

THE CHARACTER OF BRITISH RELATIONS  
WITH FRANCE, 1859-1865.

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

That British influence on the Continent suffered a sharp decline in Lord Palmerston's last administration has become a commonplace of 19th century diplomatic history. Many factors contributed to discredit Britain's reputation: the new drive behind Prussian diplomacy; the increase in military and naval power on the Continent; the irresponsible, interfering policy of the British Government itself. But even more important was Britain's inability to act cordially with France: and it is the aim of the present thesis to offer some explanation of why this should have been so.

The period between 1859 and 1865 has a unity of its own in the history of Anglo-French relations. It derives this unity from the personality of Palmerston. His was the dominating influence on British foreign policy in this period, and he was specially interested in the question of British relations with France. His advent to power in June 1859 marked the opening of a new phase in Anglo-French relations. He ousted Lord Derby on a charge of unduly favouring Austria in her war with France and Sardinia. Yet he succeeded in accommodating a pledge of strict neutrality in that war with one of "strict alliance"<sup>1</sup> with France. And it is significant

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1. Palmerston in reply to John Bright at the meeting of all sections of the Liberal party at Willis' Rooms on the eve of the reassembly of Parliament. The Times, 7th June 1859.

that the Emperor of the French did all in his power to secure the return of the Liberals. He was reported to have furnished Persigny with the means of influencing the elections:<sup>1</sup> and Kossuth has recorded how the Emperor encouraged him to exploit his connection with the Radicals to persuade them to offer their political allegiance to the Liberals.<sup>2</sup> At the time of his death, however, Palmerston was no longer the embodiment of cordiality towards France - the "pet of the Emperor of the French."<sup>3</sup> By 1865, he was disillusioned in Napoleon III. He had become a symbol of bull-dog resistance to France and an obstacle to the maintenance of cordial relations between the two powers. His departure from the political scene, like his re-entry six years before, paved the way for another phase in Anglo-French relations.

A study of British relations with France in this period has not formed the chosen topic of any single piece of historical writing before. But much has been written with a

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1. The Earl of Malmesbury, Memoirs of an ex-Minister, an Autobiography, [1884], p.188.
  2. Louis Kossuth, Memories of my Exile, [1880], cf. Emile Ollivier, L'Empire Libéral, [1899], IV, 106.
  3. The taunt with which he was met at Tiverton during the election campaign in April 1859. E. Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, [1876], II, 152.

direct bearing on it. Almost all the more important issues in which the two powers were concerned have been treated in detail. Various aspects of Anglo-French relations have been dealt with in monographs. Public figures of the period on either side of the Channel have been the subject of much biographical study. All the relevant unpublished sources available in England - official and private - have been used before.

The present thesis attempts to make a fresh contribution to the study of Anglo-French relations by using this material to indicate the diplomatic character of the relationship between the two powers. This has been judged by applying four main criteria. The first relates to terminology: the contemporary description that was given to the connection between the two powers. The second concerns the practical working of the association: the extent to which the two powers acted together or apart in the international issues of the period. Both these criteria provide useful pointers to the character of British relations with France although neither, it will be found, is an entirely reliable guide. The third criterion deals with the principles behind British and French policy: the extent to which they were similar or conflicting. The fourth is a test of confidence: the degree to which each power was kept informed of the policy and intentions of the other. All but the second of these criteria

involve aspects of the general question of Anglo-French relations which have received little attention up to the present: whilst the second reveals a regional trend in the relationship of the two powers on the basis of which it is possible to reassess the influence of well known political events.

As the title of this thesis suggests, the emphasis throughout will be on British policy rather than French. But the character of the relations of one power with another is necessarily affected by the policy of that other power. The general lines of French policy will emerge, therefore, in so far as they can be determined from the material available in England.

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CHAPTER I.  
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"THE ANGLO-FRENCH 'ALLIANCE': THE USE AND MEANING OF THE TERM."

..... "Why, what is an ally? An ally is a Power allied by treaty engagements in carrying on some active operations, political or otherwise. But to call a country an ally merely because it is in a state of friendship with you, is to use an expression that has no meaning whatever because it is applicable to every other Power in the world with whom you may happen not to be in a state of war ....."<sup>1</sup>

'Alliance' was the term most commonly applied to the relationship between Britain and France in this period.<sup>2</sup> Friendly alliance, cordial alliance, intimate alliance, holy alliance, quasi alliance, bona fide alliance, special alliance, exclusive alliance, political alliance, commercial alliance - these were a few of the many contemporary descriptions that

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1. Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons, 21st July 1849. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CVII, 808. Printed in E. Ashley, The Life of H.J. Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, [1876], ii. 480.
  2. W.F. Reddaway has given the title of 'entente' to the association of the two powers in this period. But there seems to be little justification for this in contemporary usage. The term was very rarely applied to Anglo-French relations in England: and in France, where it was used more frequently, but still less than 'alliance', it carried no special meaning. The Cambridge History of the British Empire, [1940] ii. 547 ff.

were given to Anglo-French relations between 1859 and 1865. With a galaxy of prefixes, bewildering in their variety, the term 'alliance' figured constantly in written and spoken statements on either side of the Channel. It was used publicly and privately; officially and informally; by responsible persons and private individuals.

The existence of an 'alliance' was acknowledged in speeches from the throne in both countries. In 1859, the Emperor of the French declared that his constant object had been "cimenter étroitement notre alliance avec l'Angleterre, et régler avec les puissances continentales de l'Europe le degré de mon intimité d'après la conformité de nos vues et la nature de leurs procédés vis-à-vis de la France..."<sup>1</sup> A year later, the Queen proclaimed the British Government's intention "to draw still closer the Bonds of friendly Alliance" between Britain and France.<sup>2</sup> These references to the 'alliance' were particularly authoritative for although the British and French speeches from the throne differed in character - the former more like an agenda for the session, the latter an extended apologia with its stress on past achievement,-both contained a well weighed statement of foreign policy.

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1. Procès-Verbaux du Corps Législatif, 1859, I, 4. Le 7 février 1859.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVI, 3. 24th January 1860.

The term 'alliance' was also applied to the relationship which existed between Britain and France by responsible Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition in both Houses of the British Parliament. In 1859, Palmerston declared his belief that no one could fairly refuse to acknowledge "that the Emperor of the French has been the faithful and true ally of England both in times of peace and war; and that we have every reason to regard him as a monarch who feels personally and upon system desirous to cement and perpetuate the alliance which subsists between his country and our own."<sup>1</sup> In the following year, Russell appealed to members to refrain from hasty judgments on the question of Nice and Savoy lest they should be unfair towards the ruler of "a country like France with whom it is our interest to keep on terms of friendship and alliance."<sup>2</sup> The Conservative leaders were equally lavish in their use of the term. Derby declared it would be a calamity for Britain and Europe if there were "rupture or dissolution of the friendly alliance between this country and France."<sup>3</sup> Disraeli deprecated the tone of the British reply to the French Congress proposal of 1863 on the grounds that it

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLV, 211.  
21st July 1859.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVI, 2177.  
2nd March 1860.
  3. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 30.  
5th February 1861.

was unnecessarily harsh towards a Sovereign "who was, I believe, at the time Parliament was prorogued still our cordial ally."<sup>1</sup>

French officials in the Sénat and Corps Législatif added their testimony to the existence of an 'alliance'. Their references were less frequent and less authoritative than those made in similar circumstances in England. The occasions on which foreign policy could be debated in France were strictly limited: and even with the reforms of 1860, imperial policy was defended by ministers not always fully acquainted with information in the Foreign Office. Speeches made on the resumption of debates on the Address, however, were received with special deference. Speaking of French relations with Britain, Billault proclaimed the official view that "Il y a dans cette alliance avec, dans cette entente de deux grands peuples une précieuse garantie pour la paix du monde, et pour ses libertés ...."<sup>2</sup> Baroche was even more explicit in his reference to the connection with England. "Nous sommes à l'état de grande, de large, de noble alliance avec l'Angleterre," he declared, "Nous marchons avec elle quand sa voie est la nôtre; nous marchons seuls quand notre voie se sépare de la sienne..."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXXIII, 89. 4th February 1864.
  2. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], I, 109. Sénat, le 2 mars 1861.
  3. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], I, 278. Corps Législatif, le 12 mars 1861.

Senators and deputies showed less appreciation of the 'alliance': but they did not doubt its existence. "On invoque les grands avantages de l'alliance anglaise" was a typical comment "on nous dit qu'ils doivent nous faire accepter quelques dissidences de vues... Ce sont là sans doute de louables sentiments de conciliation. Mais doivent-ils aller jusqu'à nous faire accepter le sacrifice de nos intérêts propres? ... la France se demande si cette alliance, qui, après tout, reste si précaire, vaut le prix qu'on y met ..."<sup>1</sup> A more extreme opinion was expressed by le marquis de Boissy. ... "L'Angleterre est notre alliée nominale, mais notre ennemie implacable au fond;" he said, "dans toute circonstance nous la trouvons contre nous ..."<sup>2</sup>

During the prorogation of the French Chambers, public references to the 'alliance' in France were exceptional. But in England there was still an opportunity for official reference to it when Parliament was not sitting. Each year an authoritative statement of foreign policy was made on the occasion of the Lord Mayor's inaugural banquet at the Guildhall. Speaking at the ceremony in 1860, Lord Palmerston expressed the hope that the changes introduced by the recently concluded Commercial Treaty would "tend to cement more closely the ties

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], I, 251, 254. Speech by Kolb Bernard in the Corps Législatif, le 11 mars 1861.
  2. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1864], I, 33. Sénat, le 14 décembre 1863.

of friendship and alliance between England and France...."<sup>1</sup>

Another example of the public use of the term is the reference to it in despatches that were deliberately written to meet the possible need for publication. Such despatches were practically unknown in France where the constitution enabled the government to withhold information on its foreign policy. Pressure for the publication of official documents in England, however, could not be safely resisted for long: and some despatches were actually drafted in anticipation of parliamentary interpellation. Thus when Russell wrote to acknowledge Cowley's vindication of his conduct against the attacks made on him in the press, the Foreign Secretary replied in terms designed for a wide audience. Recalling the duties of a British Ambassador in Paris, he emphasised the obligation of "making the alliance of the two Countries cordial by the frankness and sincerity of your language...."<sup>2</sup>

Nor was the term preserved only for public consumption. There were allusions to it in official communications between the British and French Governments, and in private and informal correspondence between the Sovereigns and officials of the two countries. It was used, for instance, in official despatches of which copies were left by the Ambassador of one country with the Foreign Minister of the other. Thus in a despatch

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1. The Times, November 10th 1860.

2. Russell to Cowley, No.144, 8th February 1860, FO 27/1420.

communicated to Lord John Russell, Walewski spoke of his government's object to maintain "aux yeux du Gouvernement Chinois et je pourrais dire aux yeux du monde entier, cette conformité de vues et de sentiments et cette union des deux pavillons qui constatent l'intime et durable alliance des deux pays."<sup>1</sup> The term figured prominently, too, in reported conversations between Ambassadors and the Foreign Ministers or Sovereigns of the Courts to which they were accredited. Lord Cowley, for instance, frequently recorded the use of the word by Napoleon III and his Ministers. "I defy anyone to listen to the Emperor when he is speaking of the English Alliance without attaining the conviction that the preservation of it is that which he has most at heart"<sup>2</sup> he wrote in 1859. In 1863 he reported Drouyn de Lhuy's assertion that "It had been his object again to establish a community of action between Great Britain and France in the defence of right - to have cemented the alliance begun in the great Eastern Question in that which perhaps was of the next greatest importance, the question of Poland."<sup>3</sup> The formal but unofficial correspondence between the Sovereigns of the two countries provides further examples of the use of the word. Queen Victoria regarded it

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1. Walewski to Persigny (copie), le 21 octobre 1859, communicated 28th October 1859, FO 27/1315.
  2. F.A. Wellesley (ed.), The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire, [1923], 189.
  3. Cowley to Russell, No.260, 1st March 1863, FO 27/1487.

as something of an imposition that she should be obliged to write at all to the Emperor of the French.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that her New Year's Greetings to him should have ignored the existence of an 'alliance' between the two Empires. But the Emperor gallantly persisted in his reference to it. Replying to the British Sovereign's congratulations on the opening of 1860, he professed to desire "above all" that the coming year might "draw closer our alliance which has always been fertile in happy results."<sup>2</sup> References to the 'alliance' occur also in the correspondence between Palmerston and Persigny, and between the Emperor and Lord Cowley.

The pervasive character of the assumption that an 'alliance' existed between Britain and France in this period is most strikingly illustrated, perhaps, in the private and confidential communications between Ministers, and in those between Ministers and diplomatic representatives abroad. Without reading in the French archives, it is not possible to form a reliable impression of the extent to which an alliance was recognised in the confidential communications of the Imperial Government. In the British archives, however, there is much interesting evidence of the use of the term in Cabinet Memoranda, Ministerial correspondence, and confidential

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1. G.P. Gooch (ed.) The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell 1840-1878, (1925), II, 270. The Queen to Lord John Russell.
  2. T. Martin, Life of H.R.H. The Prince Consort, [1880], V, 3.

communications between the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Paris. Apprehensive about French designs in the Mediterranean at the end of 1859, Palmerston wrote to Russell in the following terms: "It certainly looks as if our good Ally was meditating something that would not be agreeable to us ..."<sup>1</sup> Gladstone, in a long and closely reasoned letter to the Foreign Secretary on the 3rd January 1860, expressed his considered opinion that "the alliance with France is the true basis of peace in Europe."<sup>2</sup> And on 6th May 1863, Russell wrote privately to Cowley: .. "I am very much satisfied with our present alliance, England, France and Austria ..."<sup>3</sup>

Alliance, therefore, was a term that was instinctively applied to the relationship which existed between Britain and France in this period. Yet there was no apparent justification for the description. There was no treaty engagement between the two powers in 1859 or at any time between 1859 and 1865 which could be considered to constitute an active political alliance. Such an alliance had been contracted in 1854; and its object had been defined in a Military Convention signed by Lord Clarendon and Count Walewski on the 10th April of

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 28th November 1859, G. & D. 22/20.
  2. Gladstone to Russell, private, 3rd January 1860, G. & D. 22/29. Printed in J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, [1905], I, 648.
  3. Russell to Cowley, private, 6th May 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

that year.<sup>1</sup> But although no term had been put to its duration, and Article I had enjoined the High Contracting Parties "to do all that shall depend upon them for the purpose of preserving Europe from the recurrence of the lamentable complications which have now so unhappily disturbed the general peace," their joint responsibility had been practically dissolved by Article VII of the General Treaty of Peace.<sup>2</sup> It is significant, too, that Martens and Cussy should have excluded the Anglo French Convention from a collection of documents, published in Leipzig, in 1857, which purported to give the text of all treaties, conventions, and diplomatic acts then in force.<sup>3</sup>

The absence of any formal ties between the two countries would seem to suggest that the frequent allusions to the alliance were little more than common form: gestures merely, designed to revive something of the intimacy of the Crimean Alliance. It is undoubtedly true that the persistent use of the word was a legacy from the alliance of 1854: and it is equally true that reference to it in public statements and in communications between Britain and France was often little

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1. E. Hertslet, The Map of Europe by Treaty, [1875], II, 1193.
  2. E. Hertslet, The Map of Europe by Treaty, [1875], II, 1250. Treaty of Paris, 30th March 1856.
  3. Le Baron C. de Martens et le Baron F. de Cussy, Recueil, Manuel et Pratique, [Leipzig, 1857] VII.

more than a meaningless courtesy. Indeed, there were a number of occasions on which the term was deliberately exploited for political purposes. Opportunities, not without a comedy of calculation, were specially created for introducing a reference to it. Persigny called upon Palmerston the day before the Lord Mayor's banquet of 1860 to say that he was "ready to go to the Lord Mayor's Dinner To-morrow and to say something about good understanding and alliance between the two Countries provided that he knew beforehand what the Lord Mayor was going to say in proposing the Foreign Ministers and provided that .. [this] ... would be an invitation for Persigny to say what he would wish and would be useful." <sup>1</sup> The "Little Drama" <sup>2</sup> went off well: Persigny referring to Britain with marked cordiality and Palmerston naming the 'alliance'. <sup>3</sup>

But although the term 'alliance' was essentially a mere catchword, and duly turned to account as such for purposes of propaganda, there were also a number of special senses in which it was employed. Most frequently it was used synonymously with 'cordial understanding'. Within this general definition, however, the term assumed many different shades of meaning. It meant one thing to Britain; another to France. And the

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 8th November 1860, G. & D. 22/21.
  2. Palmerston to Russell, private, 12th November 1860, G. & D. 22/21.
  3. The Times, November 10th 1860.

individual interpretations of the two countries varied from time to time in accordance with the political events of the period.

The British conception of the alliance in 1859 was substantially the same as it had been in 1857. On March 1st of that year, Lord Palmerston had written to his Foreign Secretary: ... "the alliance of England and France has derived its strength not merely from the military and naval power of the two states but from the force of the moral principle upon which that union has been founded. Our union has for its foundation resistance to unjust aggression, the defence of the weak against the strong and the maintenance of the existing balance of power."<sup>1</sup> By 1859, however, additional importance had come to be attached to another function of the 'alliance': one to which Russell had no hesitation in referring in the House of Commons on the eve of the Conservative defeat in June 1859: "I declare at once" he stated "that my belief is that they [i.e. the Government] are not disposed .. to maintain that intimate alliance with France on which our influence with France must depend."<sup>2</sup> The Liberal conception of the

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1. E. Ashley, The Life of H.J. Temple Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, II, 125. To Lord Clarendon, 1st March 1857. cf. also Sir Herbert Maxwell, The Life and Letters of George William Frederick, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, [1913], II, 300.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLIV, 386. 10th June 1859.

'alliance', therefore, was twofold: a moral combination for the promotion of peace and justice; an effective instrument for the control of a restless neighbour. After 1860, however, there was a modification in this conception. The annexation of Nice and Savoy put an end to the exclusive character of the connection with France. Speaking in the House of Commons on the 26th March, Russell declared his belief that "however we may wish to live on the most friendly terms with the French Government ... we ought not to keep ourselves apart from the other nations of Europe but that when future questions may arise ... we should be ready to act with them."<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards, this opinion was endorsed by Lord Palmerston in a Cabinet Memorandum. Urging the need for developing closer relations with Austria and Prussia, he declared that intimate association with France had become impossible ... "alliance between England and France" he wrote "can exist only so long as the policy of France is not directed to territorial aggrandisement."<sup>2</sup> But although the exclusive connection was dead, a close relationship persisted. The need for retaining a controlling influence on the action of France was greater than ever: and this constituted the primary function of the 'alliance' which survived. It did not pass unnoticed that the

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 1258. 26th March 1860.
  2. Marquis of Lorne, Viscount Palmerston [1892], p.198. May, 1860.

term was becoming more and more of an anachronism. This provided opportunities for the Opposition, and especially Disraeli, whose plea for retrenchment in June 1862 was couched in the following terms: ... "In this country, protected by 400,000 men and a commanding fleet in the Channel, to say that freemen are in danger of a midnight invasion from cordial allies is a mystification too monstrous for belief."<sup>1</sup>

In France the 'alliance' received a rather different interpretation. Although sometimes described as "l'alliance de la liberté,"<sup>2</sup> it was not regarded as a moral combination in the sense of the British definition. It was not regarded, either, as a means of controlling British policy; nor, of course, was it considered to impose a brake on French policy. On the contrary, it was conceived as a powerful instrument for promoting the interests of both countries, and giving added weight to their diplomacy. "[I]l ne se peut rien faire de grand, en Europe et dans le monde entier" Baroche declared in the Sénat "sans l'alliance de la France et de l'Angleterre."<sup>3</sup> But this early conception of the 'alliance' was rudely shaken by Britain's reaction to the annexation of Nice and Savoy.

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1. G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, [1916], IV, 310. 3rd June 1862.
  2. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], I, 75. Prince Napoleon in the Sénat, 1st March 1861. Cf. Billault on 2nd March 1861, supra p.4.
  3. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862] I, 203, le 6 mars 1861.

It showed that the 'alliance' was incompatible with a vital French interest. "If you disapprove of these annexations which are insignificant in themselves," the Emperor was reported to have said "which are made with the consent of the Sovereign who loses them, and with that of the people whose nationality is changed - is not the inference inevitable that you will object to any expansion of France, however unexceptionable its character?"<sup>1</sup> And so, after 1860, the 'alliance' came to be regarded in France - as in England - as a less intimate connection. But it was still acknowledged. "The English Alliance is of vital importance to me" Prince Metternich reported the Emperor as saying in November 1860, "and I will maintain it in spite of the ill will of a large faction in England."<sup>2</sup> He needed it for the safety of France; and for the success of her diplomacy. In 1863, however, there was another modification in the French conception of the 'alliance'. After the Polish fiasco, Napoleon was finally disillusioned about the value of Britain's diplomatic support: and after the refusal of the Congress proposal, he saw no further prospect of any very cordial cooperation with her. Reporting the substance of a conversation with the Emperor at this time, Lord Dufferin, then a guest at Compiègne wrote:

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1. G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, [1916] IV. 320. Ralph A. Earle to Disraeli, Secret and confidential, April, 1860.
  2. V. Wellesley and R. Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 189. Prince Metternich to Baron Hübner, 3rd November 1860.

"He was constantly talking of the great results which the bona fide English and French alliance might have produced, and as constantly of the extreme improbability of that alliance being able to survive this last shock to its cordiality."<sup>1</sup>

In the following months 'alliance' was a term that was rarely used on the French side of the Channel, and only a continuing respect for British sea power prevented a complete reorientation of French policy. But as soon as Prussian policy in the Danish question was seen in its true colours, the word gradually reappeared in the Imperial vocabulary. In a moment of affability or genuine conviction, Drouyn de Lhuys admitted to Cowley on 20th June 1864 that there was only one alliance of any value - an alliance between England and France. "Each" he was reported to have said "could do a great deal alone - together they could govern the world."<sup>2</sup> And so in echoing the sentiments which Baroche had expressed in the Sénat four years previously, he made a brief attempt to revive something of the earlier conception of the 'alliance'.

