour, or even components of armaments manufactured under subcontract, into the Reich was conducted under such difficulties that by 4 January 1944 Planungsamt were even prepared to deploy these arguments before Hitler. Their aim was to convince Hitler that if completed armaments were manufactured in France not only would the attacks on transport be less harmful but the German people would be spared part of the bombing.\textsuperscript{26}

This desire to shelter the German population from the unpleasant effects of full-scale war was also revealed in the almost general feeling that the French should be made to work harder and their standard of life reduced. The forty-hour week introduced by the popular front government was still general in French industry and contrasted harshly with the tentative plans, soon to be put into practice, to work a seventy-five-hour week in German fighter factories. In his report of 2 December 1943 to Hitler, Sauckel claimed that the tempo of work in France was not in any way to be compared to that in Germany.\textsuperscript{27} Nor was the equipment with which the work was carried out comparable to that in Germany. Sauckel’s remedy for this would have been to reduce production still further in France. He was against the transference of cotton goods manufacture to France from Germany because he believed the French cotton industry to be fundamentally underequipped.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} The Italian steel industry was of greater importance than its total output might suggest due to its relatively high production of electro-steel.
\textsuperscript{25} Kehrl to Dorn and Humbert; the italics are Kehrl’s, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
\textsuperscript{26} Kehrl, ‘Gesichtspunkte, die eine noch stärkere Konzentrierung der Produktionen in Deutschland selbst unmöglich machen’, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
\textsuperscript{27} GbA to Hitler, 2 December 1943, FD 3048/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
\textsuperscript{28} Minutes of Zeentrale Planung, 1 March 1944, FD 3048 49, Section ii, Sc. 246.
German Economic Policy towards France

But if it was merely a question of increasing armaments production, as opposed to war production, in France Sauckel was quite in favour. His intellectual sympathies had from the earliest days been with the anti-capitalist section of the National Socialist movement. As Gauleiter of Thuringia he had been partly responsible for a number of semi-socialistic experiments there, and he was deeply opposed to Speer’s liberal attitude to the business community, which, he now feared, would embrace the Vichy business community too. His primitive impulse was to increase the burden on the French economy which he thought of as resting on flagrant social inequalities. He felt that relations between masters and men, and conditions of work, were better in Germany than in France. At the same time he believed the average Frenchman to be so underworked and oversed that it would be perfectly possible to carry out larger labour drafts into Germany and increase armaments production in France at the same time. He voiced his opinion vigorously at Zentrale Planung.

It is indeed the case that the French worker in France lives better than the German worker in Germany, and also the Italian worker, in that part of Italy which is occupied by us, even when he is out of work, lives better than when he is working in Germany. That is the basis of my request on the subject of German nutrition to improve the nourishment of German workers by a smack given out in the factory. If I am in Paris I naturally go to Maxim’s. You can witness prodigies of feeding there. I have talked about it with the Führer. It is always the idea that in these countries only the really rich rabble who can go to Maxim’s are well provided for. I have even sent my people into Parisian suburbs to estaminets and luncheon tables and established that, compared to our people, the French do not notice the burden of war. And the average Frenchman can have everything he wants. (Shout: It’s even better in small towns.)

Such arguments appealed to many sections of German opinion. Speer and Sauckel even found themselves in agreement on this issue, the French should be made to work harder.

The more important question was, however, where should they work? Speer and his officials did not believe for a moment that it was possible for

29 Ibid.
30 Minutes of Zentrale Planung, 1 March 1944, FD 3048/49, Section II, Sc. 246.
their new policy to be put into effect and for Sauckel to continue conscripting labour in the same numbers as before. Sauckel's policy was an extension of the older policy of 'exploitation'. They saw their own policy, not as a supplementary one, but as a complete alternative.

"The Führer agrees in principle to my proposal to plan production on a European basis, possibly by setting up a production office. He also agrees that France should be represented in this planning on an equal footing with other nations,' recorded Speer. And the strongest argument for the replacement of the old policy was the failure actually to transport the desired quantities of workmen from the occupied western territories.