Specific instances of Anglo-French co-operation inspired the use of the term 'alliance' in a less nebulous sense. On both sides of the Channel, for instance, the Cobden Treaty was

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1. A. Lyall, The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, [1905], 135. Dufferin to Argyll, 20th December 1863.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private, 20th June 1864, G. & D. 22/60. Printed in F.A. Wellesley (ed.) The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire, [1928], 268.

judged to usher in a period of close 'alliance' between the two countries. During debates on the Treaty in Britain there was much speculation on the nature of that 'alliance'. In his instructions for framing the Treaty, Russell had written to Cowley: ... "they [i.e. H.M.G.] attach a high social and political value to the conclusion of a Commercial Treaty with France ... its significance at the present moment, when the condition of some parts of the Continent is critical would be at once understood and would powerfully reassure the public mind in the various countries of Europe."<sup>1</sup> It was not surprising, therefore, that critics of the Government should have drawn the deduction that the Treaty foreshadowed ten years of identity of policy between the two powers. These suspicions found their most exaggerated expression in a speech in the House of Commons by Mr. Horsman. Referring to the text of the instructions that had been sent to Lord Cowley, he said: "The construction which I put upon it is this, that by the Treaty the great Powers of Europe were to be informed that England and France had come to an understanding as to their common policy in regard to the affairs of Europe; and that especially upon the foremost question which was then agitating men's minds and engrossing the attention of the Cabinets of Europe, the settlement of Italy, there was between them that intimate alliance and close accord which would tend to reassure

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1. Russell to Cowley and Cobden, No.1, 17th January 1860, FO 97/207.

the public mind as to the prospects of peace ... The policy of France," he added, "is the extinction of treaties, aggression, aggrandisement and war. Yet, while the sentiments, the principles and the policy of the two countries are the antipodes of one another, we are invited to form this new political alliance which, we are told, is to have an unmistakable significance in the eyes of Europe."<sup>1</sup> Similar criticism was made in the House of Lords by the Earl of Derby.<sup>2</sup> In reply, the Duke of Newcastle acknowledged the political bearing of the Treaty but denied its political significance.<sup>3</sup> Russell's own interpretation of the connection likely to result from the Treaty was "an alliance of nations which after all is more secure than any mere alliance of Cabinets or Kings."<sup>4</sup>

Less stress was placed on the political aspect of the Treaty in France than in England. The existence of a formidable body of French protectionists made it inevitable that the Imperial Government should wish to rest its primary defence of the agreement on the grounds of economic expediency. But the

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 256, 260. 9th March 1860.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 616. 15th March 1860.
  3. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 638. 15th March 1860.
  4. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 1994. 19th April 1860.

prospect of a closer political alliance between the two countries was by no means omitted from the official sum of its attractions. In his speech at the opening of the legislative session on 1st March 1860, the Emperor declared: .. "Le Traité n'a donc fait qu'avancer l'époque de modifications salutaires et donner à des réformes indispensables le caractère de concessions réciproques destinées à fortifier l'alliance de deux grands peuples."<sup>1</sup>

Ten days later the following statement was published in the official report to the Emperor of the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the Treaty:

.. "Votre Majesté, qui a toujours montré une si ferme volonté de maintenir intacte l'alliance anglaise à travers tant de difficultés et de défiances, n'était certes pas indifférente à cette nouvelle garantie donnée à la paix du monde. Mais elle a compris dès le premier jour de la négociation que ce puissant élément de sécurité ne serait plus qu'éphémère et ne tarderait pas à dégénérer en une cause dissolvante si un intérêt industriel ou commercial pouvait être sacrifié en compensation d'un intérêt politique ..."<sup>2</sup>

The new meaning that has been given to the 'alliance' between France and Britain by the signature of the Treaty was more openly recognised in subsequent debates in the

1. Procès-Verbaux des Séances du Corps Législatif, 1860, I, 5.

2. Le Moniteur, le 11 mars 1860. Rapport à l'Empereur par M. Ex. le président du conseil d'Etat, chargé par intérim du département des affaires étrangères et le ministre de l'agriculture, du commerce et des travaux publics.

Corps Législatif. On 28th April, M. Morin made the following declaration: "Le côté public du traité c'est le renouvellement de notre alliance avec l'Angleterre, alliance qui sert la plus noble de toutes les causes, celle de la civilisation, alliance pour laquelle la France trouve l'appui et sympathie dans la partie la plus active et la plus progressive de la nation anglaise."<sup>1</sup> In the same debate, M. le Baron David laid similar emphasis on the stimulus that had been afforded to the 'alliance' of the two countries by the signature of the Treaty of Commerce: ... "il est heureux" he said "qu'elle soit cimentée par la multiplicité et par l'abondance des relations commerciales."<sup>2</sup> Despite the professions of the Imperial Government, therefore, it could no more escape notice in France, than in England, that the Treaty of Commerce had been primarily inspired by political motives: that it was less a manifestation of the cordiality which existed between the governments of the two countries than an attempt to allay the mounting hostility between their peoples.

The term 'alliance' was also used with special reference to the co-operation of Anglo-French forces in China during the autumn of 1860. On the prorogation of Parliament in August of that year the Speech from the Throne contained

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1. Compte Rendu des Séances du Corps Législatif, Session de 1860, Tome Unique, 253.
  2. Compte Rendu des Séances du Corps Législatif, Session de 1860, Tome Unique, 263.

the following reference to the approaching expedition to Peking: "We are commanded by H.M. to inform you that H.M. regrets the pacific Overtures which by H.M.'s Directions Her Envoy in China made to the Imperial Government at Peking did not lead to any satisfactory Result and it has therefore become necessary that the combined Naval and Military Force which H.M. and Her Ally the Emperor of the French had sent to the China Seas should advance towards the Northern Provinces of China for the purpose of supporting the just Demands of the Allied Powers."<sup>1</sup> The designation of 'ally' was also accorded to the Emperor of the French in the Vote of Thanks to the Forces moved in both Houses of Parliament on the successful conclusion of hostilities.<sup>2</sup> But although the term was thought appropriate to the military and naval cooperation of the two powers, it had no basis in any diplomatic act. The objects of the Far Eastern campaign had been duly concerted between the governments of the two countries: but the results of their deliberations had been embodied in separate instructions to their diplomatic representatives in China. Moreover, although the unsigned 'alliance' was directed towards a common end - the forcible ratification of the Treaties of Tientsin - the motives of the two 'allies' were very different. "Our

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLX, 1833. 28th August 1860.

2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 375, 417. 14th February 1861.

views," Russell had written privately to Cowley on 31st December 1859, " - we for trade, and the French for glory - differ in principle."<sup>1</sup> But Britain did not refuse to gratify the French desire for a military excursion to China on that account. Indeed, she regarded it as an additional reason for her intervention. "As long as we act together," wrote the British Minister in China, "we can check them to a certain extent."<sup>2</sup> His view was fully shared by the British Government.

In France, also, the joint action of the two powers in China was deemed to constitute an 'alliance'. Announcing the success of the French and British forces on the 5th November, the Moniteur referred to the expedition as one in which "les chefs et les soldats des deux nations alliées ont rivalisé d'estime réciproque de valeur et de dévouement."<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Russell was only too well aware, the French motive for participating in the campaign was not so much a desire to promote the development of commercial intercourse with China as to extend support to the catholic missions in China and to demonstrate the prowess of the military and naval forces of France. Significant in this latter respect was the paragraph dealing with the Chinese expedition that was contained in the

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 31st December 1859. (copy) G. & D. 22/103.
  2. Bruce to Hammond, private, 6th February 1860, FO 17/336. Printed in W.C. Costin, Great Britain and China, 1833-1860 [1933], p.310.
  3. Le Moniteur, le 5 novembre 1860. Partie Non Officielle, Paris le 2 novembre.

Address from the Corps Législatif in 1861: "En Chine nos soldats, unis à ceux de la Grande Bretagne ont jeté un lustre nouveau sur nos armes. Semblables aux phalanges antiques, par la force de leur organisation, ils ont frappé au coeur le plus vaste et le plus peuplé des empires."<sup>1</sup>

The Polish Revolution of 1863 provided the occasion for another interlude of close co-operation between Britain and France. From March to October of that year the two powers acted in diplomatic concert to revive the liberties of Poland. The intimacy of their association, however, was modified by the inclusion of Austria, and it was to the relationship of the three powers that Russell assigned the description of "quasi-alliance."<sup>2</sup> The adherence of Austria was equally solicited by both powers. Russell welcomed her presence on account of the restraint that she would impose on the counsels of France. "I much prefer acting with Austria and France to acting with France only," he wrote to Cowley in a private letter on the 28th March, "I imagine French statesmen have the same feeling about us."<sup>3</sup> The French feeling was certainly similar: but it was inspired by motives of a very different order. In seeking the co-operation of Austria in the Polish question, Napoleon looked beyond the immediate issue. He hoped to lay the foundation of

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], II, 168.
  2. Russell to Napier, No.16, confidential, 13th January 1864, FO 65/655.
  3. Russell to Cowley, private, 28th March 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

an intimate union between the two continental powers which should have for its object the revision of the map of Europe. Reporting the conversation in which the Emperor had revealed this intention, Prince Metternich wrote to Count Rechberg on 26th February 1863: "il avoue que nous avons le droit de nous rappeler diverses circonstances de nature à ne pas inspirer une confiance absolue. C'est pour cela qu'il a voulu, dit-il, placer un peu l'Angleterre entre nous. Le mariage de raison qui lie les deux Puissances occidentales dans toutes les grandes questions qui se présentent n'empêche pas selon-lui, une liaison étroite et passionnée entre les deux plus grands Etats du continent ... J'ai essayé [he reported the Emperor to have said] de m'entendre avec la Russie et l'Angleterre et je n'ai pas réussi. Je le dis franchement, j'appartiendrai à la Puissance qui m'y aidera ...."<sup>1</sup>

There were also occasions between 1859 and 1865 when 'alliance' was used in the strict sense of the word to denote a formal diplomatic engagement. During the Polish question, for instance, the idea of such an alliance was broached by France;<sup>2</sup> during the Schleswig-Holstein question it was mooted by Britain.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Fürst Metternich an Graf Rechberg, le 26 février 1863. Printed in Hermann Oncken, Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons III. von 1863 bis 1870 und der Ursprung der Kriegen von 1870-71, [1926], I, 7.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.828, confidential, 27th June 1863, FO 27/1480.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.64, 18th January 1864, FO 27/1517.

Only at one period, however, were both powers simultaneously attracted to such an engagement. This was during negotiations on the Italian question in the latter part of 1859 and the beginning of 1860. In an attempt to free herself from the impractical obligations incurred at Villafranca, France made unofficial overtures for an alliance with Britain in September, 1859.<sup>1</sup> Meeting with no encouragement from the British Government at that time, they were renewed by Prince Napoleon on 17th November.<sup>2</sup> After an interview with the Emperor that evening Cowley drew up a Memorandum outlining the project of a settlement in Italy to which he thought the Emperor could be persuaded to agree. He suggested that if Austria were to withhold her concurrence from the proposal, the British and French Governments might proceed without her "taking perhaps as their rule of conduct the quadruple treaty entered into with Spain and Portugal for the recognition of the existing dynasties in those Kingdoms."<sup>3</sup> The British Government agreed to lend its support to the settlement that was proposed but declined to pledge military aid to France in the event of Austria's renewing the war to enforce the stipulations of the Treaty of Zurich. Such was the Cabinet decision: but Russell

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 4th September 1859, G. & D. 22/20; Cowley to Russell, private, 4th September 1859, G. & D. 22/53.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private, 17th November 1859, G. & D. 22/53.
  3. Cowley to Russell, private, 18th November 1859, G. & D. 22/53.

would have had no scruple in contracting a formal alliance in the sense that France had desired.<sup>1</sup> As rumours of Austrian military activity increased, he took the initiative in proposing to the Cabinet that Britain should enter a formal engagement with France and Sardinia to prevent a settlement being forced on the states of Central Italy by Austrian intervention. Despite the support of Palmerston and Gladstone, a majority of the Cabinet refused their assent to the proposal on the 3rd January. Palmerston thereupon adjourned the meeting for a week in the confident expectation that maturer reflection would bring dissenting members to sounder judgment. In an attempt to further the process, he circulated a Memorandum to the Cabinet on 5th January in which he stated the case in favour of alliance with France and Sardinia. ... "what is the understanding or agreement which we ought to establish with France and Sardinia?", he asked. "Clearly a joint determination to prevent any forcible interference by any foreign power in the affairs of Italy. This, it is said, would be a league against Austria. No doubt it would be as far as regards the interference of Austria by force of arms in the affairs of Italy: and such a triple league would better deserve the title of holy alliance than the league which bore that name."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 6th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
  2. E. Ashley, The Life of H.J. Temple Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, II, 174.

A diminution in Austrian military ardour, however, and an alternative proposal from Persigny, reconciled the two statesmen to the abandonment of the project for a triple alliance. When Thouvenel revived the possibility of an intimate alliance between Britain and France in conversation with Cowley on the 17th February it evoked no sympathetic response from the British Government.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Russell chose to invest the French overture with rather more significance than it really warranted in order to put an end to the recurring suggestions from France that intimate alliance between the two countries would secure an immediate solution of Italian difficulties.

The chief interest in these negotiations for a formal alliance between Britain and France lies in the motives which had led prominent members of both governments to incline towards it. The ostensible object of their co-operation was the defence of Italian liberty against Austrian despotism. But neither power was wholly disinterested. France looked upon alliance with Britain as a welcome means of resolving her difficulties in Italy, and perhaps of bringing about that consolidation of central Italy which would enable her to extort the cession of Nice and Savoy from Sardinia. Britain, on the other hand, was mainly concerned to prevent France from reaping singlehanded the advantages of a second victory over Austria.

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1. Cowley to Russell, Secret and Confidential, 17th February 1860, FO 27/1333.

.. "We cannot" wrote Russell "let Italy be played for by Austria and France without taking part. We should then really establish French influence as paramount in Italy for a century."<sup>1</sup>

The designation of 'alliance', therefore, was a misnomer for the connection which existed between Britain and France in this period. But even if, as Palmerston so eloquently contended, it was a "slipslop expression", a "totally unmeaning term"<sup>2</sup>, its constant application to Anglo French relations in this period was not without significance. It served as an indication of the occasions on which the two powers acted in particularly close accord on a specific issue: and in the frequency of its use, it served as a barometer of their general relations. But an analysis of references to the 'alliance' is not a reliable criterion for establishing the character of their relationship unless the motives which governed their association, as well as the use of the word itself, are also taken into account. Co-operation between the two powers did not always spring from an identity of purpose; more often it was the outcome of policies that were essentially in conflict, to which the designation of alliance was frankly paradoxical. Moreover, repeated references to the 'alliance' were more frequently the indication of a desire for improvement in

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 24th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CVII, 808.  
Printed in E. Ashley, The Life of H.J. Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, [1876], II, 480.

relations that were strained than the spontaneous recognition of prevailing cordiality: absence of such references, more indicative of a relationship that was untroubled than of a desire on the part of either of the two powers to sever their existing connection. When these factors are taken into consideration it becomes apparent that the term 'alliance' was not only a misnomer for the relationship of Britain and France in this period but a particularly misleading anomaly. Whether in relation to the general association of the powers, or to specific instances of co-operation between them, it cloaked a divergence in their interests and principles. It helped to disguise, but was unable to conceal the rivalry and suspicions that were engendered by the international issues in which the fortunes of the two powers were involved between 1859 and 1865.

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE REGIONAL TREND IN THE WORKING OF THE 'ALLIANCE'

The character of British relations with France was practically determined by the degree to which the two powers acted in cooperation or opposition in the various international issues of the period, and by the relative intimacy of their association with the other great powers of Europe. The application of this criterion reveals a regional trend in their relationship. Similar characteristics are apparent in each of three geographical divisions: northern Europe, southern Europe and the Mediterranean, and districts overseas. In the opening years of the period, relations between the two powers were worked out in issues which had the lands bordering on the Mediterranean for their setting.

#### 1. The Mediterranean.

The major international problems in which British and French interests were involved in this region were threefold: the settlement of Italy, the pacification of Syria,<sup>1</sup> and the establishment of a new dynasty in Greece.<sup>2</sup> Apart from these

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1. A question of "extreme importance" - Russell to Cowley, No.745, 27th July 1860, FO 27/1327.
  2. "I am afraid this Greek Succession will prove as great a Bungle as the Spanish Marriages" - Palmerston to Russell, private, 17th November 1862, G. & D. 22/14.

issues of obvious importance, there were a number of minor questions which brought the two powers into contact - questions relatively unimportant in themselves but bearing ultimately upon such vital considerations as the maintenance of the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire in the east and central Mediterranean, of the Moroccan Empire in the west.

British relations with France in these issues had the appearance of infinite variety, ranging from close collaboration to spirited opposition. The cooperation between the two powers comprised differing degrees of intimacy. Occasionally they acted jointly; occasionally in cooperation with a third great power; but most frequently they shared the wider association of all five of the great powers. The extent to which they resorted to prior consultation in anticipation of diplomatic intervention with other powers is a further gauge of their connection; but one that it is not always possible to determine from the archives of a single country.

Perhaps the most striking example of joint cooperation between Britain and France was the negotiations into which the two powers entered at the end of 1859 with a view to discovering a practical substitute for the Italian settlement which had been outlined at Villafranca, and confirmed in all its ambiguity at Zurich. A typical instance of the admission of a third power to the joint counsels of Britain and France was that in which Russia took part in regulating the question of

succession in Greece at the end of 1862. The occasion for intervention by all five great powers was provided by the outbreak of massacres in the Lebanon in 1860.

The significance of these various instances of cooperation from the point of view of the character of British relations with France, turns on the motives which prompted the association of the two powers; on the course their cooperation followed; on the results that it achieved. In attempting to secure the acquiescence of the French Government in a liberal solution of the central Italian problem, Britain not only hoped to forestall the creation of a French puppet Kingdom in Tuscany, but, by increasing and consolidating the strength of Piedmont, to establish an effective bulwark against the infiltration of French influence. Britain's disposition to act with France and Russia in attempting a solution of Greek difficulties in 1862 represented an equally doubtful compliment to the disinterestedness of their policies. Her association with those powers developed naturally out of the obligations which all three had incurred at the time of the establishment of Greek independence: but her eagerness to invoke the self-denying engagement of July 1827 was prompted by fear that France might be induced to countenance the candidature of a Russian prince for the Greek throne. Nor was British cooperation with France over Syria inspired by motives of a higher order. Indeed the British Government

gave their consent to the French proposal for the despatch of foreign troops to the Lebanon only after prolonged discussion in the Cabinet and then with obvious reluctance. Defending the decision against Palmerston's objections, Russell indicated the consequences of an opposite policy. .."Russia would probably join France with might and main," he reasoned, "We have been with Russia against France (1840) and with France against Russia (1854) but we have never had to oppose both, and in so rotten a cause it would be terrible work..."<sup>1</sup>

In each of these questions the ostensible object for which the two powers had combined was duly achieved. The revolution in central Italy was peacefully consummated by fusion with Piedmont; Greece was provided with an innocuous dynasty; the Lebanon was pacified, and as a pledge for the future converted into an autonomous province with a christian governor and a revised system of local administration. Judged solely by its results, cooperation between Britain and France appeared to constitute an effective and satisfactory instrument of diplomacy. Yet a critical investigation of the negotiations which took place over these particular questions leads to a very different conclusion. In each case a solution was delayed, if not imperilled, by the inability of Britain and France to act in cordial cooperation. At the beginning of

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1. Russell to Palmerston, private, 27th July 1860, G. & D. 22/30. Printed in G.P. Gooch (ed.), The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell 1840-1878, [1925], II, 266.

1860, for instance, France suddenly withdrew her support from Russell's four point proposal for the settlement of central Italy in an attempt to supersede it by an alternative plan which harked back to the retention of an independent state in Tuscany. Unknown to the British Government, she attempted to prevail on the northern Courts to press for the assembly of a Conference to which this modified proposal might be submitted. Much incensed at this unforeseen check to a solution to which Austria had appeared resigned and afraid that the new proposal might result in the substitution of French influence in Italy for Austrian, Britain instructed her representative at Turin to declare officially that the British Government considered the French proposals subversive of Italian independence. Her prompt condemnation of the French plan was immediately effective. Cavour refused to entertain it; the British policy of non-intervention regained the ascendent; and the settlement of central Italy, momentarily jeopardised by the breakdown in Anglo-French cooperation, was finally secured.<sup>1</sup> Equally chequered was the course of British cooperation with France and Russia in Greece where negotiations were unduly protracted by the equivocal conduct of the two latter powers in regard to the candidature of the

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1. cf. A.J. Whyte, The Political Life and letters of Cavour 1848-61, [1930].

Duc de Leuchtenberg. In Syria, the cooperation between the two powers was still more superficial. British hostility to the French occupation became such that it endangered the chances of effecting a speedy pacification of the disaffected districts. The more violent her representations, the less France was able to withdraw without sacrifice of honour. Yet the longer the occupation, the more fanatical became the animosity between Druses and Maronites.

In addition to the occasions on which Britain acted in nominal cooperation with France, were a number of instances in which she opposed the diplomacy of the French Government. Her opposition, like her cooperation, varied in intensity. Latent opposition to French designs in the Mediterranean was evinced in secret and confidential despatches to the British Ambassador in Paris. In January 1861, for instance, Russell warned Cowley of intrigues that were on foot to restore a separate kingdom in Naples, to create a new state from the disaffected provinces of the Austrian and Turkish Empires, and to place French princes on the thrones of both. He expatiated on the dangers that the success of these schemes would present to British power in the Mediterranean. "I have no wish," he concluded, "that you should speak to M. Thouvenel on this subject unless specially instructed to do so. He might, with perfectly good faith, deny that he approved of such conspiracies. But it is fit you should know that H.M.G. will

use all their influence to counteract these designs and to make them abortive."<sup>1</sup> British suspicions of French territorial designs in the Mediterranean were the subject of formal representations to the French Government. Shortly after the annexation of Nice and Savoy, lively apprehension was caused in England by fear that Cavour might alienate Genoa or Sardinia to France in return for a further extension of Piedmontese territory in the direction of Venetia, Naples, or Sicily. Palmerston was particularly alive to the serious effect that such an arrangement would have on the balance of power in southern Europe and the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> As a result of his initiative, the French Government were formally asked whether a secret treaty existed between France and Sardinia. Warning was mixed with blandishment. "The government of the Emperor must be aware" Russell wrote, "that such a project would be viewed in the most serious light by Great Britain, and Her

1. Russell to Cowley, No. 51, Secret, 9th January 1861, FO 27/1372.
2. Outlining his objections in a private letter to Russell on 10th July he wrote: "... Genoa in the Hands of the French would lay Italy at the mercy of France, Sardinia given to France would add greatly to the naval Stations and naval Resources of France and if such an arrangement were some fine day started upon us without our having opened our Eyes betimes and having done our best to prevent it we should be laughed at and abused as simpletons whom the Tragi-Comedy of Savoy had been performed to in vain...." Palmerston to Russell, private, 10th July 1860, G. & D. 22/21.

Majesty's Government cannot think that it has been entertained.<sup>1</sup>  
 Still more serious, from the point of view of the relations of the two powers, were the persistent remonstrances of the British Government against actions by France in various parts of the Mediterranean. Her occupation of Rome, for instance, and her sponsorship of de Lessep's project for the construction of the future Suez Canal met with constant and remorseless opposition from the British Government. Most serious of all manifestations of British hostility were the occasions on which Britain reinforced her representations to France by enlisting support from other powers. Particularly significant in this respect was her attempt to assemble a moral coalition at the end of March 1860 to prevent the French annexation of the neutralised districts of Nice and Savoy which, it was considered, would not only endanger the security of Switzerland but furnish France with easy, unrestricted access into Italy.<sup>2</sup>

One basically significant fact emerges from an analysis of these varying types of nominal cooperation and opposition:

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.719, 23rd July 1860, FO 27/1327.
  2. ..."[W]e cannot say in any shape or form" Russell wrote to Cowley, "that we are satisfied to see the southern shore of the Lake of Geneva and the passes of the Simplon and the St. Bernard in the hands of France." Russell to Cowley, private, 5th June 1860, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.

that British relations with France in this region were dominated by suspicion of French designs and by the conviction, in Lord Palmerston's words, that "the Traditional and standing policy of France with Regard to the Mediterranean is aggressive and tending to the spread of French Domination."<sup>1</sup> Several of the examples indicate something further about the character of British relations with France in this region: that the relationship was embittered, on occasion, by the existence of rival diplomatic alignments.

One of Russell's immediate preoccupations on entering the Foreign Office in 1859 was the knowledge that a secret agreement had been reached between France and Russia. Gortchakov's assurance that it contained nothing which could be interpreted as constituting a hostile alliance against England had been publicly disclosed at the hustings during the election campaign. But it was an unsatisfactory assurance - admitting the existence of the agreement whilst giving only a negative indication of its substance - and on the reassembly of Parliament fear was expressed that the understanding might have been inspired by the Treaty of Tilsit, one of the clauses of which had been directed towards establishing

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 27th December 1864,  
G. & D. 22/22.

a monopoly of the Mediterranean for the littoral powers.<sup>1</sup>  
 Russell was less perturbed by the potential danger of such a combination than the want of cordiality it evinced in the attitude of the French Government.<sup>2</sup> Cowley was equally of the opinion that there was nothing to be alarmed at in an understanding between France and Russia.<sup>3</sup> In the following year, however, both were to learn that the agreement was capable of nullifying the diplomacy of the British Government. For it was Russian connivance which, by defeating the British attempt to instigate a diplomatic coalition against France, made possible the French annexation of Nice and Savoy. British suspicions of Franco-Russian intrigue were roused intermittently

1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLIV, 56, 7th June 1859, The Marquess of Normanby; le Comte de Garden, Histoire Générale des Traités de Paix et autres transactions principales entre toutes les puissances de l'Europe. X, 240, Article VIII.
2. ... "The secrecy about the Russian engagement with France is not very consistent with our cordial alliance," he wrote to Cowley in a private letter of 23rd June 1859, "Walewski might as well be reminded that if he wishes the two nations to be friends he ought to put more zeal in the business. Our accounts of the Russian navy do not make them appear formidable but they may be so one day..." Russell to Cowley, private, 23rd June 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
3. .. "It suits them both to have it believed that such an understanding exists but I am convinced that there is nothing alarming in it." Cowley to Russell, private, 24th June 1859, G. & D. 22/53.

on a number of occasions thereafter: on some of which no evidence could be adduced, on some of which no proof was needed. In May 1860, for instance, Britain suspected the Russian proposals for instituting an inquiry into the state of the christian population in the Ottoman Empire to have been previously concerted with France. At the beginning of the following year, French and Russian plenipotentiaries worked together in conference at Paris to procure an extension in the period of French occupation in Syria. In August, 1862, there were rumours that France and Russia had come to a secret agreement about the policy they should pursue at Constantinople on the subject of Servian relations with Turkey. Later in the year Britain was confronted by indications of collaboration between France and Russia in the choice of a candidate for the Greek throne.

Although the British Government was inclined to be sceptical about the range and potency of the Franco-Russian understanding, British policy towards France was undoubtedly influenced by the knowledge of its existence. Uncertain about the objects which France and Russia might be pledged to promote in the East, Britain tended to be more willing to act with France in Mediterranean issues than she would have been otherwise. It was the fear of a combined move by Russia and France, for instance, which won her assent to the despatch

of French troops to Syria.<sup>1</sup> But the Franco-Russian entente was also responsible for influencing British policy in an opposite direction. The need for countering the new combination encouraged Britain to enlist the support of another great power. Her choice fell on Austria. Austria was a continental power, conservative and predominantly catholic; Britain was insular, liberal and protestant. If, as John Bright contended in 1859, a war between England and Austria was as unlikely as a fight between a fish floating in a river and a horse grazing upon its banks,<sup>2</sup> the basis for a close understanding between them seemed to be equally wanting. Despite the obvious differences in their outlook, however, and an understandable reluctance on the part of Austria to provoke the military power of France, the two powers gradually drew together in reply to the muffled challenge from France and Russia. French annexation of Nice and Savoy gave impetus to the tightening of relations between England and Austria. In April 1860, Rechberg proposed the conclusion of a formal alliance to resist any further territorial aggrandisement by France.<sup>3</sup> This Britain declined on the grounds of her traditional objection to binding engagements.<sup>3</sup> A month later, however, she took the

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1. V. Supra p.33.

2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLIV, 220, 9th June 1859.

3. Russell to Loftus, No.124, most confidential, 25th April 1860, FO 7/586.

initiative in establishing an agreement with Austria whereby each power undertook to communicate to the other any proposition it might receive "tending to alter the Territorial circumscription of Europe or to disturb the balance of Power" and to withhold a favourable answer until informed of the views of the other.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter Britain became more and more inclined to act with Austria<sup>2</sup> and especially anxious to exploit the one vital interest they shared in common: respect, amounting almost to reverence for the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Although there were occasions

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1. Russell to Loftus, No.164, confidential, 13th June 1860, FO 7/587; Loftus to Russell, No.358, confidential, 28th June 1860, FO 7/594. This agreement, and a similar one concluded with Prussia, seem to have originated with the Queen. Writing from Aldershot on 13th May 1860, inspired, so Palmerston believed, by the 'Genius Loci', she urged the need for doing "something to secure Europe and ourselves" against France. "The most simple and least dangerous step the Queen can think of" she wrote, "is a union with the German Powers having for its object to watch France, and giving mutual security that no overture made by her to any one of the Powers will be received without being at once communicated to the others ...." (Memorandum by the Queen, 13th May 1860, G. & D. 22/14). Later, it seems, she urged the further suggestion that the powers should agree to refrain from replying to such overtures until after an exchange of views. (Palmerston to Russell, private, 3rd and 5th June 1860, G. & D. 22/21).
  2. Writing privately to Cowley in the midst of negotiations on the subject of Nice and Savoy, Russell commented: "... I fear these Bonapartes will never let us be quiet and if Alexander of Russia has formed an unholy alliance with them the two may give us a great deal of trouble .... for my part I get more and more inclined to act with Austria..." Russell to Cowley, private, 19th May 1860, (copy) G. & D. 22/104.

on which Austria appeared reluctant to incur the displeasure  
of France, <sup>1</sup> her conservative cooperation with Britain in the

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1. During the Syrian crisis in 1861, Prince Metternich admitted to Cowley that although his government agreed in principle with the British view, it could not afford to offend France in a matter of so little importance to Austria. Cowley's private report of this conversation provoked the following official, though confidential retort from Russell:-

"You may inform Prince Metternich that the question of the supply of arms in the Principalities is nothing in our estimation compared to the question of Syria. H.M.G. are making themselves unpopular in the Principalities by their endeavours to return the arms brought from Genoa to that port. If H.M.G. are asked to promote the interests of Austria on the Danube and told at the same time that the interests of H.M.G. in the Mediterranean are as nothing to Austria, Prince Metternich must see that this one sided relation cannot long continue and that H.M.G. must treat Austrian interests as matters of indifference to Great Britain.

But H.M.G. have always been under the impression that the maintenance of the Turkish Empire and the prevention of the acquisition of its Provinces by powerful European States was an object in regard to which the Austrian Government considered itself as having a great and direct interest and it is not easy to see how, if that be so, the Austrian Govt. can maintain that it has no interest in preventing Syria from falling under the dominion of France.

It is manifest that the transfer of Syria to France would soon be followed by an extension of French domination to other parts of Asia Minor; that the example thus set by France with the support of Russia would soon be followed in Europe by Russia with the support of France; and the Austrian Govt. would ere long find that vital interests of Austria had been sacrificed by the weakness and short sightedness which her Government would have applied to the consideration of the Syrian Question."

Russell to Cowley, No.215, confidential, 'Not to be sent Abroad', 21st February 1861, FO 27/1373/215.

eastern Mediterranean stood in striking contrast to the more adventuresome policy of France and Russia in that region. Indeed the Anglo-Austrian connection became almost as distasteful to France, as the Franco-Russian association to Britain.

British relations with France in the Mediterranean were further impaired by the knowledge that British policy was suspect in France. French suspicions were rarely the subject of direct representations to the British Government, but they were freely mentioned in conversation with the British Ambassador and no less freely referred to in public statements to the French Chambers. Resentment at British opposition to the settlement of Villafranca, for instance, as well as British hostility to the French occupation of Rome was openly deplored by government representatives in the Sénat and Corps Législatif.<sup>1</sup> In the course of a conversation with Cowley, Drouyn de Lhuys referred to the popular belief in France that Britain was scheming to set a prince of British extraction on the throne of Greece with the object of establishing a jumping-off ground for a life and death struggle with Russia. His disclaimers left the British Ambassador in no doubt that he shared the general opinion.<sup>2</sup> Senators and

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], II, 151, Billault, Corps Législatif, le 22 mars 1861; [1863], II, 128, Billault, Corps Législatif, le 12 mars 1862.

2. Cowley to Russell, No.8, Most Confidential, 2nd January 1861, FO 27/1484.

deputies in the French Chambers subscribed to the conviction that Britain was seeking to establish predominant influence in Sicily if not to acquire formal possession of the island.<sup>1</sup> Similar suspicions were revealed in regard to Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The effect of all this resentment was to stimulate a policy of counter-encroachment on the part of the French Government and so to add to the already considerable sum of jealousy between the two powers. Indeed, Drouyn de Lhuys was apparently frank in his admission that the good conduct of France in the Mediterranean was not a little dependent on her interpretation of British action in that area. "His object," Cowley reported, "would be to act cordially with you and you would much facilitate his endeavours if you drew it mild in Italy. He did not want to make conditions - but he told you the exact truth ...."<sup>3</sup>

Cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual distrust is sufficiently difficult if the suspicions entertained on either

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1. Compte-Rendu des Séances du Corps Législatif, Session de 1860, tome unique, 1040, M. le Baron David, le 13 juillet 1860.  
Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1862] I, 247, M. Kolb Bernard, Corps Législatif, le 11 mars 1861.  
Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1862] I, 182, M. le Baron Bourgoing, Sénat, le 20 février 1862.
  2. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1864] II, 128, M. Hubert Delisle, Sénat, le 18 décembre 1863.
  3. Cowley to Russell, private, 7th November 1862, G. & D. 22/57.

side are unfounded; when they are in fact justified it becomes infinitely more so. That the British Government was hypersensitive to the moves of French diplomacy in the Mediterranean is undoubtedly true. Palmerston himself was particularly allergic to signs of French activity in this area. His private letters abound in the wildest accusations against the French Government. At different times in this period he stated his opinion that France was intent upon disrupting Turkey,<sup>1</sup> occupying Constantinople,<sup>2</sup> and maintaining a military Tête-de-Pont<sup>3</sup> in Rome. But these accusations were the outpourings of an unusually ebullient spirit. It is improbable that they represented his considered judgment: far more likely that they were intended to keep the Foreign Office on the alert. Russell, moreover, was less extreme in his mistrust of French designs in the Mediterranean: and as a result the suspicions that were sufficiently credited to become the inspiration of government policy were not, so far

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 31st July 1861, G. & D. 22/21.
  2. Palmerston to Russell, private, 8th August, 1860, G. & D. 22/14.
  3. Minute by Palmerston, 5th September 1861, FO 391/7.

as published sources reveal, much in error. Britain was undoubtedly justified in suspecting France of desiring to establish a satellite power in Italy<sup>1</sup> if she was mistaken in saddling the French Government with territorial designs in Genoa, Sardinia and Sicily. She was justified, too, in believing that the French occupation of Rome was influenced by political motives: for although it is unlikely that France maintained an army in Rome for the strategic advantage it gave her in the centre of the Mediterranean, still less for the opportunity it afforded her of promoting the return of Francis II, it seems certain that the primary object of her occupation was to preserve the very considerable influence she wielded over Catholics in the Mediterranean and beyond as 'la Fille aînée de l'Eglise'.<sup>2</sup> Nor was the British Government mistaken in believing that France sought to extend her influence in the East by affording support to the allegedly christian population of the Turkish Empire. Such

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1. Vide Mémoire addressed by Napoleon III to Walewski on the eve of war against Austria in 1859. Emile Ollivier L'Empire Libéral [1898] III, 537-542.
  2. This was acknowledged by Billault in a speech to the Corps Législatif on 12th March 1862. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863] II, 126.

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was her avowed intention in Syria where the British Government was certainly justified in suspecting her of a desire to establish predominant influence if over-zealous in crediting her with motives of territorial ambition. The justice of British suspicions of French activity in Greece cannot be finally determined without access to the French archives. It seems probable, however, that France had no desire to promote a claimant who would be objectionable to Britain; that her tolerance of the Duc de Leuchtenberg was inspired by jealousy of Prince Alfred. And certainly the intrigue to establish a French or Italian prince on the throne of Greece - never very seriously regarded, however, in England - seems to have been fomented by Bourée in liaison with Drouyn de Lhuys rather than by any design of the Emperor himself.

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1. Reporting a conversation with Thouvenel on 28th January 1861, Cowley represented the French Foreign Minister to have said: .. "There is not a post which arrives from Syria that does not bring petition upon petition to the Emperor for continued protection and it is difficult to abandon altogether these people who have at all times looked to us, for I will not deny that we place a certain value in the preservation of our influence over the Maronites. .."  
Cowley to Russell, No.152, 28th January 1861, F.O. 27/1384.
2. It was Cowley's view that Bourée "would support the devil himself" sooner than it should appear that British influence was uppermost in Greece. Cowley to Hammond, private, 18th December 1862, FO 396/5. Russell also attributed French intrigues in Greece to Bourée, adding however "I fear Drouyn himself stirs the cauldron."  
Russell to Cowley, private, 6th May 1863 (copy)  
G. & D. 22/105.

British suspicious that France planned to advance her policy in cooperation with Russia were fully grounded. She had signed a secret treaty with the Russian Government in January 1859<sup>1</sup> which envisaged joint action in the east in return for a pledge of Russian neutrality in event of war in Italy. That agreement was subsequently reinforced by other diplomatic acts: by a Memorandum in September 1860,<sup>2</sup> by a secret protocol in August 1862:<sup>3</sup> yet from the published material at present available it appears that Britain was right in judging that France had no intention of rewarding Russia for her services in Italy by any very substantial return in eastern coin. Her reaction to the Russian proposal for remonstrating with the Porte about the condition of the christian population of the Ottoman Empire in May 1860 was sufficient evidence of that. Indeed France had succeeded in obtaining the neutrality of Russia in war with Austria, her assent to the annexation of Nice and Savoy, her diplomatic backing in Syria, as well as a potential acquiescence in the general diplomacy of France in exchange for the vaguest

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1. Vide. B.H. Sumner, "The Secret Franco-Russian Treaty of 3rd March 1859," English Historical Review, XLVIII, [1933], 65-83.
  2. F. Charles-Roux, Alexandre II, Gorchakov, et Napoléon III [1913] 299.
  3. T.W. Riker, The Making of Roumania - a study of an international problem, 1856-1866, [1931] 382 note.

insinuations of cooperation in the East. And even here there was little prospect of any very cordial alliance for the only bond between the two powers was the negative one of contempt for the Turk. In any attempt to redraw the political frontiers of the Ottoman Empire it was obvious that French championship of the Catholic population would come into conflict with Russian patronage of the Orthodox christians. The French Government, however, showed no inclination to precipitate a radical solution of the eastern question in this period: and Russell showed a just appreciation of the value of the entente to France and its menace to Britain when, in a private letter to Grey, the chargé d'affaires, on the 3rd November 1864, he expressed his misgiving about Morny's inclination to revive the connection with Russia. "Now, mind," he wrote, "the alliance between France and Russia is the worst thing that can happen for us on the continent of Europe - not indeed threatening our safety, but injurious, very, to our influence."<sup>1</sup>

France's suspicions of British policy were largely the outcome of exasperation at the obstacles deliberately strewn in her path by Britain. Some of them, on that account, were hopelessly wide of the mark: England had no more intention

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1. Russell to William Grey, private, 3rd November 1864, (copy), G. & D. 22/106.

of acquiring Sicily<sup>1</sup> than of Egypt nor of founding a dynasty in Greece. But her policy of non-intervention in Italy was nicely judged to raise her influence in the central Mediterranean at the expense of France and her excessive solicitude for the rights of the Porte was calculated to bring about a similar result in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

British relations with France in this region, therefore, suffered for the most fundamental of all reasons: that the interests of the two powers were not only dissimilar but conflicting. Both had a deliberate, integrated, Mediterranean policy. Britain had trading interests to protect in the Mediterranean and beyond; she had imperial possessions whose defence in time of war depended on her being able to retain undisputed communication with the east by way of the Ottoman Empire. She was determined that the new forces which were conspiring to change the territorial possession of lands bordering the Mediterranean should not diminish the influence which she had established in that sea. She disclaimed any desire for predominant influence, stipulating only for a position of equality with France.. But she saw nothing incon-

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1. "The lies about Sicily respecting us are hardly worth notice," Russell wrote to Cowley on 15th May 1860, "When the Genoese offered themselves to Louis XI he said: 'You give yourselves to me and I give you to the Devil.' Our reply to the Sicilians would not be so uncivil, but equally negative." Russell to Cowley, private, 15th May 1860, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.

sistent between this and the desire to maintain a superior  
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 naval force in Mediterranean waters.

Britain's resolve to prevent political developments in this region from undermining the balance of power and weakening her own position brought her into immediate conflict with France. For France, it seems, was intent upon turning the new forces of liberalism and nationalism to her own account. In giving military support to the Italians, and diplomatic support to the subject races of the Ottoman Empire, it would appear that she aimed also at extending her influence in the Mediterranean. Her interest in this region was not only economic and strategic. It

1. It is interesting to compare a minute written by Lord Palmerston in 1864 with a postscript to a letter of his written three years previously. The former was provoked by the intrigues of Beauval in Tunis:-

"Lord Cowley might usefully state to Drouyn - That in all Parts of the world in which France does not pretend to paramount Influence, English and French agents get on well together. But that in all Parts of the Countries bordering the Mediterranean, French agents assume that France and French influence ought to be paramount and as English agents assert their right to be on an Equality with the French there is a perpetual struggle ..."  
 8th May 1864, FO 27/1529/46.

The latter was inspired by the French proposal for European intervention in Syria:-

"As to the number of Ships to be stationed in the Mediterranean we ought if possible to be stronger there than the French. Do you know how many Liners they have there?" .... Palmerston to Russell, private, 20th July 1860, G. & D. 22/21.

was also the result of something less tangible: the conception of the Mediterranean as a kind of native preserve, a sea washing the shores of France, Algeria, and those parts of the Ottoman Empire to whose catholic populations France extended a jealous and traditional protection. To translate this conception into reality - to establish French hegemony in the Mediterranean, and convert it into a French lake - would appear to have been no less an object of policy with Napoleon III than it had been with Napoleon I.<sup>1</sup> It was not, of course, an ambition which could be publicly avowed so that evidence for it is bound to be scanty. But it was considered as one of the dominant ideas in the Emperor's mind at the beginning of the period by Cowley, who, at that time, may perhaps be regarded as a contemporary observer well qualified to judge.<sup>2</sup> Its advocacy by members of the French Chambers subsequently would seem to indicate its force as a national aspiration.<sup>3</sup> And it had apparently been all but acknowledged in words attributed

1. c.f. Albert Pingand "La Politique Exterieurle du Second Empire", Revue Historique, [1927], CLVI, 41-68.
2. Cowley to Russell, No.53, confidential, 27th June 1859, FO 27/1298. Cowley was well disposed to the Emperor at this time and had had an opportunity of watching him closely since 1852.
3. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, [1862], 244, M. Koenigswarter, Corps Législatif, le 11 mars 1861; [1863], 179, M. Lefébure, Corps Législatif, le 9 février 1863.

to Napoleon III in 1857 by Bismarck, and recorded by his son.<sup>1</sup>

In the Mediterranean, therefore, Britain and France pursued policies which were essentially conflicting. Yet it is significant that the only substantial rivalry between them was confined to the opening years of the period. Their conflict reached a climax in 1861; it persisted, though on a lesser scale, in the following year; it was reawakened, briefly, by disturbances in Tunis in 1864. But after the Franco-Russian understanding had foundered on the Polish question at the beginning of 1863, events in the Mediterranean ceased to have the same vital repercussions on international relations. The centre of diplomatic activity shifted from the Mediterranean to the north of Europe: and it was primarily in that region that relations between Britain and France were then shaped.

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1. "Je ne dis pas que je veux faire de la Méditerranée un lac français," Napoleon III was reported to have said, mais pourtant à peu près la même chose." Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914 [1922], VI, 102-3.

### CHAPTER III.

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#### THE REGIONAL TREND IN THE WORKING OF THE 'ALLIANCE'

##### 2. Northern Europe.

In contrast to the many and varied issues in which Britain and France were involved in the Mediterranean, there were only two major questions which called for their intervention in northern Europe: those of Poland and Schleswig-Holstein. Sympathy for the Poles and Danes was a common sentiment on either side of the Channel so that the solution of these problems seemed to offer the fairest prospect of cooperation between the two countries. France took the initiative in proposing intervention in Poland; Britain was responsible for suggesting joint measures in Schleswig-Holstein. But the alignment of powers they endeavoured to establish in each case was conspicuously impotent: for in this region, as in the Mediterranean, the interests of the two countries were fundamentally irreconcilable.