The monthly figures for the transport of foreign labour into Germany were a source of constant dispute during the war. Sauckel's figures are, naturally, the highest. They are based on registrations of foreign workers at their place of employment, each new registration counting as a new worker although it very frequently indicated no such thing. But even Sauckel's figures show a drop after July 1943. The figures agreed on by the Speer Ministry and the military commanders in Belgium and France were:

**Monthly number of workers conscripted for labour in Germany**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>From Belgium and France (Nord and Pas de Calais)</th>
<th>From the rest of France</th>
<th>From the Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1943</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>126,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>43,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

31 Führerkonferenz, 14 September 1943, FD 3333/45, vol. 49.
German Economic Policy towards France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Belgium and France (Nord and Pas de Calais)</th>
<th>From the rest of France</th>
<th>From the Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1,901</td>
<td>3,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>3,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>2,445</td>
<td>5,623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1944

| January                                      | 1,183                  | 2,582               | 2,145               |
| February                                     | 1,832                  | 2,876               | 1,913               |
| March                                        | 3,143                  | 5,222               | 2,532               |
| April                                        | 2,778                  | 8,228               | 2,761               |

The first of the Frankreichaktionen, the special drives to get labour from France, had begun on 1 July 1942. The quota fixed for the three 'actions' from 1 July 1942 to 30 June 1943 had been 720,000. If the special Sauckel-Aktion to obtain a further 500,000 from 1 July 1943 to 31 December 1943 is added then 1,220,000 men should have been transported from France to Germany in the period 1 July 1942 to 31 December 1943. The proportion of these due by mid-September 1943 should have been 950,000. In fact less than 660,000 arrived, a shortfall of 290,000. These 290,000 were lost not only to the German economy but to the French economy as well; their only recourse was to disappear, probably into the bands of partisans. From January to September 1943 194,396 inhabitants of Belgium, including the two French departments of Nord and Pas de Calais, had been detailed for transport to the Reich; 45,572 of them were now lost to either economy. The same trend held good for the Netherlands.

In Belgium, even from the outset, resistance to the drafting of labour had been very strong, no doubt furthered by memories of the first world war and the similar policies then applied. In spite of immense propaganda campaigns over one-and-a-half years, in spite of the use of placards, press, radio, and loud speakers the numbers leaving either voluntarily or compulsorily remained low. In France Sauckel's policy had some initial success, as the figures show. But by summer 1943 it was bankrupt. Out of 100 men

drafted from an apprentice workshop in Troyes only eleven turned up at the station for transport. Ten of these disappeared on the way to the frontier.\textsuperscript{34} Out of 1,500 men conscripted in the conscription area of \textit{ZentralKraft-West} only 300 arrived in Germany.\textsuperscript{35} Little more than ten per cent of the men detailed in August and September actually arrived in Germany. The consequence was special police ‘actions’ to round up those who did not appear for transport. But these only produced still more grotesque results. One such ‘action’ by the local field commander in 1943 to round up 5,618 escapees produced twenty-three.\textsuperscript{36}

It is hardly surprising that in these circumstances the Army should have been solidly behind any change of policy. Their interests were in defending France against an imminent invasion. Massive police ‘actions’ were not to their taste, particularly when their main result was to increase the number of partisans, a serious problem for the first time in 1943. How serious a problem can be seen by the number of men needed to protect vital installations. To protect the thirty-four hydro-electric works 1,700 men were necessary, 1,250 for the twenty-five coal-fired power stations, 1,400 for the transformer stations, 1,600 for the grid.\textsuperscript{37} Armament industries, canals, railways, chemical plant, all had to be constantly protected against considerable bands of armed men. Protection duties were occupying a larger and larger rôle in the duties of the army of occupation, a situation which von Rundstedt, convinced there would be an invasion in the spring, could not tolerate.

The other branches of the executive in France were in agreement with the Army. The \textit{Sicherheitspolizei} considered that the bands of marauders in the Ardennes were largely composed of young men evading the Belgian labour service laws.\textsuperscript{38} They were joined constantly by Belgian workers going home on leave from Germany. Their numbers were now too large to be rounded up in such a terrain.

Never was Sauckel’s obstinate fanaticism better displayed than in his refusal to abandon his policy even when the other parties to it were con-

\textsuperscript{34} GBA to Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan, 11 September 1943, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, Anlage 5.
\textsuperscript{37} ‘Schutz gegen Sabotage’, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
vinced that it was not only useless but dangerous. He persisted in his view that if only the executive power in France would act more sternly the high levels of labour imports of March and June would be achieved once more.