The conflict of interest in northern Europe originated with the Treaties of Vienna. The pushing back of the French frontiers created an inevitable grievance in France, and an inevitable source of potential discord in Anglo-French relations. But the question of the Rhine remained on the whole a latent issue between the two powers until the opening of

this period. Russell had scarcely entered the Foreign Office in 1859 before rumours reached him that France intended to extort the cession of Nice and Savoy from Sardinia. He immediately warned the French Government that if Savoy were annexed to France "it will generally be supposed that the left bank of the Rhine and the 'natural limits' will be the next object and thus the Emperor will become an object of suspicion to Europe and kindle the hostility of which his uncle was the victim,"<sup>1</sup> Walewski's assurance<sup>2</sup> that the Emperor had abandoned all idea of annexing Savoy was received with a good deal of relief; but Russell was careful to give publicity to it in the House of Commons and to construe it as an indication that the Emperor did not intend to make "any addition whatever"<sup>3</sup> to the territory of France. On this note of optimism, British speculation about French designs on the Rhine subsided. But not for long. When the French project of annexing Nice and Savoy was revived in the following year, Russell repeated

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.56, 5th July 1859, FO 27/1284.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.145, confidential, 8th July 1859, FO 27/1299.
  3. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLIV, 1052, 12th July 1859.

the warning he had given in July.<sup>1</sup> When, a little later, Thouvenel attempted to justify French claims by alluding to the Treaty of 1814,<sup>2</sup> the British Government pronounced the reference disquieting. "For other cessions on other frontiers of France were made in 1815 and the plea now put forward of the severity of the Treaty of 1815, if admitted, might be used in support of other arrangements which might be proposed and which might alarm other susceptibilities."<sup>3</sup> After the transaction had been completed, Cowley warned Russell privately that the Emperor could be expected to make constant efforts to secure the peaceful revision of the map of Europe; that in particular he would be likely to incite Prussia to extend her territory in the north in order to obtain compensation for France on the Rhine.<sup>4</sup> Russell responded with a counter-warning

1. ... "the question of the annexation of Savoy would be regarded not so much as composing past troubles as raising the elements for new storms. Natural frontiers - the Alps and the Rhine - the repetition of the history of long and bloody wars - the commencement of a new struggle between France and Europe, such are the ideas which would pass through men's minds at the announcement of such an acquisition." Russell to Cowley, No.62, Seen by the Cabinet, 28th January 1860, FO 27/1322.
2. Cowley to Russell, No.87, confidential, 5th February 1860, FO 27/1332.
3. Russell to Cowley, No.114, 13th February 1860, FO 27/1323. At the request of the French Government, (communicated in Cowley's despatch of 18th February - No.144, confidential, FO 27/1333 -) this extract was withheld from publication, as well as Thouvenel's reference to the Treaties of 1814 and 1815, to which it was a reply. (Accounts and Papers Vol. LXVII, [1860], pp.73, 82).
4. Cowley to Russell, private, 2nd May 1860, G. & D. 22/54. Extract quoted in Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 182.

of his own: "I think ... that you should say that without having instructions you know full well from the temper of the English people that either the present Ministry would resist such a scheme of spoliation or if they should fail to do so they would be succeeded by Lord Derby who would have the whole nation at his back."<sup>1</sup>

These warnings indicate a heightened consciousness in Britain of the potential divergence between herself and France. In suspecting that the Emperor might follow up the annexation of Nice and Savoy with a move to the Rhine, the British Government were no doubt influenced by prejudice and fear. The presence of a Bonaparte on the throne of France made them over credulous when rumours of French aggressive designs were in circulation: and their conviction that any extension along the German section of the French frontier would endanger the security of Britain made them doubly cautious. But their apprehension was also roused by a number of more substantial factors. The apparent surprise and resentment with which France received British objections to the annexation of Nice and Savoy<sup>2</sup> did not reflect any great reverence for the existing treaty settlement. Nor were the arguments which the French Government cited in support

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 4th May 1860 (copy) G. & D. 22/104.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.87, 5th February 1860, FO 27/1332; Cowley to Russell, No.144, confidential, 18th February 1860, FO 27/1333.

of that transaction calculated to allay suspicion. Many were of a general nature, equally valid for the justification of other projects of expansion. One of the most alarming, perhaps, was Thouvenel's contention that the decision to annex Nice and Savoy had been precipitated by popular agitation in the press: <sup>1</sup> for it was followed shortly afterwards by the appearance of pamphlets urging aggression on the Rhine. Moreover, the official denials <sup>2</sup> that France

1. Cowley to Russell, No.144, confidential, 18th February 1860, FO 27/1333.
2. "As to the frontier of the Rhine," Cowley reported Thouvenel to have said on 2nd February 1860, "everybody knew that that idea had long been exploded in France. It had existed so long as she had not recovered her military reputation but the place which France had occupied in Europe since the accession of the Emperor had reconciled her to her territorial limits." Cowley to Russell, private, 3rd February 1860, G. & D. 22/54.

Thouvenel emphasised that this was a personal opinion for he had not had an opportunity of discussing the matter with the Emperor since his appointment. But he reiterated it as an official opinion shortly afterwards. .. "he went into some details to prove that there existed no notion whatever of extending the French frontier towards the Rhine. He said that since 1815 the separation of Belgium from Holland and the erection of the former into a neutral Kingdom covered a large part of the French frontier which had previously been exposed; and that in fact the only open country still remaining was well protected by the fortresses of Metz and Strasbourg. There was therefore no sufficient reason for desiring an extension of frontier towards the Rhine." Cowley to Russell, No.144, confidential, 18th February 1860, FO 27/1333).

intended to expand her territory to the Rhine lost much of their effect owing to persistent rumours to the contrary. Loftus reported that one of his colleagues in Vienna had been informed by Moustier, the French Ambassador, that the Emperor had indicated to him, whilst on leave, the necessity of rectifying the French frontiers in the direction of Landau, Saarbruck, Saarlouis, and the Palatinate.<sup>1</sup> Cowley received similar reports from his colleagues;<sup>2</sup> and Palmerston was told by Persigny that if Germany were to be united in one state, France would undoubtedly think it essential for her safety to demand an extension of territory towards the Rhine.<sup>3</sup>

The precedent afforded by the French annexation of Nice and Savoy was sufficient to justify the British Government in believing that the Emperor would not scruple to invent a pretext for extending his territory if such were his object. But the reports of his intentions were conflicting, and of questionable validity. It was not surprising that Thouvenel's disclaimers should have inspired the British Government with little confidence. If the Emperor had formulated the intention

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1. Loftus to Russell, No.228, Most Confidential, 19th April 1860, FO 7/592. Printed in Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 377.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private, 2nd May 1860, G.& D.22/54. Extract quoted in: Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 182.
  3. Minute by Lord Palmerston, 22nd February, 1860, FO 391/7.

of going to the Rhine, it was by no means certain that he would have informed his Foreign Minister. And even if Thouvenel had been aware of such a plan he would have been unlikely to have disclosed it to the representative of a country whose immediate reaction would have been to devise ways and means of making it miscarry. But the validity of the reports which credited the Emperor with designs on the Rhine was scarcely less questionable. Statements attributed to the Emperor were received at second hand, sometimes at third: and even if they had been accurately reported they might have been indicative of a fleeting fancy rather than a fixed intention. Statements of other Frenchmen, however influential, were no more than individual expressions of opinion.

If British sources contain insufficient evidence for establishing the justice of Britain's suspicion that the Emperor harboured an intention of overstepping his boundaries - and it is very possible, of course, that social contacts provided the British Government with indications beyond the reach of the historian - it is questionable whether material in the French archives would be able to throw any conclusive light on the subject. Whether from motives of shame or cunning an aggressive intention is rarely committed to paper, even in the most secret of chancelleries: and it is only when the intention is transformed into action that it can be proved to have existed at all.

But although it is impossible to deduce any certain facts about the Emperor's intentions from material in the British archives, it is significant that the reports which represented the Emperor as intent upon 'rectifying' his frontiers should have reached the British Government from a number of independent sources. It is significant too that the apparent revelations should have been withheld from British diplomats, and made only to representatives of powers who might well have been supposed less hostile to the project or less able to resist it. Both these factors go some way towards justifying the British Government's assumption that a divergence of interest existed between Britain and France, and their apprehension that subsequent international issues would precipitate it.

British fears were not realised until diplomatic activity became centred in northern Europe at the beginning of 1863. In the intervening years, however, speculation about French designs on the Rhine did not entirely subside. It continued to flourish as a favourite topic of private correspondence between Cowley and Russell: and although Cowley's information about the Emperor's intentions was necessarily limited - based as it was on hearsay or the opinions of those who were believed to enjoy the Emperor's confidence - it was nevertheless valuable in showing the extent to which Imperial circles, and the general public in France were preoccupied by

thoughts of the Rhine. His report of a conversation with Walewski in July 1860 is a curious yet typical example of the sort of intelligence with which he regaled the Foreign Secretary. In it, he represented Walewski, who had just returned from a visit to Fontainebleau, to have said that the Emperor had been endeavouring to raise the Eastern Question for months previously; that his one object in doing so had been to obtain the Rhine for France in return for acquiescing in the transfer of the Danubian Principalities to Austria. "It is clear to me," Cowley added in comment, "from what Walewski said, and what I have heard from Paris that this is the Emperor's principal dream. If the Eastern Question comes to a crisis he will say to Europe - do what you like - place whom you will at Constantinople and elsewhere, but give me Belgium and the Rhine."<sup>1</sup> Russell was disposed to agree in this interpretation of Imperial policy. "It shows what I always supposed," he wrote in reply, "that the Rhine is the darling object in the Imperial mind, and not the East."<sup>2</sup> Palmerston was equally convinced that the Rhine was Napoleon's main objective; but he differed from Cowley and Russell in thinking that an attempt would be made to secure it by force. Without disclosing the grounds for his belief, he informed

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1. Cowley to Russell, private, 13th July 1860, G. & D. 22/55.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 14th July 1860 (copy), G. & D. 22/104.

Russell at the beginning of 1862 that he expected the Emperor to make war on a grand scale in the following Spring with the double object of obtaining Venetia for Italy and the Rhine for France.<sup>1</sup> In reply to Russell's request for an opinion on this forecast, Cowley embodied his views in a Memorandum<sup>2</sup> which was subsequently circulated to the Cabinet. He agreed that it would be idle to suppose that the Emperor did not desire to associate his name with the restitution of what the French were pleased to call the "natural limits" of France. But he did not think that the Emperor intended to set about it by aggression. The bases on which he rested his contention offer a compelling illustration of the difficulty of reaching any definite conclusion about French designs from British sources. Uncertainty about the British attitude towards an attack on the Rhine was one argument which he thought would make the Emperor pause. This was reasonable enough. But the fact that none of the Frenchmen with whom he was acquainted had ever spoken to him about the restitution of French frontiers by force was obviously a deficient argument: for it was quite conceivable that they would have refrained from discussing such an eventuality with a British Ambassador. Nor could much solid comfort be derived from Cowley's observation that

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 8th January 1860 (copy), G. & D. 22/105.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private. Memorandum, 10th January 1862 G.&D.22/57. Printed in full Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III [1934], 200.

he had never come across "a man of less decision of character, of more indolent disposition, or more inclined to wait upon events instead of creating them" than the Emperor.

But despite the prognostications of Lord Palmerston, the Spring of 1862 came and went without any aggressive move from France. It was not until February, 1863 that her action was suspect. On the 24th of that month, the French Ambassador communicated to Russell a proposal that Britain, France and, if possible, Austria should present identic notes at Berlin, remonstrating against the signature of the Alvensleben Convention by which Prussia had undertaken to give certain assistance to Russia in suppressing the Polish insurrection.<sup>1</sup> Russell did not think the Convention "a peg big enough to hang an invasion of the Rhine provinces upon";<sup>2</sup> but the Queen was "terribly alarmed" by the French proposals, and far from satisfied with Palmerston's attitude to them. She despatched a frantic note to Lord Granville her confidant in the Cabinet: "The Queen shudders at the very thought of what, if we are not very careful, .... we may find ourselves plunged into! The proposals of France would inevitably bring us into collision with Prussia and we should have a French army on the Rhine before we could turn round."<sup>3</sup> But the royal

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1. Baron Gros to Lord Russell, 2nd March 1863, FO 27/1509.

2. Russell to Cowley, private, 26th February (copy) G. & D. 22/105.

3. Queen Victoria to Earl Granville, 23rd February 1863 (copy) - Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, [1926], I, 66-7.

fears had been roused unnecessarily - at least so far as Palmerston was concerned. He was quite ready to believe that French policy was dictated by motives of aggrandisement,<sup>1</sup> and in full agreement with the Cabinet's decision to "throw cold water"<sup>2</sup> on the French proposals. Delay, however, occurred. A reply had been agreed on the 25th February, but it was not until three days later, after a second meeting of the Cabinet,<sup>3</sup> that it was eventually sent to Paris. The delay does not seem to have been caused by any misgiving about the wisdom

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1. Earl Granville to Queen Victoria, 24th February 1863, Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, [1926], I, 67.
2. Earl Granville to Queen Victoria, 25th February 1863, Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, [1926], I, 69.
3. Russell to Cowley, No.306, confidential, 28th February 1863, FO 27/1477.

of separating British policy from French;<sup>1</sup> but it contributed to the irritation which the terms of the British reply provoked in France. They were irritating because evasive. The reply made no direct reference to the project of identic notes. Instead, it enclosed a copy of a very mild despatch about the Alvensleben Convention which Britain was to send to Berlin

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1. It seems rather to have been the result of uncertainty about the Austrian attitude towards the Polish question. When Russell informed Cowley privately on the 25th February that the Cabinet had agreed on a reply to the French proposals, he stated that this would be sent off on the following day "if your despatch does not alter our views" (G. & D. 22/105, (copy)). He referred to a despatch which Cowley had outlined in a private letter of 24th February but was unable to draft officially until the 25th (G. & D. 22/59). It reached the Foreign Office on the 26th, and reported Prince Metternich's private opinion that Austria might be persuaded to throw in her lot with France and England in the Polish question if advised to do so by the British Government. (FO 27/1487/238 Most Confidential). It may well be that this intelligence prompted Russell to withhold the draft reply to France and resubmit it to the Cabinet on the 28th. There seems to be no record of this original draft. But it is possible that it was identical with a draft of the 28th which bears an alteration in Russell's hand; and possible, too, that the alteration was the result of the Cabinet meeting on that day. For it concerned the attitude Britain was prepared to adopt towards Austria in the Polish question. The original passage suggested that in deference to representations received from Count Apponyi Austria should not be invited to join a démarche to Russia on behalf of Poland, but that she should merely be informed of the course to be taken by the Western Powers. The final version, however, was as follows: "HMG will be .... ready to ask Austria, as well as other Powers, Parties to the Treaty of Vienna to concur in the steps which Great Britain and France are about to take at St. Petersburg." (FO 27/1477/306, Confidential).

with the explanation that it had already been drafted when the French proposals were received. As the British Government had been warned of the probability of a French démarche as early as the 21st February,<sup>1</sup> the evasion was as palpable as it was naive.

Subsequent reports from Paris showed that British fears about the motives of French policy in the Polish question had not been entirely unfounded. Those which disclosed the substance of French overtures to Austria were, perhaps, the most significant. Based on 'reliable sources', and the personal testimony of Bourqueney and Metternich, they revealed that the Emperor had spoken of territorial compensation in proposing an alliance for the reconstitution of Poland. "Prince Metternich has no doubt that floating visions of the frontier of the Rhine are mixed up with vague ideas of Polish independence," Cowley wrote in a secret despatch of the 27th February, "though it does not appear that H.M. allowed any expression to escape him for which he could be fairly called to account."<sup>2</sup> Other reports confirmed that official circles in France were becoming more and more preoccupied by thoughts of war and the Rhine: and that similar ideas were pervading the general public. In an interview with Drouyn de Lhuys on the 12th March, the British chargé d'affaires received the impression that the

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.207, confidential, 20th February 1863, FO 27/1486.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.255, Secret, 27th February 1863, FO 27/1487.

Foreign Minister was deeply disappointed at having failed to secure British cooperation in a project which might have brought material gains to France. He was convinced that "(h)e [i.e. Drouyn de Lhuys] regrets the loss of the opportunity which was offered by the Petersbourg Convention, which he said in so many words was 'un incident duquel nous aurions dû profiter'<sup>1</sup>" Cowley wrote that he had good reason to believe that the Emperor had approved a reference to himself in the report of the Committee of the Senate appointed to consider petitions on behalf of Poland as a Prince who had shown on more than one occasion "qu'il ne recule pas au besoin devant une guerre juste et nécessaire."<sup>2</sup> And Grey was convinced that with every Frenchman he met "sympathy for Poland"<sup>3</sup> was but a pretty expression for a desire of the Rhine.

Indeed, the 'caucus' of Paris became so vociferous on the subject of the Rhine that the Emperor saw fit to reassure the British Government about his intentions. Cowley was invited to an audience on the 19th March and in his report stated that he had received the most positive declaration that the Emperor had no thoughts whatever of obtaining the frontier of the Rhine. His own rejoinder, however, illustrated the

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1. Grey to Russell, No.19, confidential, 12th March 1863, FO 27/1488.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.298, confidential, 15th March 1863, FO 27/1488.
  3. Grey to Russell, private, 13th March 1863, G. & D. 22/59.

the necessary inadequacy of any such declaration: "I responded that I was quite certain that H.M. would not state that which he did not believe but that I could not forget that public opinion in France had forced him to take possession of Nice and Savoy against assurances previously given, and that public opinion might also insist on the acquisition of other advantages were France again to be engaged in successful hostilities."<sup>1</sup>

Russell and Cowley regarded his assurances as satisfactory for the time being: and they were relieved to note that the Austrian refusal of the French overtures of alliance seemed to have a sobering effect on the French Government. Nevertheless Cowley continued to express the opinion that the Emperor and Drouyn de Lhuys were only waiting to profit by the Polish question; and indeed that they would not hesitate to pick a convenient quarrel with Prussia if Britain became engaged in war with America.<sup>2</sup> The British Government's reactions to subsequent overtures they received from France showed that they were not prepared to discount these suspicions. The French proposal that Austria, Great Britain and France should make a collective representation to Russia on the subject of Poland met with concurrence from the British

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.314, Most Confidential, 19th March 1863, FO 27/1488.

2. Cowley to Russell, private, 24th April 1863, G. & D. 22/59.

Government:<sup>1</sup> but in writing privately to Cowley, Russell made no secret of his satisfaction that the cooperation of Austria would necessitate a "piano-forte, bitter-sweet note" which would leave Britain free to abstain from any further action if it were ignored by the Russian Government.<sup>2</sup> Britain was less accommodating when France indicated a desire to settle the affairs of Poland in a general conference or congress, composed of all the governments of Europe. Russell told Cowley privately that he had informed Baron Gros of two objections to this procedure. "First, that it is not what Russia asks - Second the delay and clumsiness of such a Machine - Next, (apparently an afterthought) we have nothing to propose." "The proposal has certainly the merit of staving off a war," he went on "but at the expense of making us all ridiculous." And then came his real objection to the proposal: "What would save the project from ridicule would be that the Congress, inspired by Italy or France, might propose to construct a new map of Europe."<sup>3</sup> It was for this reason that the British Government took the precaution of defining their attitude towards the assembly of a Conference on the subject of Poland in an official despatch to Cowley: "In case of the meeting

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.402, 27th March 1863, FO 27/1478.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 28th March 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.
  3. Russell to Cowley, private, 6th May 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

of a Conference," it ran, "the following two conditions must be positively agreed to: 1. That the Conference should consist only of the eight Powers who signed the Treaty of Vienna. 2. That the subject of its deliberations should be confined to the affairs of Poland." To prevent any misapprehension on the subject, Cowley was instructed to leave a copy<sup>1</sup> of the despatch with Drouyn de Lhuys.

British suspicions were equally apparent when Drouyn de Lhuys called Cowley's attention to some information he had received which suggested that Prussia was contemplating the conclusion of an agreement with Russia for the suppression of the Polish insurrection. He indicated that he would not make any representations to Prussia himself, for he recognised that any action by France might be suspect. But he stated his intention of communicating the facts in his possession to the British Government, and of asking them to make the approach to Prussia.<sup>2</sup> Cowley regarded Drouyn's suggestion as an "artful dodge to mix you up in the discussion which he may turn to account later when the Rhine is ripe."<sup>3</sup> Russell was equally alive to the danger of making any complaint to Prussia "which our neighbour might follow up in another and more angry

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.715, 2nd June 1863, FO 27/1479.

2. Cowley to Russell, No.657, confidential, 5th June 1863, FO 27/1492.

3. Cowley to Russell, private, 5th June 1863, G. & D. 22/59.

voice."<sup>1</sup> The Prussian Government, therefore, remained unmolested.

A more serious proposal from France later in the same month brought British suspicions of her intentions to a climax. On 23rd June, Russell received what he regarded as "a very important despatch" from Baron Gros.<sup>2</sup> It proposed that the three Governments of Austria, Great Britain and France should conclude a diplomatic act - in the form of a Convention or Protocol - with the object of defining the scope of their action on behalf of Poland. "Elles ajouteraient," Drouyn de Lhuys suggested, "qu'elles attendent l'aplanissement des difficultés actuelles d'une discussion amiable et du seul emploi des moyens diplomatiques, en se réservant, toutefois, d'examiner d'un commun accord les résolutions qu'elles auraient à prendre dans le cas où elles ne parviendraient point, par les seules voies de la persuasion ....."<sup>3</sup> Cowley detected the cloven hoof in these proposals;<sup>4</sup> Russell, the smell of gunpowder;<sup>5</sup> and the Cabinet decided that the time was not fitting for any

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 6th June 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.828, confidential, 27th June 1863, FO 27/1480.
  3. Drouyn de Lhuys to Gros, 20th June 1863. Affaires Etrangères. Documents Diplomatiques, (1863), p.36.
  4. Cowley to Russell, private, 23rd June 1863, G. & D. 22/59.
  5. Russell to Cowley, private, 24th June 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

fresh agreement between the three Courts.<sup>1</sup> Cowley's report of Drouyn de Lhuy's reactions to this decision suggested that it had been a wise one. He represented the French Minister to have contrasted the results of the Crimean and Italian Wars in defence of his proposal to define the engagements of the three powers; to have repudiated all ambition of adding to the territory of France, yet to have stated "were she left unsatisfied in the great question of the day" [i.e. Poland] .. "then - he did not say it would be the case, but it might happen that France would be agitated by other desires than those which impelled her now."<sup>2</sup> Neither war, nor territorial expansion, seemed very far from his thoughts.

With the Austrian and British rejection of these proposals, the Emperor, if not his Foreign Minister, became progressively more pacific: but the uncertainty of the situation remained - owing to the apparently vacillating character of the Emperor and his policy - until the three powers recognised the futility of further remonstrance and withdrew in ignominy from their diplomatic contest with Russia.

Britain's belief that France wished to profit by the circumstance of the Polish insurrection to effect a 'remaniement' in the map of Europe and bring her frontiers to

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.828, confidential, 27th June 1863, FO 27/1480.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.735, confidential, 26th June 1863, FO 27/1493.

the Rhine, was the main cause of the failure of the 'quasi-alliance'.<sup>1</sup> It not only confirmed her in the pacific policy she had resolved to follow from the start: but it coloured the tone of the diplomatic representations she was prepared to make to Russia. Russia was not unaware of the divergence of interest between the two Western Powers. Indeed, Baron Brunnow seems to have deliberately exploited it as a means of calling Russell's bluff in an interview on the 10th April. For Russell represented him to have called attention to the existence of projects for altering the map of Europe, and to have expressed the hope that Britain would be as circumspect in discountenancing them as Russia.<sup>2</sup> Brunnow may have had no solid grounds for making this observation, but it was an effective rejoinder to the British remonstrances, and it tallied well enough with the general trend of British suspicions for it to strike home.

It was scarcely less difficult for the British Government to form a reliable opinion about the existence of French designs on the Rhine during the Polish crisis than it had been at the time of the French annexation of Nice and

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1. Russell to Napier, No.16, Confidential, 13th January 1864, FO 65/655.  
cf. Supra p. 23.
  2. Russell to Cowley No.486, confidential, 10th April 1863, FO 27/1478.

Savoy three years earlier. But in 1863 they had reason to believe that the Emperor had broached the subject of territorial revision with another great power. Their information on this point was based almost exclusively on Austrian sources. Its validity, therefore, was by no means absolute. Yet there was no apparent reason for supposing that Austria would deliberately mislead the British Government about the character of the proposals she had received from France; nor that her Ambassador would give an inaccurate report of the Emperor's words. This initial indication of the trend of Imperial policy was confirmed by others, individually less valuable, but cumulatively no less significant. The successive proposals of the French Government; the stray remarks of the Foreign Minister; the agitation by the general public: all were straws in the wind, and all pointed in the same direction. All lent a degree of veracity to the information that had been received from Austria; all suggested that the Emperor was disposed to exploit a favourable opportunity to claim territorial compensation for France. It would seem from British sources, therefore, that the potential divergence of interest between Britain and France in this region was established for a brief moment during the Polish question on the occasion of the French overtures to Austria; that it lapsed into the realm of potentiality with Austria's refusal of those overtures; but that it formed a far more disquieting background to Anglo-French

relations in northern Europe than it had done previously.

The Polish question had no sooner subsided than the death of King Frederick VII of Denmark precipitated another international problem in northern Europe: the graver one of Schleswig-Holstein. Anglo-French co-operation was no more effective in this issue than it had been over Poland: and recent studies have suggested that it was Britain's curt refusal of Napoleon III's famous Congress proposal which lost her the support of France in the subsequent negotiations<sup>1</sup> over Schleswig-Holstein.

Yet was the British reply such a gratuitous insult to France? The fact and circumstances of its publication; its substance; its tone: all have been declared wanting in the rudiments of diplomatic tact. Of these charges, perhaps the first is least well substantiated. After the publicity Napoleon had given to the project in his Speech from the Throne, it was surely appropriate that the British Government should have published their answer, even though a refusal. It was particularly unfortunate that the British despatch should have appeared in the London Gazette before it reached the French Foreign Minister. But as Cowley was able to explain that this was the result of a genuine mistake - for

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1. L.D. Steefel, The Schleswig-Holstein Question [1933], 113; H.C.F. Bell, Lord Palmerston [1936], II, 351, 365; H. Temperley and L.M. Fenson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy [1938], 253-9.

which he and Drouyn de Lhuys were equally responsible - it was not a legitimate ground for resentment.<sup>1</sup>

Based on a characteristically vigorous letter of Lord Palmerston's,<sup>2</sup> the substance of the British despatch may have been "unnecessarily explicit."<sup>3</sup> But after all it was only a logical development of the arguments which Russell had used to oppose the assembly of a conference or congress of all Europe on the Polish question: arguments which he had made to the French Ambassador informally and to the French Foreign Minister by implication in an official despatch.<sup>4</sup>

The tone of the British despatch was less defensible. Cowley admitted - though not to Lord Russell - that it was thought in France to be "rude and dry".<sup>5</sup> But he assured the Emperor that the British Government had desired to convey their refusal in "a courteous and conciliatory form" and

1. Cowley to Russell, private, 11th December 1863, G. & D. 22/59. Extract quoted in Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 224. Defending the early publication in the House of Lords, Granville said that the Government had considered it desirable in view of the fact that "French papers had stated that England had consented to enter into the Congress and that other nations were most anxious to learn what the decision of this country was." Hansard's Parliamentary Debates CLXXIII, 60. 4th February 1864.
2. Palmerston to Russell, private, 8th November 1863, G. & D. 22/22. Printed in Temperley and Penson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy [1938], 254.
3. The criticism of The Times, noticed by Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell [1889], 382.
4. Supra p.71.
5. Cowley to Layard, private, 1st December 1863. British Museum Add: M.S. 39108.

reminded him of the difference in style between British and French despatches: "H.M. must have seen enough of our despatches to know that it was not our habit to do more than to convey as succinctly and plainly as possible the resolution at which we had arrived."<sup>1</sup> The British reply was indeed no more didactic, haughty or consciously stylised than a host of other despatches with which Russell had favoured France in the past. Perhaps his colleagues were more resigned to the peculiar style of his despatches than the French Government. At any rate, they do not seem to have found his tone discourteous or provocative. That it was not so intended may be reasonably inferred from Russell's reply to Lord Napier, British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, who had raised the question whether Britain should depart from her traditional connection with France in favour of a closer understanding with Russia on the lines of the "masterly and successful combinations of 1840."<sup>2</sup> Russell was unmoved by this historical analogy. In his view, the safety of England depended on maintaining rather than severing relations with France. "It would be very dangerous" he wrote "to leave France to suppose<sup>3</sup> that she was excluded from the Councils of the Great Powers..."

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1. Cowley to Russell, private, 11th December 1863, G. & D. 22/59.
  2. Napier to Russell, No.823, Most Confidential, 31st December 1863, FO 65/639.
  3. Russell to Napier, No.16, confidential, 13th January 1864, FO 65/655.

Even if the British reply to the Congress Proposal had an opposite effect to what was intended and created - as it undoubtedly did - a feeling of resentment in France, is it true that it led to the reshaping of the alignment of powers in Europe? Was it the interpretation which France put on the British reply which prompted her to seek an understanding with Prussia? If this were the real cause of her overtures to Prussia, it presupposes that she had hoped to cooperate with the British Government at the Congress. But this seems improbable. The tone of the Emperor's Speech from the Throne was ill-calculated to conciliate the British Government. It referred to the intimate relations which had existed between France and Russia on the outbreak of the Polish revolt - "une des premières alliances du Continent" - but it contained no reference to the character of French relations with Britain.<sup>1</sup> An even clearer indication that Napoleon did not expect to cooperate with Britain in the Congress was the fact that he announced his proposal to the world without previous concert with the British Government. He knew that Britain was opposed to participating in a Congress on unspecified subjects, and thought to force her hand by

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif, (1864), Discours prononcé par sa Majesté l'Empereur, le 5 novembre 1863.

appealing to the British public.<sup>1</sup> Had he hoped to secure her cooperation, as distinct from her acquiescence, it is unlikely that he would have resorted to this subtle form of intimidation.

Moreover, to attribute the new grouping of powers in the Schleswig-Holstein question to the rebuff which France considered she had received in the British reply to her Congress proposal presupposes also that she had not already<sup>2</sup> begun to court an alliance with the Prussian Government. But material published from the German archives suggests that the Emperor and his Foreign Minister had started to work towards an understanding with Prussia very shortly after the failure of their overtures to Austria in February and March, 1863. Prince Henry VII of Reuss reported this trend in Imperial policy as early as June.<sup>3</sup> Count Goltz gave repeated indications of it subsequently: in August, September and

1. In a letter to the Duke of Argyll on 20th December 1863, Lord Dufferin represented the Emperor to have said that "he adopted the thunderclap mode in proposing the Congress from the conviction that although the idea would be scouted by the Cabinet it would be hailed with such enthusiasm by the people of England that you would be forced to agree with him ..." Lyall, The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, [1905], 134.
2. Professor Steefel gives due prominence to the French overtures to Prussia before the British refusal of the Congress proposal: but he attributes the acceleration of those overtures in November and December 1863 to French resentment at the terms of the British reply rather than to the precipitation of the Schleswig-Holstein question.
3. Oncken, H. Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons III. (1926), I, 17-21.

October.<sup>1</sup> And in reporting a conversation with Drouyn de Lhuys about the projected Congress on the 8th November, he represented the Foreign Minister to have said: "Vous vous rappelerez, que je vous ai plusieurs fois exprimé le désir de faire quelque chose ensemble avec vous: Peut-être que ce moment est arrivé."<sup>2</sup>

A study of the unpublished material in the British archives, therefore, and of published material from the French and Prussian archives, leads to the conclusion that this incident in Anglo-French relations has been overstressed: that it was in fact a symptom rather than a cause of the divergence of policy between Britain and France in northern Europe. Sensitive about the failure of his diplomacy in Poland, and the reverses he had suffered in the French elections, it seems probable that the Emperor's object in proposing a general Congress was not only to restore French predominance on the Continent by posing as an international arbiter, but also to conciliate public opinion in France by securing a rectification of his frontiers. For although he proclaimed that he was disinterested in making the proposal, Lord Dufferin reported him to have said subsequently that "if there had been a Congress some slight modification of the

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1. Die auswärtige Politik Preussens 1858-71 III [1932] Nos. 646, 671, 677, 704. IV [1933] No.3.

2. Goltz an Bismarck, le 8 novembre, Die auswärtige Politik Preussens IV [1933] p.124.

north frontier of France, to the extent perhaps of the extradition of a fortress here and there, might have been subjected to its consideration."<sup>1</sup> If it is true that he meant to obtain some addition of territory for France - and Dufferin's evidence certainly points to the intention - he would have needed the cooperation of at least one great power. Britain was known to oppose any extension of the French frontier, and having no territorial designs herself, was beyond the reach of bribery. Austria had already indicated her aversion to any territorial reshuffle in Europe. But it was possible that Prussia - the guardian of the Rhenish Provinces - might be interested in projects of territorial compensation. That such was Napoleon's hope may be inferred from the tenor of Drouyn de Lhuys' remarks to Count Goltz on the 8th November.<sup>2</sup> With Britain's refusal of the Congress proposal, the opportunity was lost. And it was not surprising that the Emperor should have vented his wrath against the power which had made his plan miscarry.

Britain saw as much reason to suspect ulterior motives behind the Congress proposal as she had done behind the various overtures she had received from France on the subject of Poland. "I can hardly doubt that in proposing the assembly

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1. A. Lyall, The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, [1905] 134.

2. Supra, p. 82.

of a Congress H.M. anticipates also the possibility of that readjustment of the map of Europe which years ago he so pertinaciously advocated" was Cowley's first reaction.<sup>1</sup>

Russell's misgivings about the Emperor's intentions may be detected in the disclaimers of suspicion in the draft of the interim reply which he submitted to the Cabinet. "H.M. commands me to say," he had written "that She does not call in question for a moment the motives by which the Emperor of the French has been guided in making the proposal."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the Cabinet thought this would have made too great a demand on Imperial credulity. At any rate it was discreetly excluded from the final version of the despatch.

By aggravating the relations between the two powers, the 'Congress' incident undoubtedly contributed to the failure of their cooperation in the approaching negotiations over Schleswig-Holstein. But the cause of that failure lay far deeper. Britain had been unable to interest the French Government in finding a solution to the problem of the Duchies for several years past. France had remained persistently unresponsive to the various expedients which Russell had devised in 1861, 1862 and 1863: and she had taken no initiative in the matter herself. "I don't know whether Thouvenel means

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.1061, 7 November 1863, FO 27/1498.

2. Russell to Cowley, No.1192, 12 November 1863, FO 27/1482.

to take any notice of my explanatory despatch about Holstein" was a plaintive enquiry from Russell in 1861. "Does he mean to decline altogether to take part in the affairs of Holstein?"<sup>1</sup> But the British chargé d'affaires could obtain no more from the French Minister than an expression of the degree to which the whole question of Holstein "bored" him.<sup>2</sup> Nor was there any apparent change in the attitude of the French Government in the following year. After communicating a fresh proposal from Russell in April 1862, Cowley reported that Thouvenel considered it "time enough for the Non-German Powers to interfere when the integrity of the Danish Monarchy should be really threatened."<sup>3</sup> No wonder that Russell refrained from concerting his famous 'Gotha' proposals with France. "I did not communicate my plan .. previously to Thouvenel", he explained to Cowley, "as he always throws cold water upon any attempt at settlement previously shown to him. He will do the same now but the bolt is sped and cannot be recalled."<sup>4</sup> With the failure of the allied intervention in Poland, France became still more reluctant to move in the Danish question.

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1. Russell to Grey, private, 1st June 1861 (copy), G. & D. 22/104.
  2. Grey to Russell, private, 3rd June 1861, G. & D. 22/56.
  3. Cowley to Russell, No.517, 22nd April 1862, FO 27/1437.
  4. Russell to Cowley, private, 11th October 1862, (copy) G. & D. 22/105.

Commenting on Russell's suggestion that the two powers should remind Austria, Prussia and the German Diet that any action tending to weaken the integrity and independence of Denmark would be at variance with the Treaty of 8th May 1852, Thouvenel pointed to the disturbing analogy between this proposal and the course already pursued by Britain and France in the Polish question. "He had no inclination ... to place France in the same place with reference to Germany as she had been placed with regard to Russia" Grey reported him<sup>1</sup> to have said.

In view of the fact that Denmark had traditional claims on the sympathy and support of France, it was not surprising that Britain should have looked for some ulterior motive to account for the attitude of the French Government. "Perhaps ... there is a latent thought, hardly avowed, that Holstein and Schleswig might be some day or other a compensation for the Rhine" Cowley suggested in May, 1861.<sup>2</sup> In the following year he believed that it was the Emperor's determination to "pay court to Germany" which prevented him from intervening<sup>3</sup> in the dispute between Denmark and the Diet. But after France had succeeded in separating Austria and Prussia in the Polish

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1. Grey to Russell, No.52, 18th September 1863, FO 27/1496.

2. Cowley to Russell, private, 10th May 1861, G. & D. 22/56.

3. Cowley to Russell, private, 22nd April 1862, G. & D. 22/57.

question, he was more inclined to think that the Emperor would seek to profit from the situation by ranging himself on the other side. He was not disposed to place much credence in the rumours which suggested that France was secretly encouraging Denmark to resist the pretensions of the German powers. "At the same time, I am far from affirming that in the case of hostilities between Denmark and Germany, the Emperor may not side actively with the former in the hope of obtaining some territorial advantages for France."<sup>1</sup>

But even when the Danish question drew rapidly to a climax with the death of the King, Federal Execution, and the invasion of both Duchies by Austria and Prussia, the Emperor showed no sign of departing from his attitude of reserve. By a curious reversal of the rôles which they had assumed in the Polish question it was Britain who pleaded the cause of intervention - military as well as diplomatic - and France who remained provokingly aloof. But the British Government were no less ready to discover an aggressive design in French apathy than in French restiveness. "The Prussians ought not to be lulled into security by the firm repose of France on this Question" Palmerston wrote to Russell at the end of December, "She is only waiting to see Prussia fairly committed beyond the Power of Retreat and then.

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.741, 27th June 1863, FO 27/1493.

she will fall foul of Prussia with the approval of all honourable men."<sup>1</sup>

This comment of Palmerston's is particularly significant: for it shows how little the British Government were aware of what the German archives have since revealed about the trend of Imperial policy at the turn of 1863. To judge from the reports of Count Goltz, it would seem that Napoleon was much more intent upon extending his frontiers by striking a bargain with her than provoking a conflict.<sup>2</sup> If he and his Minister were sincere in the suggestions which the Prussian Ambassador attributed to them it was evidently their aim to secure compensation for France in the Rhenish Provinces of Prussia by sanctioning a radical solution of the Schleswig-Holstein question: the cession of Holstein and German Schleswig to Prussia, and the fusion of Denmark and Danish Schleswig into a Kingdom of Scandinavia. Of the substance of these overtures to Prussia, Britain remained ignorant. But during the course of January 1864, rumours began to reach the British Ambassadors in St. Petersburg, Berlin and Paris that France was endeavouring to reach an understanding with

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 26th December 1863, G. & D. 22/14.
  2. Vide L.D. Steefel, The Schleswig-Holstein Question [1932], 117 ff.

Prussia:<sup>1</sup> and it was not long before the British Government were able to form a pretty clear picture of the Imperial design from the actions and commentaries of the French Government itself.

France did not withhold diplomatic support from Russell's expedients for preserving peace. But in many cases her response was dilatory; in nearly all it was unenthusiastic.<sup>2</sup> Often the British Government had reason to suppose that she had acquiesced in a proposal from the conviction that it would be useless: sometimes, that she had taken steps to nullify the very measures she had affected to support.<sup>3</sup> Nor

1. Napier to Russell, No.825, 31st December 1863, FO 65/639; Buchanan to Russell, No.40, confidential, 12th January 1864, FO 64/555; Cowley to Russell, private, 1st January 1864, G. & D. 22/60; Cowley to Russell, private, 14th January 1864, G. & D. 22/60.
2. .."the more I see and hear the more I am convinced that the French Government do not desire to prevent hostilities. They could not refuse the principle either of discussion or of mediation but they have delayed giving an answer until the answer will be of no utility. This conviction is shared by all my principal Colleagues .... " Cowley to Russell, private, 8th January 1864, G. & D.22/60. Cf. Cowley on the delay of the French Government in replying to Russell's suggestion that the Diet should be urged to refrain from entering Schleswig. 12th January 1864, FO 27/1522/70.
3. .."As I feared Drouyn cannot play a straightforward game. I find that Metternich and Goltz saw him after my interview with him yesterday and that he told them that he had only backed up your proposal for an armistice par acquit de conscience but that he knew it to be impossible for either Austrians or Prussians to consent to it under present circumstances, in other words telling them to go on ..." Cowley to Russell, private, 12th February 1864, G. & D. 22/60.

did the Emperor and Drouyn de Lhuys convey the impression in conversation of desiring a peaceful solution of the dispute between Denmark and Germany. Cowley reported that they could scarcely conceal their joy "even for the sake of decency" - when the invasion of Schleswig was announced. Their vexation that Britain showed no signs of becoming embroiled in hostilities, he added, was no less pronounced: and it was echoed with some violence in the press and society of Paris. The Emperor's object, Cowley surmised, was to keep the solution of the question in his own hands. "That the Emperor still meditates the creation of a Scandinavian Kingdom and the consequent annexation of Schleswig to Germany is to my mind beyond a doubt," he wrote. "What scheme of profit there may be for France at the bottom of Scandinavian and German unity I need not now stop to enquire ...". To remove any possible misconception on the point, Palmerston pencilled the concise comment "Rhine" in the margin.<sup>1</sup>

There were only two occasions on which France showed any inclination to depart from her passive rôle. The first was on the eve of the invasion of Jutland when rumours of the impending extension of hostilities and the Prussian threat to Saxony seemed to predispose the Imperial Government to join

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.217, confidential, 5th February 1864. FO 27/1525.

Britain, Sweden and Russia in a naval demonstration in the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> The change in the French attitude was only momentary: it lasted a bare couple of days and Drouyn de Lhuys was soon repeating the Emperor's determination to be "excessivement prudent" about giving material aid to Denmark.<sup>2</sup> Professor Steefel has interpreted this sudden volte face on the part of the French Government as a warning to Prussia, and an incitement to Britain rather than the symptom of any real desire to intervene in the dispute between Denmark and the German powers.<sup>3</sup> Cowley suggested still another reason for the Emperor's conduct: "I quite agree that it would never do for us to hold out baits of any kind to the Emperor," he wrote in reply to a letter from Russell, "Probably some hope of this kind may influence his present conduct..."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.282, Confidential, 20th February 1864, FO 27/1525; Cowley to Russell, No.299, Most Confidential, 23rd February 1864, FO 27/1526.  
Extracts quoted in: Steefel: The Schleswig-Holstein Question [1932] 186, 193.  
Cowley to Russell, private, 21st February 1864, G. & D. 22/60.  
Cowley to Russell, private, 22nd February 1864, G. & D. 22/60.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.289, 22nd February 1864, FO 27/1526.
  3. Steefel: The Schleswig-Holstein Question [1932], 197-8.
  4. Cowley to Russell, private, 22nd February 1864, G. & D. 22/60.

Drouyn de Lhuys had given Cowley no reason to suppose that such was the French game: and it was not until three months later - a result, perhaps, of the meetings of the crowned heads of Austria, Russia and Prussia at Kissengen and Carlsbad - that he even suggested that the alliance of France could be bought.<sup>1</sup> In an interview of 20th June, he gave Cowley to understand that French military aid might be forthcoming if the theatre of operations were extended from the Baltic to the Adriatic: if Venetia were freed from Austrian rule, and a portion of the Rhenish provinces ceded to France. "The word 'Rhine' was not mentioned by either party," Cowley explained, "though it was easy to see what Drouyn was driving at."<sup>2</sup> Palmerston's immediate reaction was to proclaim the price too high. French assistance in expelling Austria from Venetia would only be given in return for compensation in Sardinia, Sicily or Genoa, "none of which

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1. Curiously enough, Drouyn de Lhuys seems to have informed the Danish Minister in Paris early in June that he had let Cowley know that the cooperation of France might have been obtained "by an intimation from H.M.G. that some material or 'moral' advantage would necessarily accrue to her in the event of her taking up arms." Cowley explicitly denied the truth of this assertion. Commenting on it in a confidential despatch he stated: "M. Drouyn de Lhuys has on the contrary in his conversations with me invariably asserted that it was a calumny to suppose that the Emperor entertained those plans of obtaining the frontier of the Rhine which had been attributed to him..." Cowley to Russell, No.685, Most Confidential, 11th June 1864, FO 27/1530.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private, 20th June 1864, G. & D. 22/60.

Cessions ... would suit us": and so far as the Rhenish provinces were concerned, the loss to Prussia would signify little "but as future Danger to Belgium and Holland, and through them to us, Such an Acquisition to France would be hurtful to us."<sup>1</sup> In view of the Cabinet's decision to abstain from war in conjunction with France - so long as there was no immediate threat to the continued existence of Denmark as an independent power - it was perhaps fortunate that the Emperor should have again retracted the advances of his Foreign Minister.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until 20th June, when Cowley reported the substance of his conversation with Drouyn de Lhuys, that the British Government had any concrete evidence for their suspicions that France sought to profit materially from the Danish question. Goltz had every reason to withhold the Imperial confidences from Cowley: and Britain was unable to discover how far French overtures to Prussia cut across fundamental interests of her own. She was not in possession of sufficient information to appreciate to the full the subtle irony of the Emperor's plea that suspicion of his designs on the Rhine made it imperative for him to follow a pacific

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 21st June 1864, G. & D. 22/15.
  2. Earl Russell to Queen Victoria, 25th June 1864, Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, [1926] I, 229.

policy.<sup>1</sup> But she was able to draw her own conclusions from the reluctance with which France supported her efforts to prevent war; her satisfaction at the outbreak of hostilities; and her evident desire that a British naval force should be sent to the Baltic. Whilst, therefore, British sources contain valuable indications of the reserve which France maintained towards Britain, they reveal little about the motives which inspired it. They convey the impression of a divergence of interest between the two powers, but provide insufficient evidence for judging the extent of the divergence. Published material from French and German archives, however, goes some way towards filling this gap: and, moreover, towards substantiating the suspicions of the British Government.

The conflict of interest between Britain and France in northern Europe is less easy to define than that in the south and Mediterranean. It was not the result of rivalry; nor was it openly revealed. It grew out of the British belief that France desired to revise the frontiers which recorded the defeat of her armies in 1815. It cannot be said to have existed until the French Government, acknowledging that desire, resolved to translate it into action. The Emperor did not deny that French aspirations were centred on the left bank of the Rhine, "but people might dream," he

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.165, 26th January 1864, FO 27/1524.  
Clarendon to Russell, private, April 15th, 1860,  
G. & D. 22/26.

reminded Lord Dufferin, "without ever thinking of carrying dreams into effect."<sup>1</sup> Evidence of the French resolve to act upon the national 'dream' is extremely fugitive in British sources. It is always verbal; always indirect. Refutations of it, by contrast, are constant; written as well as verbal; direct, therefore, as well as indirect. Cumulatively, however, evidence in the British archives suggests that the desire for the Rhine was latent in France until 1860; that after 1860 it was sufficiently strong to be precipitated by the evolution of events in northern Europe. It does not lend support to the much criticised theory of Professor Oncken,<sup>2</sup> that desire for the Rhine was the be-all and end-all of French policy. Rather it indicates that the Emperor was disposed to exploit the opportunities which presented themselves but that with one exception - the Congress proposal - he was not prepared to create them. The divergence of interest between Britain and France, therefore, seems to have been constantly potential; and only occasionally established. But potential or established, it was always a poison in Anglo-French relations.