In this instance [he said], the German offices must all work together, and if, in spite of all promises, the French do not take effective measures then we on the German side must make an example of some one and in certain circumstances on the basis of this law we must stick a prefect or a mayor up against a wall if he doesn’t go along with us, otherwise no Frenchman will ever go to Germany. In the last quarter the belief in a German victory and all the rest that we could put into the field by way of propaganda in our favour has sunk to less than nothing. I believe that the new French ministers, especially Henriot, are already acting effectively; they are very willing and I have a good impression of them. The question is just how far they can push things through their subordinates’ offices. That is the situation in France.  

It was in fact Sauckel’s persistence in that policy which he had been originally appointed to carry out which was to deal the death blow to the new policy of using French industrial resources in France. But in the autumn of 1943 the tide was still running for Speer. It was only as a result of a series of Führer decisions beginning on 16 December 1943 that Sauckel was eventually able to reassert the primacy of the policy of labour drafting. Until that time the new policy had its chance. How was it operated and how well did it succeed?

In the first place it was necessary to construct some economic machinery in France which would play a more positive rôle than the Comités de répartition, whose primary function was to divert a certain percentage of France’s output to Germany. When armaments orders had been placed in France they had been placed by the ordnance board of the particular branch of the forces that required them, or they had been sub-contracted by German firms in trouble with the original order. The mechanism for controlling war production in Germany which had been introduced by the ministry of armaments and munitions, the so-called ‘self-responsibility and autonomy of German industry’ did not originally go beyond the boundaries of the Reich proper. When it became the policy of the

39 Minutes of Zentrale Planung, 1 March 1944, FD 3048/49, Section II, Sc. 246.
ministry of war production to organize regular war production in France this mechanism of 'Rings' and committees had also to be extended to that country. This was done by the decree of 1 June 1943. But setting up such a complicated organization was a long job and the immediate response of the French government to the new policy was to protest that they had not the labour necessary to fulfil the new contracts, that their chances of getting it were diminishing with every day of the Sauckel-Aktionen, that their powers over their own labour force were insufficient to enable them to direct labour to the necessary degree, and that it was essential to stop the transport of many raw materials into Germany.

In fact war production in France remained at a fairly low level. It was this which gave rise to the meeting between Speer and Bichelonne on 17 September 1943, and the agreements signed between them. It is clear from Speer's preliminary notes for the meeting that he did not win from Bichelonne every point he wanted. But his bargaining position was not as strong as he would have wished; for example, he obviously wished to offer Bichelonne the postponement of the labour transports. Instead of the 215,000 more workers, 81,000 of whom would have been employed directly in the manufacture of armaments, which Bichelonne had envisaged in July, Speer now considered 440,000 were needed. The whole scale of conversion of the French economy was to be larger than had been planned in the summer.

The final agreements left greater responsibility to the French government than it had expected to obtain. A total production programme would be drawn up by the German ministry of war production and its division and allocation would be the work of French offices. The expansion of coal production in France was vital to the whole programme. Speer considered that 300,000 tons more a month could be produced in the northern coalfield; Bichelonne placed it nearer 200,000. Fifteen thousand more

---

40 'Erlass über die Einschaltung der Ausschüsse und Ringe bei der rüstungswirtschaftlichen Nutzbarmachung Frankreichs', 1 June 1943, FD 2627/44.
41 Ministère de la Production Industrielle et du Transport to Chef der Abteilung Wirtschaft bei der deutschen Militärverwaltung in Frankreich, 15 July 1943, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
42 'Besuch Minister Bichelonne, Besprechungs-Notiz für Minister Speer', ibid.
43 Leiter der Abteilung Wi.II, Militärverwaltungsstab Frankreich, 'Notiz über die Schlussbesprechungen anlässlich des Besuches von Minister Bichelonne bei Minister Speer am 17.9', 20 September 1943, ibid.
employees would be needed in the mines in the north and an equivalent number in the southern zone. This programme of labour recruitment would stretch over five months. Rations for coal-face workers would have to be increased. In compensation coal would have to be more strictly directed away from household consumption in France. Finally it was agreed that 600,000 extra people would have to be directed into French war industry, 200,000 of them directly into the manufacture of armaments. All factories producing for the war economy would continue to be classified as S-Betriebe\(^4\) and this title would give complete protection from Sauckel’s depredations and be extended to cover a much greater range of firms. Speer dismissed Bichelonne with a brisk and gratuitous exhortation.

One and a half years ago in Germany we drew up a plan for doubling production. We know the difficulties and optimism is necessary to overcome them. We were able to stick to the programme and we had results. I believe you should not go too much into detail but should work. The will overcomes everything. We do not want written conditions which are too severe. We want to find out through work where the difficulties are. We are bringing decisions; you must bring French industry to unreservedly effective results. Difficulties can be overcome through good co-operation.\(^5\)

Later in Zentrale Planung Kehrl gave an account of the circumstances which led to the agreements.

The circumstances which at that time occupied Minister Speer and led to the agreement with Bichelonne were the following. If I cannot now even by violence bring people from France to Germany in the necessary quantity, a fact which is clear from developments, and at the same time I run the risk that people through fear of violent seizure leave the firms where they are at present working, then for me only the lesser evil is left, that I seek to employ these people in France or Belgium, whereby I no longer need a German force to bring them over the frontier. In this way a change began in production policy. Until then Minister Speer had, in essence, transferred armaments production

\(^4\) ‘Sperr-Betriebe’.

\(^5\) ‘Notiz über die Schlussbesprechung’, FD 3040/49, Section iv, Sc. 425.
running into bottlenecks in Germany in those areas where German production capacity did not suffice. Now, he said: 'I will not disperse only those areas of production to France, but also indisputably important war production, which otherwise could be carried out in Germany by German labour, in order to free German labour in Germany and to bring about this production in France, Belgium and Holland.' We have dispersed, in part, up to 50 per cent of the total German needs to the West, and production is succeeding there.\footnote{Minutes of Zentrale Planung, 1 March 1944, FD 3048/49, Section II, Sc. 246.}

Kehrl's conclusion was over-optimistic. At the end of 1943 France, Belgium and the Netherlands were contributing about 6,400,000 tons of hard coal per month to the total output of greater Germany of 24,000,000 tons per month.\footnote{Planungsamt, 'Bedeutung der Wirtschaftskraft der besetzten Westgebiete (und Italiens) für das deutsche Rüstungspotential', 1 January 1944, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.} They were producing about 450,000 tons of iron ore (in iron content) per month out of a grand total of 800,000 tons. But greater Germany still needed to import 550,000 tons per month, mainly from Sweden. The crude steel production of the occupied western territories was about 15 per cent that of greater Germany (45,000 tons per month out of 2,500,000 tons). The greatest success was in the manufacture of alarm clocks in France, 80 per cent of German consumption.

The success of the new policy depended on an increase in French coal production. In 1930 this had stood at round 4,600,000 tons a month. Deducting from this the average Lorraine coalfield production of 400,000 tons a month, which was now included in German figures, production had declined from 4,200,000 tons to 3,940,000 tons per month in October 1942.\footnote{'Bericht 2', Dr L. Westwick to Direktor Continentale-öl A.G., 17 May 1944, FD 3045/49, Section IX, Sc. 292; der Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich, Gruppe Bergbau, 'Kohlenwirtschaft Frankreich 1918/39', FD 469/45.} From then onwards the fall became much steeper. September 1943 output was 3,426,000 tons. On this figure the Speer–Bichelonne agreements made little impact. Production for October 1943 was 3,200,000 tons, the average of November and December was 3,510,000 tons, and for January and February 1944 3,420,000 tons. The impact on French steel production was no more dramatic. In the two major steel producing regions of the north and the department of Meurthe et Moselle output
remained about the levels it had reached in spring 1943 although it recovered from the decline of August and September. Combined output of the two regions in September was 158,465 tons, in October 167,242 tons, in November 163,647 tons, and in December 165,345 tons.\textsuperscript{49}

The forecasts for labour intake into French industry proved wildly optimistic. Although as a result of the agreements a new arm of the Speer Ministry was established in France, the Länderbeauftragten,\textsuperscript{50} the French local authorities still had a great deal of temporizing and delaying power in their own country. Also Sauckel continued his raids unwearyingly although not unperturbed. On 20 April 1944, one hundred and eighty young workmen in an S-Betrieb at Tarbes heard, wrongly, that Sauckel's groups were to visit the works, and rushed from their work benches into the river Adour.\textsuperscript{51} The gross intake into French armaments factories between October 1943 and 31 December was 45,000, the net intake only 22,000—woefully short of the 120,000 needed to keep up to the target set in September.\textsuperscript{52} From 1 November to 31 December the crude addition to the number of employees in mines in the southern zone was 3,040; this was, however, counterbalanced by a withdrawal of 2,307. Bichelonne had promised a net addition of 10,000 in this period. The brief experiment in Franco-German co-operation was not, so far as Germany was concerned, an improvement on the previous policy. The Speer-Bichelonne agreements were failing by the beginning of 1944. It took Sauckel to give them their death blow.