Unlike the conflict between Britain and France in the Mediterranean, the divergence of interest between them in

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1. Lyall, The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, [1905], 134.
  2. H. Oncken, Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons III. von 1863 bis 1870 und der Ursprung des Krieges von 1870/71. Berlin und Leipzig [1926].

northern Europe was not reflected, to any marked degree, in a rival alignment of powers. Indeed, the outbreak of the Polish insurrection had the appearance of tightening rather than relaxing the relations between Britain and France for it severed the connection between France and Russia, and drew France towards an understanding with Austria, with whom Britain had already been working closely in the Mediterranean. After the failure of the 'quasi-alliance' between the three powers in Poland, Britain attempted to maintain her conservative connection with Austria, until this was precluded by Austrian policy in the Danish question. France did not sever her relations with Austria but she concentrated her efforts upon securing an understanding with Prussia, to which she even attempted, unsuccessfully, to attract Russia. In her new association, unlike her earlier one with Russia, it was she who was the dupe, not her partner. So that on the conclusion of hostilities in Denmark, and the triumph of Bismarck's policy in the Duchies, France was no less isolated in Europe than Britain. The absence of cooperation between the two powers in northern Europe had inflicted a signal defeat on the policies of both - with incalculable consequences for the future. They were to be kept apart until "France would once for all declare herself content with her present limits and .... would not seek to extend them."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Russell to Grey, private, 7th November 1864, G. & D. 22/106.

## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE REGIONAL TREND IN THE WORKING OF THE 'ALLIANCE'

#### 3. Outside Europe and the Mediterranean.

The issues in which Britain and France were concerned overseas played a less important part in shaping the character of their relationship than those nearer home. They rarely took precedence over the more vital questions in the Mediterranean and northern Europe: and they rarely held the diplomatic stage alone. Indeed, these were treated by both powers - by Britain perhaps rather more than by France - less on their own merits than according to a deliberate calculation of the effect they would be likely to produce on Anglo-French relations in general. As a result, both governments were disposed to minimise points of conflict; to agree to differ rather than to persist in dispute; to compromise, and whenever possible to present the appearance of co-operation. Their task was eased by the very fact of these issues arising at a distance from Europe. This precluded the intervention of two of the remaining great powers; and the third - Russia - showed no inclination to disturb the relations of the Western powers in Asia or America. Differences between Britain and France in this region, therefore, were not accentuated by the

diplomacy of those seeking to displace the Anglo-French understanding by other alignments.

There were only three series of events overseas sufficiently important to exert a substantial influence on the general relations of Britain and France. In each case the two powers achieved some measure of co-operation. The period opened with the repulse by Chinese forces of the small Anglo-French expedition sent to ratify the Treaties of Tientsin in Peking. The outrage was deeply resented in London and Paris; and the two governments co-operated in sending a further expedition to Chinese waters. Their motives in so doing were fundamentally dissimilar.<sup>1</sup> Yet one motive was common to both: the belief, in Cowley's words, that "our double action at a distance may perhaps bring back a little more cordiality between the two nations."<sup>2</sup> The Emperor emphasised this aspect of the expedition in conversing with Cowley.<sup>3</sup> And to Russell it was equally important. From the point of view of Britain's military prestige in the Far East he would have preferred that British forces should have been allowed to restore their reputation alone. But "if the enterprise brings us together, and Paris will be amused by

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1. Supra pp.21-2.

2. Cowley to Russell, private, 21st September 1859, G. & D. 22/53.

3. Cowley to Russell, private, 5th October 1859, G. & D. 22/53.

the accounts of a march to Peking" he was not disposed to  
<sup>1</sup>  
 object to a joint expedition.

Diplomatic preliminaries were concerted in a spirit of compromise. Both powers made some sacrifice of opinion in fixing the indemnity to be claimed from China.<sup>2</sup> The execution<sup>3</sup> of the campaign was inevitably marred by dissension, but this was carefully concealed in official statements on the conclusion of hostilities. Speaking in the House of Commons, Palmerston unblushingly acclaimed "the most perfect harmony" that had prevailed between the British and French forces. "I trust," he added, "that this is only a happy omen of the concord which will long prevail between the two nations."<sup>4</sup> These sentiments were echoed in the Corps Législatif, where Baroche went so far as to express the hope that allied

1. Russell to Cowley, private, 11th October 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
2. A private letter from Palmerston suggests that Britain was not entirely disinterested in meeting the French view. "As to the French despatch about China," he wrote to Russell, "we might perhaps join them in demanding money if we are obliged to send an expedition. I do not give much weight to the opinion that the Chinese could not pay. Those semi-barbarous Governments have generally a Treasure hoarded up. Moreover the French say they will occupy Territory probably Chusan as Security for payment and we might as well have a joint occupation with them as leave them in sole Possession of an Island very much commanding Shanghai." Palmerston to Russell, private, October 29th 1859, G. & D. 22/20.
3. Vide P.H. Chiang, Anglo-Chinese Diplomatic Relations 1856-60, unpublished PH.D. Thesis, [1939].
4. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 400, 14th February 1861.

victories in China might efface the memory of the "discordes<sup>1</sup>  
séculaires" which had divided the countries for so long.

This was much to expect of a minor operation in a remote part of the globe. Yet the co-operation between Britain and France in China did make some contribution towards improving their relationship. It came as an opportune antidote to the ill feeling that had been roused over Nice and Savoy. And it gave the British Government the satisfaction of observing that the secret understanding between France and Russia, although operative in the Mediterranean, did not extend to the Far East. For France had shown no disposition to accept the Russian offer of mediation between China and the Western Powers:<sup>2</sup> whilst Palmerston affected to believe<sup>3</sup> that Russia was at the bottom of Chinese resistance at Taku.

The second major event to affect British and French interests overseas was the American Civil War. In its most crucial phase, this titanic struggle on the American continent happened to coincide with a curiously uneventful period in

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1862], I, 278, le 12 mars 1861.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.585, 5th October 1859, FO 27/1303.
  3. "There can be no doubt that there were Russians employed in the Construction of the Peiho Batteries and in the working of them in the late action" he wrote to Hammond. "I heard the other Day from a Person likely to know that a Batch of Russian Officers was sent to China in February last and they did not of Course go thither for nothing." Palmerston to Hammond, private, 20th September 1859, FO 391/7.

Europe. The problems it posed for Britain and France, therefore, acquired a special prominence: and the attitude adopted by each power towards them played an important part in determining the general character of their relations.

From the outset, the British Government was anxious "to act in this American business entirely in accordance with France."<sup>1</sup> Russell sought French co-operation in inviting both sides to accede to the four points of the Declaration of Paris on maritime law.<sup>2</sup> He readily modified his draft instructions to Lyons in Washington to meet the French objection that a renunciation of privateering was more likely to be acceptable to the north than the south.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, when negotiations were transferred to London by Seward's offer to adhere to the Declaration by means of an Anglo-American Convention, Palmerston was instrumental in making the British acceptance conditional upon a similar Convention's being signed with France.<sup>4</sup>

It was Britain, therefore, who was responsible for initiating a joint policy with France in the American question:

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 21st May 1861, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.563, 11th May 1861, FO 27/1376.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.600, 16th May 1861, FO 27/1376.
  4. Vide E.D. Adams, Great Britain and the American War, [1925], I, 167. The project foundered when Britain and France insisted that the Convention should be accompanied by separate declarations to prevent the Northern States demanding that Southern privateers should be treated as pirates.

and Britain who showed herself the more conciliatory in establishing it. Yet France was hardly less convinced of the need for a common stand. Although more concerned than Britain about the shortage of cotton, she refused to be led away from the British policy of neutrality by the wiles of the Southern Commissioners. It was her action in supporting British claims over the Trent which provided the most convincing demonstration of Anglo-French co-operation in American affairs. Not only did the French Minister at Washington give valuable "moral support" to Lord Lyons on his own initiative:<sup>1</sup> but Thouvenel formally upheld the justice of British claims in a despatch which was subsequently communicated to each of the principal courts of Europe.<sup>2</sup> Russell was particularly gratified by the form of the French support - "precisely that which was most useful to Her Majesty's Government"<sup>3</sup> - and writing privately to Cowley, he expressed his confident hope "that this incident will do much to strengthen the alliance between England and France."<sup>4</sup> Whatever the motives of French conduct - and neither Palmerston nor Cowley could believe them

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1. Lyons to Russell, private, 23rd December 1861, (copy), G. & D. 22/14.
  2. Affaires Etrangères, Documents Diplomatiques 1861, (1862), 99. Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères à M. Mercier, le 3 décembre 1861.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.49, 15th January 1862, FO 27/149.
  4. Russell to Cowley, private, 7th December 1861, (copy), G. & D. 22/106.

disinterested<sup>1</sup> - the effect was certainly to lessen British suspicions of French intentions in Europe. For as Cowley reasoned in his famous Memorandum of 9th January 1862, if the Emperor were contemplating a move to the Rhine it was scarcely probable that "he would, unsolicited by us, have given advice to the United States calculated to prevent war with England, when his policy would rather have been to embroil us at a distance from home in the other hemisphere."<sup>2</sup>

Anglo-French co-operation was maintained in the following months; although the increasingly urgent demand for cotton in France threatened to disturb its harmony. The British Government felt obliged to decline a proposal from the Emperor that the Maritime Powers of Europe should offer mediation. But Russell's reply was couched in terms of unusual cordiality.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Palmerston has left two interpretations of the French action. To Russell he wrote that the line taken by the Emperor was "in keeping with ... the Feelings of the Emperor against the Northerners." (Palmerston to Russell, private, 6th December 1861, G. & D. 22/21). As a marginalia to Cowley's Memorandum of 9th January 1862, he pencilled "He [the Emperor] could not wish the Northern American Navy to be annihilated". (Cowley to Russell, private, 9th January 1862, G. & D. 22/57). Cowley's view is contained in a private letter to Layard: .. "The French hate us cordially and systematically", he wrote, "but at the moment they hate the Americans more because they cannot get their cotton. They hope that this Trent affair will lead to opening the Southern ports and that is the reason why they are with us ...". (Cowley to Layard, private, 5th December 1861, B.M. Add. MSS. 39102, Private Layard Papers).
  2. Wellesley and Sencourt, Conversations with Napoleon III, [1934], 204. Cf. Supra p.64.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.1128, 13th November 1862, FO 27/1429.

It emphasised the Queen's desire to act "with France upon the great questions now agitating the world, and upon none more than on the contingencies connected with the great struggle now going on in America"; it referred in grateful terms to the "noble and emphatic manner in which the Emperor of the French vindicated the Law of Nations and assisted the cause of peace" in the affair of the Trent; it acknowledged "the benevolent views and humane intentions" that had prompted the Emperor's suggestion. All that was questioned was the timing of the proposal. In declining it on those grounds the British Government implied that it might be renewed with advantage at a future date. Cowley reported that Britain's rejection of the French overture had caused no irritation to Drouyn de Lhuys,<sup>1</sup> an impression which Layard, then on a visit to Paris,<sup>2</sup> was able to confirm. Certainly it appeared to make very little difference to the relations of the two countries, even in American affairs. With the exception of an independent offer of mediation to the North at the beginning of 1863, France

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.1290, 18th November 1862, FO 27/1447.
  2. "As regards the offer to mediate in America," Layard wrote to Russell, "he [Drouyn de Lhuys] said he did not attach much importance to it - the Emperor had made it to discharge a duty he owed to humanity. He had heard from Flahault that you had declined to entertain it and did not seem surprised." Layard to Russell, private, 13th November 1862, G. & D. 22/28.

showed no inclination to sever her previous association with Britain. Nor did she attempt to supersede it by one with Russia.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Anglo-French co-operation survived in America when it was virtually extinct in Europe. It is significant of the strength of the association on American questions that when the war was over Drouyn de Lhuys should have found it necessary to disabuse the American Minister of the belief that British and French policy had been regulated by a formal understanding. "If by understanding was meant any political engagement between the two Governments, he [Mr. Bigelow] was in error .... but it was perfectly true that during the late lamentable war the two Governments had maintained a constant exchange of opinions with a view to acting in common."<sup>2</sup>

For France, common action with Britain in the American question had spelt subservience: a subservience, however, partly the result of the leading role she had assumed in the third major incident of this region - the debt collecting expedition to Mexico. This was the very antithesis of the

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1. Mercier did sound Stoeckl, the Russian Minister at Washington, on a joint offer of mediation without Britain: but only after he had failed to enlist Lyons' co-operation. And he received no encouragement from Stoeckl who was informed by his Government that Russia did not wish to be compelled to face such a question. "She did not wish to offend France, and an offer without England had no chance of acceptance." Vide E.D. Adams, Great Britain and the American Civil War, [1925], II, 76 note.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.816, 8th July 1865, FO 27/1574.

earlier joint expedition to China. As an essay in Anglo-French co-operation, it was a conspicuous failure. Yet it did little more than ruffle the surface of Anglo-French relations; for this the forbearance of the British Government was largely responsible.

Cowley, it seems, was the first to discourage the notion of protesting at the extension France had given to the original scope of the expedition. "For my part," he wrote to Layard shortly after the breach at Orizaba, "I am for letting them [the French] go on if they will. They never can establish themselves permanently in Mexico, which is all we have to guard against, while they will spend both men and money which will aid in keeping them quiet."<sup>1</sup> 'Mexicans not being Hindoos',<sup>2</sup> Palmerston was inclined to agree that the danger of a French conquest was negligible. Besides, the establishment of a monarchy would be "a Godsend to all countries having anything to do with Mexico."<sup>3</sup> And if he was slower than Cowley to welcome the drain on French resources he at least saw the futility of raising objections to the despatch of French reinforcements which "the Emperor will no Doubt send whether we approve or not."<sup>4</sup> Russell's personal experience

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1. Cowley to Layard, private, 30th May 1862, B.M. Add. MSS. 39103. Private Layard Papers.
  2. Palmerston to Russell, private, 13th August 1862, G. & D. 22/22.
  3. Palmerston to Russell, private, 19th June 1862, G. & D. 22/22.
  4. Palmerston to Russell, private, 19th June 1862, G. & D. 22/22.

of Napoleon I's campaign in Spain<sup>1</sup> made it hard for him to resist an occasional thrust at Napoleon III's venture in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> Yet he, too, appreciated the folly of entering into controversy on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Thouvenel's fear that Britain might jeopardise the future good understanding between the two countries by an open protest against French proceedings in Mexico was needless.<sup>4</sup> Britain's only protest was in her eventual withdrawal from the joint expedition. Even then she avoided widening the political separation between herself and France by refusing to ratify the Convention in which Wyke and Doblado had settled British claims on Mexico independently of the French. At least, that was the interpretation she gave to her action in correspondence with France.<sup>5</sup> In fact the Cabinet

1. Vide Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell [1889], I, 36 ff.
2. "The first Napoleon wished to regenerate Spain" he wrote in a despatch that was to be read to Thouvenel, ... "The end is well known and might serve as a warning if experience were not always bought and never borrowed." Russell to Cowley, No.991, 8th October 1862, FO 27/1428.
3. In a despatch dated 30th April 1862, and seen by the Cabinet, Russell impressed upon Cowley the need for "avoiding as much as possible to give a controversial character to your communications with the French Minister and seeking rather by a temperate statement of the difficulties both present and prospective which the conduct of the French agents is calculated to produce to incline the French Government of itself to prescribe to those Agents greater patience and caution for the future." Russell to Cowley, No.473, April 30th 1862, FO 27/1422.
4. Cowley to Russell, No.572, 2nd May 1862, FO 27/1438.
5. Russell to Cowley, No.699, 17th June 1862, FO 27/1424.

had decided to disavow the Convention because they regarded certain clauses as intrinsically objectionable.<sup>1</sup> But, at Palmerston's suggestion, their decision was deliberately turned to profit as a gesture of goodwill to France.<sup>1</sup> "HMG are rejoiced," ran the official despatch to Cowley, "that they are not obliged, at a moment when the French expeditionary force appears to be in difficulties to take a step which might have borne the Character of aggravating those difficulties and might have implied feelings on the part of the British Government which they are far from entertaining towards that of the Emperor."<sup>2</sup>

Thus did Britain seek to minimise the effect of her rupture with France in Mexico. And her task in preventing the "Mexican wet blanket"<sup>3</sup> from spreading a gloom over the general relations of the two countries was considerably eased by the growing belief that a consequence of French activity in Mexico would be enforced quiescence in Europe. Of this, Palmerston was more persuaded than Russell: indeed, it was largely owing to his advice and guidance<sup>4</sup> that the breakdown of Anglo-French

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 14th June 1862, G. & D. 22/14.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No. 699, 17th June 1862, FO 27/1424.
  3. Clarendon to Hammond, private, 23rd December 1863, FO 391/7.
  4. On more than one occasion Palmerston found it necessary to remind his Foreign Secretary that critical references to the Emperor's proceedings in Mexico were inexpedient. "It does not seem to be our Interest, nor that of Europe," he wrote at the end of 1863, "to induce him to withdraw from his Mexican Enterprise, it is a Safety Valve for his Steam, useful to prevent an Explosion in Europe." Palmerston to Russell, private, 22nd December 1863, G. & D. 22/14.

co-operation in Mexico did not seriously affect the general relations of the two powers. Paradoxically, Britain came to derive a positive satisfaction from the French violation of the Convention of London: and although the French Government did not scruple to foster the legend that Britain had abandoned French troops at a time of peril,<sup>1</sup> they were chary of advancing the contention officially.

In the three major incidents of this region, therefore, Britain and France either acted together or separated in good humour. But forming a background to these few prominent questions were a number of minor ones in which they either acted apart or in opposition. These smaller issues were of two kinds: firstly those which gave rise to diplomatic representations between the two powers, or to measures of opposition; and secondly, those which were carefully 'soft-pedalled' at government level.

It was the British Government who were mainly responsible for raising the issues of the former category. Although anxious to avoid controversy with France overseas, there were certain of her proceedings which they were not prepared to tolerate. Of these, the recruitment of African labour for Réunion, Mayotte and Nossi Bé was perhaps the most important. The suppression of the African Slave Trade had long been a special object of

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863], V, 112, 26th June 1862.

concern to Palmerston: and the French practice of purchasing slaves, although nominally to free them, threatened seriously to interfere with it. British agents had frequent cause to complain of the encouragement and support given by French colleagues to the activities of the slave traders. Objections were raised on political and economic grounds as well as humanitarian: for it was shown that in their desire for the establishment of engagé depots the French were led into political intrigues either with or against the native rulers; and that in their quest for slaves they gave stimulus to tribal warfare which impeded legitimate trade.

The British Government did not hesitate to bring these charges to the notice of the French Government. In July 1859, for example, they deeply deplored the indications that had reached them "from all quarters" of the determination of French agents to persevere in procuring labourers from Africa "by means too closely resembling the Slave Trade". "On all sides," it was stated, "the traffic threatens to disturb the legitimate commerce which had at last obtained a firm footing amongst the natives."<sup>1</sup> In 1861 it was the political aspect of French activities to which objection was raised. The erection by French agents of a large and mysterious building in Zanzibar - ostensibly a hospital - prompted the British Government to remind the French of the "very intimate relations of friendship

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.35, 25th July 1859, FO 84/1089.

and alliance" which subsisted between Great Britain and Zanzibar: "An active and important trade is moreover carried on between HMs Indian subjects and the subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar," Russell wrote to Cowley, "Her Majesty's Government could not therefore see with indifference any events which tended to destroy the Independence of the Sultan or to transfer his Territory to another Power."<sup>1</sup> In 1863, a higher note was sounded. The British Government took advantage of the establishment of a French protectorate over Porto Novo to remind the French Government that the suppression of the Slave Trade was a "noble task" and "fit employment" for the energies of two great nations. Whilst affecting to have full confidence in the Emperor's devotion to that cause, the British Government did not attempt to disguise their opinion that "the French on the coast of Africa seem to have been mainly animated by petty commercial jealousy of the English and have been wholly insensible to higher and nobler motives."<sup>2</sup>

Considerations of prestige may well have influenced the conduct of the French: but it seems in the main to have been inspired by the acute shortage of native labour on their sugar plantations. France was willing to sign an undertaking

1. Russell to Cowley, No.6, 27th June 1861, FO 146/1007.
2. Russell to Grey, No.1, 30th September 1863, FO 84/1199.  
The draft of this passage is in Palmerston's hand.

to respect the independence of Zanzibar:<sup>1</sup> but she was reluctant to give satisfaction in the matter of the Free Emigration system; and even after the conclusion of the Coolie Convention,<sup>2</sup> she continued to acquiesce in the shipment of slaves to her colonies in the Mozambique Channel.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for Anglo-French relations, France was not able to make the same reconciliation between humanitarian instincts and commercial interests, as Britain.

The other form of French activity to which the British Government took exception was the establishment of French coaling stations on strategic British trade routes, notably the British route to India. But this was a negligible source of irritation between the two countries. For although the British Government took active measures to frustrate the projects of the French, they were careful to do so unobtrusively. Thus, on learning from the Foreign Office that a French Company were thought to be meditating the purchase of Socotra, the India Office agreed to instruct the Political Agent at Aden to take steps to dissuade the native chief from selling it to the French.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, on hearing rumours that the French

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.2, 10th March 1862, FO 146/1066.

2. 1st July 1861.

3. Vide W.L. Mathieson, Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-65 [1929], 184.

4. Melvill to Hammond, 23rd June 1859, FO 78/3186.

were contemplating a settlement at Disseh, off the Eritrean coast,<sup>1</sup> Russell instructed the British Consul General at Alexandria that the Red Sea and Indian Telegraph Company should be invited to apply to the Porte for permission to establish one of their stations on the Island.<sup>2</sup> Britain was not entirely successful in her efforts to exclude French influence from the region of the Red Sea. In 1862, the French ensign was run up at Obock - almost opposite Aden - on a site purchased from the Sultan of Tadjoura and Rahaita.<sup>3</sup> But Britain made no attempt to obstruct the French settlement; and Napoleon III, in return, made no move to exploit its potentialities.

Of the many petty incidents deliberately belittled in the cause of good understanding between the two powers, three may be singled out as in some sense typifying the rest: those in Madagascar, Cambodia and the Pacific Islands. They are typical, of course, only of the incidents revealed in the British archives: and for this reason give special emphasis to the forbearance practised by the British Government. But it is not to be inferred that Napoleon III was necessarily any

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1. Colquhoun (Alexandria) to Russell, private and confidential, 18th December 1860, FO 78/3186.
  2. Russell to Colquhoun, 2nd January 1861, No.1, FO 78/1589.
  3. Memorandum on French and Italian Designs on the Red Sea and its immediate neighbourhood (March 1882), Confidential Print No.4590, FO 146/2415.

the less disposed to observe restraint in similar circumstances. Indeed, the material in the British archives suggests that Napoleon also was impressed by the need for minimising the distant disputes of French and British agents, particularly<sup>1</sup> in Madagascar.