Sauckel was convinced that the growth of S-Betriebe in France after September was the biggest obstacle to his own activities. There were undoubtedly some factories that barely earned this title; one made labels for champagne bottles.\textsuperscript{53} As far as the French authorities were concerned the Speer-Bichelonne agreements marked a resounding defeat for Sauckel.

\textsuperscript{49} Reichsvereinigung Eisen und Wirtschaftsgruppe Eisenschaffenden Industrie, 'Rohstahl-Erzeugung', FD 1670/45.
\textsuperscript{50} Der Reichsminister für Rüstungs und Kriegsproduktion, der Rüstungsoffmann in Frankreich, 'Dienstanweisung für die Länderbeauftragten', 15 September 1943, FD 2627/44.
\textsuperscript{51} Chef des Rüstungs- und Beschaffungsstab Frankreichs, 23 April 1944, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sec. 425.
\textsuperscript{52} 'Vermerk über eine Besprechung bei Militärverwaltungsvizechef Gehle in Paris, Freitag, dem 11 Februar 1944', 16 February 1944, \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{53} Sauckel to Speer, 10 March 1944, \textit{ibid}.

439
These were greeted with a sigh of relief throughout the French administration. ‘I will remind you once more, that for a long time I have been faced with the question, that all French prefects have put to my staff; what do you want, your Sauckel is in the wrong place here, it has been agreed between Bichelonne and Speer that no more Frenchmen need go to Germany, everything will be made in factories removed to France.’

On 28 November Sauckel announced to the military government in Paris that he would take 80,000 workmen a month to Germany in the future. This was the beginning of a plan to take one million Frenchmen to Germany in 1944, an impossible, absurd, and cruel project. On 21 November Hitler had agreed with Speer that such a project would be impossible. On 2 December Sauckel submitted a report to Hitler saying that his own activities would not be incompatible with the policy envisaged by the Speer-Bichelonne agreements. Hitler, to whom such arguments had a natural appeal, swayed towards Sauckel and, at the Führer conference on 16–17 December 1943, he decided that the one million Frenchmen should be brought to Germany, providing that the S-Betriebe remained unscathed.

Reported to Hitler on differences with the GbA. From my point of view, the main thing is to exploit French industry better for Germany so that approximately one million additional workers can be employed there. Sauckel however takes the view that labour must be brought into Germany in the first place. Hitler declares that the evacuation to France is very important to him, because of the possibilities of an increased iron production connected with this evacuation. In spite of this it is his opinion that the additional call-up of Frenchmen for Germany could not be given up. One should therefore try to combine happily both points of view, and Hitler himself suggests nominating protected plants in France in order to obtain French labour for these plants, even under the pressure of the labour draft for Germany.

54 Minutes of Zentrale Planung, 1 March 1944, FD 3048/49, Section II, Sc. 246.
55 Militärverwaltungsvizechef beim Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich to Kehrl, 28 November 1943, FD 3040/49, Section IV, Sc. 425.
56 Niederschrift über Führer-Konferenz, 22 November 1943, ibid.
57 GbA to Hitler, 2 December 1943, ibid.
Speer reminded the Führer that such provision already existed in the S-Betriebe. It was finally agreed to hold a special conference to discuss the labour question on 4 January 1944. But at that conference the decision remained unchanged. It was still necessary to ‘combine happily both points of view.’ Since these two policies were fundamentally opposed this proved impossible. The two rival policies, both already moribund, strangled each other to death after January.

In January 1944 only 2,500 workers were transported from France, in February 2,800. On 8 February, at his meeting with Sauckel, Laval was faced with a demand which had risen to 90,000 workers a month for Germany. At the Führer conference of 6/7 April 1944 Hitler ordered Speer to permit a ‘proofing’ [Prüfung] of the S-Betriebe as their were too many men underemployed there. Sauckel’s interpretation of this was much more sweeping than Speer’s. He claimed that it implied a ‘combing-out’ [Auskämmlung] of the factories by his organization. The dispute continued over these issues until it was dramatically cut short by the invasion which, fittingly enough, took place on the day appointed for yet another Führer conference on the labour question. Once the decision of 17 December 1943, confirmed by that of 4 January 1944, had been taken, the ‘European war economy’ of which Bichelonne had spoken was no longer really in existence.