Rivalry between the British and French in Madagascar was traditional. Some attempt had been made to check it in<sup>2</sup> 1856. In that year, both powers agreed to refrain from modifying their political relations with the Island without informing the other. Nevertheless, suspicion of French designs formed a recurrent theme in reports from the Governor of Mauritius in this period. Local apprehension was treated sympathetically in the Colonial Office: but it received little serious attention in the Foreign Office where the prevailing sentiment seemed to accord with Cowley's casual reflection "After all, what harm can they [the French] do us<sup>3</sup> in Madagascar?" This attitude was at once apparent in 1859 when news was received from Governor Stephenson of Mauritius that the French were thought to have concluded a treaty with the Sakalava chiefs of western Madagascar, for the cession of the fine port of Bally or Bombetoe. Duly

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1. Some confirmation is afforded in Sonia Howe's recent study The Drama of Madagascar [1938].
  2. Cowley to Clarendon, No.28, 5th January 1856, FO 97/220.
  3. Cowley to Layard, private, 14th April 1863, B.M. Add. MSS. 39105. Private Layard Papers.

acquainted with the facts by the Colonial Office,<sup>1</sup> the Foreign Office instructed Cowley to make "suitable representations" to Walewski on the apparent departure of the French from the terms of the previous agreement between the two powers.<sup>2</sup> An exchange of views between Russell and Wodehouse, the Under Secretary, shows, however, that Britain was not prepared to press her representations. Wodehouse, receiving what purported to be the text of the Treaty, published in Le Moniteur de l'Ile de Réunion,<sup>3</sup> minuted his chief as follows: "I should think the less we interfere with Madagascar the better. The French will probably fail as they have always failed hitherto in establishing their influence there."<sup>4</sup> Russell entirely agreed: and subsequent events all went to prove that the British Government were not disposed to quarrel with France about the extension of her political influence in Madagascar, provided that this did not connote any exclusive trading facilities for the French. As Napoleon III was aware of the limits of British restraint, and did not seek to overstep them, Madagascar remained the

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1. Merivale to Hammond, 29th August 1859, FO 97/220.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.294, 30th August 1859, FO 97/220.
  3. June 8th 1859.
  4. November 2nd 1859, FO 97/220.

scene of local differences between the British and French, but did not give rise to any serious contention between their governments.

Nor was the British Government disposed to quarrel with France about the extension of her political influence in the Far East. In August 1863, a French protectorate was established in Cambodia. British merchants in Singapore viewed this step with misgiving.<sup>1</sup> British naval authorities were no less alarmed. "A serious subject for consideration" wrote Commodore Montresor, at sea in the Straits of Malacca, "is ... not that the French in occupying this extent of protectorate are trading close upon the heel of our empire but that the very highway of our trade is likely to be greatly affected during war ...."<sup>2</sup> The British consul at Bangkok appeared more resigned to the French move; he took care to dispel the notion of the Siamese Government that it was in the British interest to resist the extension of French influence in Cambodia.<sup>3</sup> But in 1865, he made a brief attempt to get the protectorate annulled.<sup>4</sup> When he received a draft of the treaty which France was urging upon Siam with the object of defining the relations of the two powers towards

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1. Commodore Montresor to Admiralty, 8th Oct. 1863, No.31, (copy), FO 69/39.
  2. Commodore Montresor to Admiralty, No.31, (copy), 8th October 1863, FO 69/39.
  3. Knox to Russell, No.30, 8th October 1864, FO 69/39.
  4. Knox to Russell, No.22, 26th April 1865, FO 69/39.

Cambodia, it occurred to him that the French might be persuaded to renounce their protectorate over Cambodia in return for the recognition by Siam of Cambodian independence. He hastened to make this suggestion to the Kalahome: but too late. With an expedition foreign to his nature, the Kalahome had hurried through negotiations with the French so as to be able to take part in a white elephant hunt. Unlike the British consul, the naval authorities and the merchants, the Foreign Office displayed no jealousy of French proceedings in Cambodia. On receiving a translation of the treaty between France and Cambodia in November 1863,<sup>1</sup> they forwarded it to the India Office. But it was not until the following March, when the question of its bearing on the British right to establish consuls in Cambodia was raised in Parliament, that Cowley, informed of its existence for the first time, was instructed to make enquiries of Drouyn de Lhuys.<sup>2</sup> Moreover it was not until September 1865, that the India Office could be prevailed upon to give their opinion of the French proceedings. They then stated that the French might be regarded "without anxiety or concern" so long as they did not "in any way interfere with the independence of Siam."<sup>3</sup> In affecting to regard the whole affair as a "matter of ridicule rather

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1. Schomburgk to Russell, No.34, September 29th 1863, FO 69/39.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.255, telegram, 6.45 p.m., 11th March 1864, FO 69/39.
  3. Merivale to Hammond, 29th September 1865, FO 69/39.

than moment," the nonchalance of the French Government was no less remarkable.<sup>1</sup>

It was owing to the British Government that the third local quarrel between British and French agents - which was always potential rather than actual - never materialised. It was set in the Pacific Islands which, like Madagascar, were the scene of traditional rivalry between the two powers. It threatened to develop out of action by the British Consul in Fiji, son of the Pritchard who had been so notoriously associated with a neighbouring archipelago in the forties. Thinking to forestall the French, Pritchard junior had persuaded Ebenezer Thakombau "King of Fiji" to sign a deed of cession giving the Fiji Islands to Victoria.<sup>2</sup> He appeared in England to promote his project in person. But the British Government, after sending an independent officer to examine the question on the spot, decided to decline the offer. Their refusal was based upon considerations of expense, location, and significantly, the prospect of "possible disputes with other civilised countries."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the British Government were not prepared to offer provocation to France for the sake of obtaining territory they did not want.

1. Cowley to Russell, No.756, 23rd June 1865, FO 69/39.

2. Vide J.I. Brookes, International Rivalry in the Pacific Islands 1800-1875, 242 ff.

3. Rogers to Hammond, September 7th 1861. Accounts and Papers, XXXVI, (1862), 23.

It was just because there was so little real conflict of interest between the two powers that the British Government felt justified in stifling this local rivalry. For in this period there was no colonial rivalry between Britain and France in the later sense of the term. Britain looked upon colonies as liabilities - expensive to maintain, not always remunerative in trade, and serving only an apprenticeship in their connection with the Mother Country. Her resolve to call a halt to any further extension of British sovereignty was in itself sufficient to prevent the development of colonial conflict with France. For it meant that she offered France neither stimulus nor opposition in the colonial field. But if Napoleon was less resolute in disavowing the advances of his local agents, he too was concerned over the expense of colonisation.<sup>1</sup> He confided in Cowley that France was not a colonising nation:<sup>1</sup> and his successive Foreign Ministers persistently decried the distant exploits secretly encouraged<sup>2</sup> by their irrepressible colleague, Chasseloup Laubat. Nor

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1. "She [France] has few colonies", Cowley reported the Emperor to have said in 1861, "and those she has cost her more than they are worth." Cowley to Russell, No.799, confidential, 2nd July 1861, FO 27/1393.
  2. Whose Anglophobe tendencies caused Cowley to declare him "as ill conditioned a dog as I know". Cowley to Layard, private, 17th August 1863. B.M. Add. MSS. 39107, Private Layard Papers.

was there any substantial economic rivalry between the two powers. Both countries, it seems, recognised the principle of the Open Door, although neither yet gave it that description:<sup>1</sup> and commercial jealousy was apparent only in such local disputes as those which occurred on the East and West Coasts of Africa.

In this region, therefore, relations between Britain and France were the most untroubled of all. The major issues were characterised by co-operation rather than conflict. And there was little real clash of interest in the minor ones: for the most outspoken controversy - that centering round the Slave Trade - was chiefly remarkable for the degree to which the vigour of British representations outclassed the demands of selfish interest. Yet the veiled dispute over strategic points, and the local jealousy of agents, traders and missionaries pointed to the existence of a latent rivalry which to some extent cut across the way in which the comparative harmony of this region was enlisted to dispel discord in others. By increasing the susceptibility of various members of the British Cabinet to encroachments by France - especially those members

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1. In discussing the terms of the French Treaty with Cambodia, Cowley reported Drouyn de Lhuys to have declared that "it was well known that the French Government never sought in treaties of this nature for any special advantages for France." Cowley to Russell, No.375, 12th March 1864, FO 69/39.

who represented the Colonial Office, Admiralty and India Office - it was not without some adverse effect upon Anglo-French relations in issues of greater importance nearer home.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BACKGROUND OF CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES

"So it must always be with a man who is constantly trying to shape his Course not according to any fixed plan or determined Principle of action but according to the trifling Breezes of momentary Expediency ...."<sup>1</sup>

Palmerston's explanation of Napoleon III's "Trimming Game" in Italy<sup>1</sup> is significant for its implication: that foreign policy should be conducted in accordance with certain definite principles. To Palmerston and to Russell this was axiomatic: both recognised a merit in consistency. They were not entirely agreed in their conception of those principles. Palmerston thought of a principle of foreign policy primarily as a general law for promoting national interest. Russell, however, influenced by the Whig tradition, felt that a principle of foreign policy should also acknowledge a certain moral standard. Yet the difference was one of theory only. For in practice, Russell made no attempt to subordinate national advantage to international morality: merely so far as possible to reconcile the two.

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 21st September 1860, G. & D. 22/21.

Napoleon III was less addicted to principles, moral or otherwise. Partly as a result of temperament, partly because he seldom had a free hand, he frequently appeared in the rôle of an opportunist. Yet Palmerston was wrong in thinking imperial policy was devoid of principles in the Palmerstonian sense. For just as there were certain constant objectives behind French policy, so there were certain general principles that were designed to further them. Indeed, Palmerston was to have far less cause to lament the absence of French principles, than the fact that they so rarely accorded with his own.

British principles hinged on a double aim of policy. "Our objects," Russell declared in the House of Commons, "...are to maintain the peace of Europe and to secure that every Power should be allowed its independence as at present enjoyed. We ask nothing more than that."<sup>1</sup> He looked on these "legitimate"<sup>1</sup> aims as the traditional objects of British foreign policy,<sup>2</sup> still eminently suited for promoting Britain's advantage.

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 138, 6th February 1861.
  2. "You are too well informed" Russell wrote in an official despatch to Cowley, "not to know that the national independence of the States of Europe has been for three centuries excepting perhaps during the reigns of Charles II and James II the object of the policy of Great Britain." Russell to Cowley, No.1273, 24th December 1860, FO 27/1330.

Britain had been in a position to play a leading part in the two major treaty settlements of the nineteenth century. She was reasonably satisfied with the status quo. All she desired was peace in which to develop her trade and her resources. France was less fortunate. Although victorious in 1856, she was still unreconciled to the consequences of her defeat in 1815. Her allegiance to the Treaties of Vienna was only nominal. She was far from identifying her own prosperity with the existing territorial settlement: and she had inherited, with Louis Napoleon, a tradition of intervention on behalf of oppressed nationalities in Europe. Moreover, despite the Bordeaux pronouncement,<sup>1</sup> she was by no means averse to effecting the changes she desired by war. From hypotheses so different, it was not surprising that the principles behind British and French policy were generally conflicting.

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1. "Il est clair pour tout le monde" Napoleon wrote in a memorandum for the Council of Ministers shortly before the Italian War "que lorsque l'Empereur a dit L'Empire, c'est la paix, il voulait par ces paroles rassurer l'Europe et faire comprendre qu'il n'irait pas de gaieté de coeur recommencer les conquêtes de son oncle. Personne, cependant, n'a pu connaître par ces paroles que l'Empereur s'engageait à ne jamais faire la guerre .... Le véritable sens du discours de Bordeaux est donc ceci: "Je ne ferai la guerre que lorsque j'y serai contraint pour défendre l'honneur nationale et pour atteindre un but grand, élevé et conforme aux véritables intérêts du pays." Emile Ollivier, L'Empire Libéral [1898], III, 537-542.

An immediate consequence of the British position, and a first principle of British policy was respect, amounting almost to reverence, for the letter and spirit of treaty obligations. It was a principle that was applied to all diplomatic engagements, but more especially to the Treaties of Vienna as these were regarded as the very foundation of the new 19th century structure of international relations. "[I]t is the only landmark we have" wrote Cowley. "Without it we should be completely at sea."<sup>1</sup> This did not mean that the British Government were opposed to recognising any modification in existing treaties. They were prepared to admit the necessity of revision as a means of avoiding war, or registering the outcome of war - provided the revision was made in a regular manner. But recognising the security of Britain in the existing order of things, they came to demand a special respect for international engagements.

It was hardly to be expected that there would be a corresponding principle in France. In exile Louis Napoleon had called upon France "de mettre dans tous les Traités ton épée de Brennus en faveur de la civilisation";<sup>2</sup> as Emperor

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1. Cowley to Russell, private, 7th November 1859, G. & D. 22/53.

2. Le Prince Napoléon-Louis Bonaparte, Des Idées Napoléoniennes, [1839], p.11.

he stood in defiance of the engagement taken by Europe in 1815 to resist the return of a Bonaparte to the throne of France. Existing treaties had no special sanctity for him. Rather they were shadowy encumbrances, obstacles to a progressive programme. His general attitude towards them was thought to be reflected in Prince Napoleon's famous 'treaty-tearing pronouncement'<sup>1</sup> in 1861. "La politique française doit respecter les traités," he had been careful to state, "mais quant à ces odieux traités qui ont mis le pied de l'Europe sur la gorge de la France [i.e. Treaties of Vienna, 1815] il faut, toutes les fois que nous le pouvons les maudire et les déchirer."<sup>2</sup> But it was a distinction that was difficult to maintain. By its very nature, the principle of the sanctity of treaties scarcely admits an exception. France's attitude towards the Treaties of Vienna coloured her whole conception of the value of treaty engagements, and led her to actions which provoked ill feeling and distrust in England.

"It is not ... the position which France will occupy, but the manner in which she sets Europe and treaties at defiance that is so offensive."<sup>3</sup> This judgment of Cowley

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1. Clarendon to Hammond, private, 13th March 1861, FO 391/3.
  2. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1862], I, 78, Sénat le 1er mars 1861.
  3. Cowley to Russell, private, 15th April 1860, G. & D. 22/54.

on the French annexation of the neutralised districts of Savoy was indeed the crux of Britain's objection to the whole transaction. It struck the keynote of her remonstrance in March 1860.<sup>1</sup> It explains her insistence on a European Conference in the following July.<sup>2</sup> The decision to press for a conference was taken in the Cabinet and directly related to the need felt by Britain to regularise the essentially irregular and illegal situation created by the Treaty of Turin. France succeeded in postponing the Conference indefinitely: and the British Government therefore declined to recognise the Treaty of Turin as part of the public law of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Less than a year later, France again roused British mistrust by seeking to extend the period of her European mandate in Syria beyond the term laid down in the Convention

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1. "HMG would .. beg to submit that no case has been made out to justify this cession on the ground of necessary defences for France, and that this cession would most unjustly and in violation of Treaty engagements materially weaken a defensive arrangement which united Europe has provided as a security for the neutrality and integrity of Switzerland." Russell to Cowley, No.288, 22nd March 1860, FO 27/1324. (The whole despatch was drafted by Palmerston).
  2. ".. it seems to Her Majesty's Government" ran the official despatch "that the change which is produced by the Treaty of Turin, and especially the first case of aggrandisement of France in Europe since 1815, requires a formal Conference and a frank discussion." Russell to Cowley, No.669, 5th July 1860, FO 27/1326.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.709, 19th July 1860, FO 27/1326.

of September 1860. Reluctant to withdraw her troops until a fresh administration had been established in the Lebanon, France came to place a loose interpretation on the stipulations of the Convention. Reporting an interview with Thouvenel on 4th January 1861, Cowley represented him to have said that "[h]e did not suppose a few weeks more or less in the departure of the troops would signify or that a prolongation of their stay for that period would require the signature of another Convention." Cowley gave the Foreign Minister no reason to suppose that Britain would take a similar view. "I replied that I could not agree in this opinion ... that occupation could not be prolonged for a day without the consent of the Porte."<sup>1</sup> The British Government confirmed the Ambassador's statement in no uncertain fashion. "[I]t is impossible" Russell wrote to Cowley in a despatch to be read to Thouvenel "for Her Majesty's Government to consent to the prolongation of the stay of the French troops in Syria beyond the term fixed by the Convention of the 5th September."<sup>2</sup> In a later despatch, the British Government insisted that it would be a grave error "in point of right, and in point of policy" if the five powers were to confuse the question of foreign occupation with that of the future administration of the

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.18, 4th January 1861, FO 27/1383.

2. Russell to Cowley, No.50, 9th January 1861, FO 27/1372.

Mountain. "Suffice it to say that unless the Five Powers and the Sultan agree to renew the Convention of last September that Convention will expire, and the lawful occupation of Syria by foreign troops will terminate with it."<sup>1</sup> But France did not appear to appreciate the force of these arguments. Writing shortly after this outspoken representation from the British Government, Cowley reported that he feared he had been unable to make the Emperor understand the difference between the duties assigned to the expeditionary force and the European commission; "nor did he seem to be aware" the Ambassador added "that he is positively bound to withdraw his troops at the period fixed by the Convention of the 5th September."<sup>2</sup>

It was not only in violating treaties, and placing a loose interpretation on them that France caused disquiet in England. It was also in the brazenness with which she urged their wholesale revision. Cowley's immediate reaction to the Emperor's Congress proposal of 1863 was a general one. "[I]t is terrible" he wrote to Russell, "to have to deal with a man who can so lightly put forward theories replete with mischief."<sup>3</sup> Russell entirely agreed. He was no less taken aback at the suddenness of the proposal; no less appalled

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.108, 24th January 1861, FO 27/1372.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.165, confidential, 29th January 1861, FO 27/1384.
  3. Cowley to Russell, private, 5th November 1863, G. & D.22/59.

at its revolutionary nature. "The notion of scratching out the date from the Treaties of 1815 and of going over them to vote whether they shall stand good or not seems to be at variance with all sound principles of international law ..."<sup>1</sup>

France again transgressed the British principle of respect for international obligations by the indifference with which she viewed the violation by other powers of treaties to which she and Britain were also signatory. The British Government particularly resented her diplomatic inertia on the question of the Treaty of London of 1852; still more that she carried her indifference to the point of violating the spirit of her own obligations. For at a time when the treaty was nominally in force, the French Government, by means of a despatch to their Ambassador in London, subsequently communicated to the smaller German courts,<sup>2</sup> as well as by articles inserted in the Constitutionnel<sup>3</sup> and La Patrie,<sup>4</sup> publicly envisaged a solution of the Danish Question on the basis of nationalities.

A second principle on which Britain based her foreign policy was the much vaunted principle of non-intervention. Appreciating its moral value, as well as its hidden potentialities

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 14th November 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.448, 4th April 1864, FO 27/1527.
  3. 1st April 1864.
  4. 1st April 1864.

for extending British influence, Russell adopted it as "the whole foundation" of his policy.<sup>1</sup> "[W]e will never lose sight of the principle which we have before enunciated and which we think is a sacred principle" he declared in the House of Commons, " - one to which there are indeed some, but very rare exceptions, - namely, that with regard to the internal government of a country the people of that country are the best judges, and that no foreigner should interfere by force to coerce or to overwhelm their decision."<sup>2</sup> It was typical of Russell that he should have admitted exceptions to the principle on the grounds of "our own conduct in various instances"<sup>3</sup> and "the very foundation of the Constitution we now enjoy!"<sup>3</sup> In theory the exceptions he allowed were

1. Russell to Cowley, private, 28th May 1862, (copy), G. & D. 22/105. That Russell expected to further British interests by a policy of non-intervention in Italy is apparent from one of his earliest private letters to Cowley. "All I wish," he wrote, "is that when England speaks she should speak not for dominion nor for influence, but solely for the benefit of Italy. Our unpopularity in that country might in this way be dispelled and we might become the most trusted as the most disinterested of all Powers." Russell to Cowley, private, 23rd June 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103. Nor was the motive behind the British policy of non-intervention in Mexico disinterested. "[W]e have kept strictly ... to non-intervention," Russell wrote to Layard, "and thereby have preserved our Influence in Mexico ..."  
B.M. Add. MS. 38988, Layard Papers, [undated, ? February 1862].
2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLIX, 1794, 12th July 1860.
3. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 128, 6th February 1861.

sufficiently comprehensive to cover almost any instance of intervention. He was prepared to sanction intervention to obtain "a clear and beneficial object";<sup>1</sup> to secure "the safety of a foreign state"<sup>2</sup> or "its paramount interests";<sup>2</sup> to avert the danger of war. British forbearance, moreover, was conditional upon the forbearance of others. In practice, however, there were few occasions on which Britain departed from the principle of non-intervention; few occasions when her interests demanded she should take advantage of the exceptions she had formulated. This did not mean that she withdrew from participation in the events of the Continent. Palmerston was insistent on the British right and duty of offering advice. He strongly objected to the Queen's "Quibble" that "Diplomatic Suggestions" in the central Italian question after the signature of the peace preliminaries at Villafranca were "Intervention in the sense in which Intervention has been repudiated." ... "[T]o say that England ... is to have her tongue gagged and not to be permitted to express an opinion or give advice as to Settlements which tend to affect both the Balance of Power and the Firmness of Peace is to reduce England to a Condition of Imbecility ..."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.555, 4th June 1860, FO 27/1325.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.258, 16th August 1859, FO 27/1285.
  3. Palmerston to Russell, private, 23rd August 1859, G. & D. 22/20.

The French theory of nationalities corresponded closely with the positive side of the British principle of non-intervention. "[L]e Gouvernement de la France respecte profondément l'indépendance des peuples;" Billault declared in the Corps Législatif, "il est profondément respectueux aussi pour le principe de la souveraineté nationale; le principe de la souveraineté nationale fait sa force, fait sa légitimité et sa gloire. Et quant au principe de l'indépendance des peuples, il l'a écrit sur son drapeau, et il l'a écrit aussi en Italie avec son épée."<sup>1</sup> It is true that France refused to admit the British principle of non-intervention as a general rule of policy.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless she usually affected to subscribe to it. Indeed it was apparently such a laudably disinterested doctrine that it was difficult openly to disavow it. Yet although there was a point at which the principles of

1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863] V, 99, Billault in the Corps Législatif, le 26 juin 1862.
2. Cowley reported Walewski to have said in August 1859 "that the Imperial Government could not admit the doctrine of non-intervention as a general rule of policy although they were ready to adopt it in the present instance with regard to Italy, but that they considered that many circumstances might arise in other countries when it might be right and proper for the French Government to interfere." Cowley to Russell, No.331, 3rd August 1859, FO 27/1301.

the two powers met - respect for "l'indépendance des peuples" - there were several ways in which the enunciation of those principles led to controversy and a sharpening of differences.