It is clear enough that the policy of the ministry of war production towards France was conceived just as much in the German interest as earlier policies had been. The fact that Speer’s policy was more advantageous to the French economy was merely coincidental. Its success depended on a higher level of investment by the Germans and a more willing co-operation by the French than were likely to be achieved in 1943. Such improvement as it did bring to the French economy was nullified by the short time it lasted. It was born out of necessity and the desire to spare the homeland.

The history of Speer’s new policy is significant in two important respects. First, it reveals that Germany never solved the problem of how best to exploit the French economy for her own purposes. For Speer’s

---

60 Planungsamt, ‘Abschrift der Niederschrift über die Pariser-Besprechung Sauckel-Laval, 8.2.44’, 29 February 1944, ibid.
policy would never have won acceptance had it not been for the open and apparent failure of less sophisticated policies of exploitation. By 1943 most German policy makers had realized that the law of diminishing returns operates with particular force on booty. If Germany was to create a valid ‘New Order’ in Europe, even if she was to survive, new policies must be tried in the occupied western territories. And to certain sections of opinion in France these new policies were welcomed as offering a deliverance from the fate which had befallen Poland.

But although these new policies were more humane, although they even raised, in a smudged way, the vision of postwar European economic co-operation, they were not a bit more justified on economic grounds. The newer policy, like the older one, was, economically, a failure. And when it was over, the only possibility was to revert to exploitation of a more horrible kind. When no rational solution seemed any longer practicable, fanaticism, ably represented by Sauckel, took possession of the field. There was never any hope of Sauckel’s plans for 1944 succeeding. Hitler’s decision to sanction them foreshadows the similar victory of fanaticism in the German domestic economy when the decree of 18 October 1944 instituted the Volkssturm and abolished civilian status.

Secondly, the sharp differences of opinion which existed on the question of how Germany should treat the French economy illustrate the confusion of economic thought tangled in the roots of National Socialism. Sauckel’s primitive form of expression was an apt vehicle for the primitivism of his economic thought. As with many of his supporters in the National Socialist movement, his ‘socialism’ was not so much a logical extrapolation from the development of capitalist society as a primitive rejection of such society. There are analogies between his economic viewpoint and that of the officers who created the independent economic empire of the S.S. In another age they might well have become leaders of millenarian movements. We should not be surprised that the plan to carry out the labour programme for 1944 was agreed upon even though it was impossible. The gulf between Sauckel and Speer could not have been wider. From the moment he came to office as minister of armaments and munitions Speer’s only criterion of action was rationality. And if this involved a complete reversal of German economic policy towards France, Speer would not shrink from this. He was a ‘technocrat’; he judged by results only. His policies were considered ‘immoral’ by Sauckel.
German Economic Policy towards France

Given such divergencies of economic thought and such a difficult problem it is not surprising that German economic policy towards France should have oscillated so violently. But, even had fanaticism not triumphed in the way it did, France's part in the Europe of the future would still have been conceived purely in the German interest. Speer, musing on the subject after the war had ended, made this clear to his interrogators:

I planned that, as much as possible, German cars should be made in Germany, and I wanted to draw from the components industry in France, even at the risk that, consequently, for example, fewer Citroëns or Renaults would be produced. In Germany without air-raids we could have raised our production 30-40 per cent while the French were to have maintained their level.61

61 Speer Report no. 30.
A Bibliography of the Historical Writings
of Professor W. N. Medlicott

Compiled by K. A. Hamilton

Monographs


Pamphlets and Teaching Aids

The origins of the second great war, London, Historical Association Pamphlet No. 116, Bell (for Historical Association), 1940, pp. 24.


Contributions


**ARTICLES**


'Lord Salisbury and Turkey', *History*, vol. xii, no. 47, 1927 (Historical Revisions), pp. 244–7.


'Gladstone and the Turks', *History*, vol. xiii, no. 50, 1928 (Historical Revisions), pp. 136–7.

'Diplomatic relations after the Congress of Berlin', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. viii, no. 22, 1929, pp. 66–79.


'The recognition of Roumanian independence', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. xi, 1933, nos. 32 and 33, pp. 354–72, 572–89.
'The powers and the unification of the two Bulgarias, 1885', *The English Historical Review*, vol. liv, 1939, nos. 213 and 214, pp. 67–82, 263–84.