Firstly in interpretation. Both powers were pledged to non-intervention in Italy, but both invoked the principle in an opposite sense in the face of Garibaldi's threat to the Italian mainland. France professed to believe that the only way of enabling the Neapolitans to choose their own form of government was to prevent Garibaldi from crossing the Straits.<sup>1</sup> The proposal was accordingly made to the British Government by the French Ambassador:<sup>2</sup> and subsequently the French chargé d'affaires communicated a further suggestion that Garibaldi should be prevented from disturbing the Pope.<sup>3</sup> But the British Government based their refusal of these overtures on the very grounds on which France had sought to justify them. Both were declared objectionable "as being in contradiction to the principle of non-intervention."<sup>4</sup> The argument between the two countries, as Thouvenel himself observed, rested on the application to be given to the word 'intervention'. France regarded Garibaldi's expedition as

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.960, confidential, 24th July 1860, FO 27/1342.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.741, 26th July 1860, FO 27/1327.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.809, 15th August 1860, FO 27/1327.
  4. Russell to Cowley, No.874, 7th September 1860, FO 27/1328.

a band of foreign adventurers; Britain as a band of native Italians. But there was yet a further difference. "When he had subscribed to the principle that there should be no foreign intervention in Italy" Thouvenel was represented as saying, "he had intended no more than that each country should be allowed to settle its own affairs within its own limits, but the question became entirely changed when territorial limits were disregarded and the unity of Italy was the object sought for." Cowley pronounced the qualification a new one. France had not questioned the right of the Duchies and Romagna to place themselves under Victor Emmanuel. Thouvenel rejoined that he had neither justified nor acknowledged it; that the cases were different as the sovereigns of central Italy had abandoned their thrones. So, Cowley retorted, had Francis II "to all intents and purposes," whilst the position of the Legations and Marches was exactly analogous.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in Mexico there was a difference of opinion on the interpretation of the principle of non-intervention. A French suggestion to back measures of pacification in that country by force drew from Russell a despatch in his best style. "The present proposal as I understand it is to impose or to influence by an armed force an arbitration in the internal affairs of Mexico," he wrote to Cowley. "To such

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.1205, 12th September 1860, FO 27/1345.

forcible interference in the internal affairs of an independent nation Her Majesty's Government are on principle opposed." He went on to consider whether conditions in Mexico warranted a departure from the general rule but came to the conclusion that there was "no case in which a remedy by foreign interference appears so hopeless."<sup>1</sup> But France was not concerned to justify an exception. She professed to acquiesce in the British view in principle, and to admit the inexpediency of forcible intervention in the internal affairs of an independent nation. But she drew a distinction between forcible interference and the moral encouragement offered by the presence of foreign troops.<sup>2</sup> It was a distinction she maintained to the end: French troops were merely reinforcing the wishes of the majority of Mexicans which had hitherto been suppressed by a usurping minority.<sup>3</sup>

British suspicions that France was secretly contravening the principle of non-intervention whilst publicly protesting adherence to it was another source of irritation to the relations of the two powers. In Tunis, for instance, France repeatedly declared that her consul had acted against instructions in attempting to coerce the Bey; that his actions were disapproved; that he would be reprimanded and recalled.

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.1037, 30th September 1861, FO 27/1380.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.1181, 2nd October 1861, FO 27/1397.
  3. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863], V, 104, Billault in the Corps Législatif, le 26 juin 1862.

He was in fact replaced: but the production of correspondence between the French Government and Consul did little to impress the British Government with the veracity of the other French assertions. "As to Drouyn's Forbiddings of Interference," Palmerston commented, "they were much like the Exhortations to the Irish School Boys who were pumping on their Master not in addition to the Ducking to nail his Ears to the Pump."<sup>1</sup>

There were also instances in which Britain objected to the exceptions which France claimed for the principle of non-intervention. Most important was the French occupation of Rome. The British Government summed up their case for the withdrawal of French troops in a despatch of 31st October 1862.<sup>2</sup> They admitted that the Law of Nations allowed exceptions to the general rule that each nation was the best judge of its own form of government. The exceptions in favour of supporting existing governments, they maintained, were usually defended on the grounds that a minority had seized power by intrigue, violence or military revolt, and that if protected the majority would, in time, be enabled to reassert its authority. Such occupations were generally limited to a term of two to five years. The French occupation of Rome, however, had lasted thirteen years: and the population

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1. Minute by Palmerston, 24th December 1864, B.M. Add. M.S. Layard Papers, 38990.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.1077, 31st October 1862, FO 27/1428.

appeared even less reconciled to their ruler than they had done formerly. Billault's defence of French Roman policy in the Corps Législatif was masterly. England, he said, had invoked "le grand principe de la souveraineté nationale" in opposition to the French occupation of Rome. "Ce principe" he went on "nous l'avons reconnu, car il est le nôtre. Mais ... nous avons nettement déclaré que des considérations d'un ordre supérieur pour la paix du monde imposaient à ce principe une exception nécessaire." He did not, of course, forget to mention that Britain herself allowed a departure from the principle of non-intervention in the cause of peace. And he backed his argument with an illustration. He pointed to the lands bordering the Black Sea and Bosphorus where Christian populations were held in subjugation in the interest of Europe and the peace of the world. "N'est-ce pas cet intérêt qui commande aux puissances d'étouffer ces sentiments de nationalités frémissantes et de leur imposer la soumission? L'Angleterre, n'est-elle pas elle même à la tête de ces puissances de cette politique?"<sup>1</sup>

Finally there was a point at which the French theory of nationalities went beyond the British principle of non-intervention. In opening the final session of the Corps Législatif in 1863, the Emperor declared that it had been a

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863], I, 202, Corps Législatif, le 10 février 1863.

constant principle of his foreign policy in the previous four years "favoriser, dans la mesure du droit et des traités, les aspirations légitimes des peuples vers un meilleur avenir."<sup>1</sup>

Yet it was exactly on the score of promoting the cause of nationalities at the expense of treaty arrangements that Britain took issue with France. It was the root of her objection to the French championship of subject races in the Ottoman Empire. It was the root, too, of her criticism of French policy in the Danish question. Britain did not only quarrel with France for publishing a proposal to consult the wishes of the Duchies on the eve of the assembly of a Conference to save the Treaty of London.<sup>2</sup> Aiming herself "to combine the existence of Denmark as a self-governing State with the satisfaction of the people of Holstein, Schleswig and Germany"<sup>3</sup> - to save the spirit of the Treaty of London if driven to abandon its substance - she resented the way in which France judged the whole question from the point of view of nationalities. When the French Government indicated a desire to consult the wishes of the people in the mixed districts of Schleswig the British Government discovered that "it would be a step backward in civilisation to lay down as a principle

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1863] I, 3, Discours prononcé par S.M. l'Empereur, le 12 janvier 1863.

2. Supra. p.130.

3. Russell to Cowley, No.500, 11th June 1864, FO 27/1519.

that a Sovereign could not rule with justice and fairness subjects of a different race and language from the race and language of the governing nation."<sup>1</sup> A prime instance of Russell's practical approach to principles! Drouyn de Lhuys at once disclaimed anything so reactionary. "It was only when subjects thought themselves aggrieved as in the present instance that it seemed necessary to have recourse to separation as a means of cure."<sup>2</sup> Even then there was a wide discrepancy in the views of the two powers. For the British Government refused to believe that the Duchies would have been able to overthrow Danish authority without the aid of foreign intervention.

There was also an offshoot of the French theory of nationalities to which the British Government objected: the principle of consulting the wishes of foreign populations by means of universal suffrage. This had an obvious attraction for France: it was the basis of her own constitution. But for a variety of reasons, not always easy to disentangle, Britain viewed it with disfavour. In the first place she considered it a revolutionary procedure. "We could not adopt it" Russell wrote to Cowley "without flying in the face of all our doctrines since 1688. Parliaments regularly summoned

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.500, 11th June 1864, FO 27/1519.

2. Cowley to Russell, No.694, 13th June 1864, FO 27/1530.

are the basis of our government - and if we accept universal suffrage we are gone."<sup>1</sup> But she had other objections as well. She regarded it as an expedient which lent itself to unscrupulous manipulation; one that encouraged unjustifiable intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. The views of the two powers were thus essentially different; and the difference was a recurrent source of friction between them.

In 1859, for instance, Russell pronounced the French idea of sending Commissioners into central Italy to ascertain the wishes of the Duchies by universal suffrage as "rather ominous."<sup>2</sup> He was even prepared to protest if the suggestion were made formally at the approaching Conference. "To assert that the opinion of a people can only be obtained by universal suffrage" he wrote "would invalidate the authority of our government and annul the deposition of Charles X and Louis Philippe."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, if money and intrigue were successful in obtaining a majority in favour of recalling the expelled rulers, there would then be a question of sanctioning the use of force against a 'factious minority'.<sup>3</sup> Open controversy developed later, with Russell's proposal to consult the wishes

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 12th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 10th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
  3. Russell to Cowley, private, 10th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.

of central Italy by means of newly elected assemblies. In a despatch to Persigny, Thouvenel stated the Imperial Government was convinced that it would not discharge its moral responsibility unless the principle of universal suffrage, which constituted its own legitimacy, were also to form the basis of any new elections in Italy.<sup>1</sup> Russell at once rejoined that it was difficult to comprehend "upon what principle known to the law of nations" that conviction was founded. "Is it meant that a Government cannot acknowledge a new Government in Europe as legitimate unless it is founded on the same principle as its own? .... Is it to be maintained that France wishes to assimilate the institutions of other countries to her own?"<sup>2</sup> Thouvenel protested that Russell had misinterpreted the French argument on universal suffrage. "His Excellency had distinctly recognised the right of other Governments to hold opinions at variance with his, nor had he sought to impose his on others .... He begged me to convey to Your Lordship the assurance that the Imperial Government had no wish or intention to dictate either to Sardinia or to the States of Central Italy what their proceedings should be."<sup>3</sup> Yet by a fine stroke of irony, it

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1. Affaires Etrangères. Documents Diplomatiques, 1860, (1861), 22. Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères à M. le Comte de Persigny, le 24 février 1860.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.180, 27th February 1860, FO 27/1323.
  3. Cowley to Russell, No.203, 28th February 1860, FO 27/1334.

was France who attempted to delay elections by universal suffrage: Britain who was glad for them to proceed. This did not mean that either power had changed its opinion on the ultimate merits of universal suffrage. Merely that Britain had no wish to interfere with the free choice of the Italians in the absence of foreign commissioners: and that without some form of outside control France saw no prospect of obtaining the result she desired.

The question of consulting the wishes of foreign states by universal suffrage was again raised in connection with the French annexation of Nice and Savoy. Britain's indignation at the transfer of territory was considerably heightened by the manner in which the wishes of the inhabitants were consulted. It was not so much that she resented the recourse to universal suffrage in distinction to any other method of ascertaining the popular will but that she considered the election had been unfairly conducted. Russell warned the French Government through Cowley that they would "do well not to lay stress on the unanimity of the vote of annexation" unless prepared for a full discussion - which the British Government had no desire to raise - "on the means which had been employed, and the mode of putting the vote."<sup>1</sup> And in a subsequent despatch, he left no room for doubt that in the British view both means and mode deprived the vote of all authority.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Russell to Cowley, Separate, 26th April 1860, FO 27/1325.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.493, 15th May 1860, FO 27/1325.

A third example of the difference between the two powers on the subject of universal suffrage was the French proposal to consult the wishes of the Danish duchies on their choice of sovereign. This time Britain's objection was primarily based on grounds of non-intervention. Yet the French Government evidently suspected a further cause of disapproval. The Emperor was at pains to reassure Clarendon that he had no desire to insist on universal suffrage provided that some other form of plebiscite could be adopted.<sup>1</sup> Drouyn de Lhuys thought to be even more conciliatory by denying that universal suffrage formed any part of the imperial programme. "He was quite willing to consider any other suggestion having the same object [i.e. ascertaining the wishes of the people]," Cowley reported him to have said. "He wished this to be distinctly understood."<sup>2</sup> In fact the British Government were of opinion that all three of their objections to the general principle were applicable in varying degrees to this particular case. To resort to elections at all would be to interfere between a Sovereign and his people; to conduct them in the presence of foreign intrigue would produce unreliable results; to base them on universal suffrage would be to carry the democratic principle to dangerous excess.

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1. Clarendon to Russell, private, 15th April 1864, G. & D. 22/26.

2. Cowley to Russell, No.459, 6th April 1864, FO 27/1527.

On the principle of conducting diplomacy by Congress or Conference in preference to the normal channels of diplomatic correspondence, Britain and France were also divided.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, Britain disliked these international gatherings, viewing them with a mixture of distrust and scepticism: but there were occasions on which she was prepared to take part in them, occasions, even, when she was prepared to initiate them. She was not unwilling to attend a Conference limited in scope to one subject on which an understanding might reasonably be expected.<sup>2</sup> She was ready to propose a conference as a means of averting war or regulating the changes made necessary by war. But with the memory of Laibach and Verona fresh in the minds of her veteran statesmen she was opposed in principle to attending a general assembly - whether Congress or Conference - without

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1. It was usual at this time to regard a Congress as an assembly of Foreign Ministers or other specially appointed, high ranking plenipotentiaries; a Conference as a meeting of local diplomatic representatives, presided over by the Foreign Minister of the country in which it was held. Cowley called attention to the distinction in July 1859 when France suggested that the affairs of Italy should be submitted to a Conference or Congress. "As you have determined on agreeing to a Congress or a Conference" he wrote to Russell, "I trust that the result may turn out better than you anticipate ... I strongly recommend conferences and not a Congress. The latter will raise expectations that will never be fulfilled and if the result is nil entails greater gravity in breaking up, whereas conferences among Representatives already accredited at some great Court can be put an end to or fall to the ground of themselves without attracting so much public attention ..." Cowley to Russell, private, 19th July 1859, G. & D. 22/53.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.1338, 22nd December 1863, FO 27/1483.

a defined agenda, and previous agreement on the means by which decisions were to be effected. Also as a result of her experiences - in Paris in 1856 as well as Vienna in 1815 - she tended to recoil from the trappings of a formal Congress, preferring instead the lesser pretensions of an ordinary Conference.

Britain's aversion to Congresses and Conferences, therefore, was directly attributable to her policy of non-intervention: and it was not a little enhanced by Napoleon III's proclivities for them. He made no secret of the fact that he looked to an international congress to revise the map of Europe. Moreover, he was as much attracted to the glamour of a Congress as Britain was repelled by it. To him, a Congress was essentially an assembly which met in Paris where Europe might be impressed by the pre-eminence of France, and France by the splendour of Empire. But unlike Britain he appeared to be genuinely convinced of the advantages of discussion over those of correspondence as a means of transacting business. For this reason he was predisposed to submit difficulties to a Conference of lesser representatives as well as to a full dress Congress.

The difference between British and French notions of the function of a Congress provoked a major crisis in Anglo-French relations at the end of 1863. In his Speech from the Throne on the 5th November, Napoleon accompanied his startling pronouncement that "Les Traités de 1815 ont cessé

d'exister" with the equally startling proposal to reconstruct "l'edifice, miné par le temps" by means of a Congress of all Europe "où les amours-propres et les résistances disparaîtraient devant un arbitrage suprême."<sup>1</sup> Britain was greatly alarmed at the proposal. She hastened to enquire what questions the Congress was to deal with; whether decisions, if agreed to by the majority, were to be enforced by arms. And there was an interesting revision in the draft of her interim reply, possibly on the suggestion of the Cabinet. In its original form this contained an assurance that the British Government would be ready to discuss with France "either in Congress or by Diplomatic Correspondence" any specified questions upon which a solution might be attained and European peace more firmly established. In the final version, however, the alternative of a Congress was<sup>2</sup> significantly omitted.

The French Government, in reply, indicated a number of pressing problems which might be submitted to the deliberations of the Congress:<sup>3</sup> but they gave no satisfactory undertaking on the question of force. Nor was the Emperor any more reassuring on the point in conversation with Cowley.

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1. Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif [1864], I, 5-6, Discours prononcé par S.M. l'Empereur, le 5 novembre 1863.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.1192, Seen by the Cabinet, 12th November 1863, FO 27/1482.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.1222, confidential, 18th November 1863, FO 27/1483.

The Ambassador reported he had evaded the question, merely expressing an opinion that decisions would be "acquiesced in." "He is, or wishes to appear to be sanguine that [difficulties] .. would disappear under the ordeal of discussion."<sup>1</sup>

French explanations were far from satisfying the British Government. Britain declined to attend the Congress, and gave two main reasons for doing so.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, that in following a period of peace it would have no authority; secondly that as a means of resolving the outstanding questions of the day it was unlikely to be effective. "It appears certain that the deliberations of a Congress would consist of demands and pretensions put forward by some and resisted by others; and there being no supreme authority in such an Assembly the Congress would probably separate leaving many of its members on worse terms with each other than they had been when they met."

There was also controversy between Britain and France on the subject of prospective Conferences. Britain was particularly reluctant, for instance, to meet the French desire for a Conference on the affairs of Italy in the autumn of

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.1086, 18th November 1863, FO 27/1498.
  2. Russell to Cowley, Seen by the Cabinet, No.1226, 25th November 1863, FO 27/1483.

1859.<sup>1</sup> Her main fear was lest the Conference might be asked to agree to the use of force as a means of restoring the rulers of central Italy, a measure which would have led to the re-establishment of Austrian influence in the Peninsula. "The pressing question," Russell wrote to Cowley officially, "is to know whether the use of force is contemplated as at Laibach and Verona to prescribe the form of government and dictate the name of the Sovereign in Tuscany and Modena .... H.M. cannot send a Minister to a Congress where any sanction is to be given or required to a proposal to impose by force a government or constitution in Tuscany or Modena or any part of central Italy."<sup>2</sup> But there was another reason for Britain's reluctance to fall in with the French proposal, one to which Russell referred in a private letter to Cowley. "I rack my brains in vain to find a plausible reason for

1. France first suggested that this assembly should be a Congress or a Conference. (Walewski to Persigny, 18th July 1859, communicated to Russell, 19th July 1859. Accounts and Papers, [1860], LXVIII, p.15). Later she formally proposed a Congress. (Walewski to Persigny, 21st November 1859, communicated to Russell, 30th November 1859. Accounts and Papers, [1860], LXVIII, p.229). But although Britain consented to attend it, she declined to send her Foreign Minister and appointed Cowley as first plenipotentiary. The decision was the cause of considerable resentment in France. Walewski told Cowley that the Emperor was "much ému" at the idea of Foreign Ministers not attending and of the Congress thereby degenerating into a Conference. (Cowley to Russell, private, 16th December 1859, G. & D. 22/53).
2. Russell to Cowley, No.329, 17th September 1859, FO 27/1285.

assembling a Congress" he wrote "... Italy is more tranquil than she has been for many years .... But there may be some hidden desire to revise the map of Europe and if there be we must join manfully with Austria and Germany in resisting it ..."<sup>1</sup> Thus in finally consenting to attend the proposed assembly, the British Government made it quite clear that they placed implicit reliance on "the French Emperor's declared opposition to forcible intervention" in central Italy: and that they considered deliberation on the means of establishing the internal and external independence of Italy on solid bases - as stated in the preamble of the Treaty of Zurich - to form its "sole object."<sup>2</sup>

Britain's reluctance to attend a Conference was also a cause of disagreement with France in the Polish question. When Baron Gros advanced the French idea of submitting the affairs of Poland to a Conference or Congress of Europe, Russell enumerated his objections to "dispersing ourselves into twelve" instead of "concentrating ourselves as three."<sup>3</sup> It was not what Russia asked; it would be a slow and clumsy machine; there was nothing it could usefully discuss. Privately he also revived the old fear that France might take advantage

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 13th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.535, 3rd December 1859, FO.27/1287.
  3. Russell to Cowley, private, 6th May 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

of such an assembly to propose a reconstruction of the map of Europe. The disagreement did not at first find its way into official correspondence. Gros submitted the French proposal to Russell in the form of a 'conversation écrite'; Russell gave him 'remarks' in answer. A month later, however, Russell indicated the conditions on which Britain would be prepared to attend a Conference on Poland in an official despatch:<sup>1</sup> and once again it was a reminder to France that Britain would continue to insist on the essentially limited function of such an assembly.

But it was not Britain who always opposed the assembly of a Conference, France who always supported it. Sometimes, from the very nature of their convictions, the rôles of the two powers were reversed. This, indeed, was what happened in the Danish question at the beginning of 1864. In a final bid to avert war between Denmark and the German Powers, Britain proposed the assembly of a Conference in London. But France did her utmost to thwart the proposal. Not that she doubted the efficacy of a Conference. Rather that she feared it would be the means of solving a problem she wished to keep open.

A last general principle on which Britain and France took different views was the contraction of binding engagements. It was a principle to which Britain, primarily on account of

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1. c.f. Supra, pp.71-2.

her desire to avoid entangling commitments on the Continent, was traditionally opposed. But France, with a vulnerable land frontier to defend, was constantly preoccupied with the search for a binding alliance. "Depuis mon avènement au trône" Napoleon III wrote to Franz Joseph, on the occasion of his overtures to Austria in March 1863, "j'ai toujours cherché, lorsqu'un intérêt commun me mettait d'accord avec une des grandes puissances à établir avec elle une entente plus générale, afin de cimenter ainsi une alliance durable ... [U]ne alliance .. où il va ferait cesser toutes les incertitudes du passé et tous les dangers de l'avenir."<sup>1</sup>

This difference of principle on the question of binding engagements was one that coloured the whole character of the relationship between Britain and France. For it meant that Napoleon turned to Continental powers for the security he was unable to find in an understanding with Britain. It also had serious consequences for the relations of the two powers in individual issues, particularly in the settlement of the central Italian question. Napoleon might have been persuaded to adopt the British solution of the problem in the autumn of 1859 if he could have obtained a pledge from Britain that she would give France military support in the event of

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1. Albert Pingaud, "La Politique Extérieure du Second Empire", Revue Historique, CLVI, (1927), p.57.

hostilities being renewed by Austria. But when he asked whether Britain would be prepared to make this pledge<sup>1</sup> he was informed that "every such question must be reserved for the time when the case arises."<sup>2</sup> And this "time honoured observance of English Cabinets"<sup>2</sup> was repeated still more emphatically when Thouvenel revived the question of an offensive and defensive alliance in the following February. In an official despatch, of which a copy was given to Thouvenel, Russell stated that it was "not usual for the British Government in the midst of such quiet for the present and such uncertainty for the future to enter into binding engagements."<sup>3</sup> And so the two powers continued to pursue their separate policies until the central Italians withdrew from the arena of international diplomacy by voting to join the Kingdom of Sardinia.

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1. Cowley to Russell, private, 29th November 1859, G. & D. 22/53.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 1st December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.  
 Russell personally considered the emergency was sufficiently great to justify a departure from this traditional policy. He agreed with the Emperor, and with Cowley that a military engagement between Britain and France would be the best means of conjuring an attack by Austria; "but there is no getting an English cabinet to exercise foresight." (Russell to Cowley, private, 6th December 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103. C.f. Supra pp.25-6.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.164, 22nd February 1860, FO 27/1323.

The main principles behind British and French policy, therefore, were essentially conflicting. They formed a background of potential discord against which negotiations between the two powers were conducted. They were the cause of initiating disputes, and by provoking controversy, of exacerbating existing differences of policy. Theoretically they were unrelated to any particular geographical region; but because they symbolised the individual interests of the two powers and were invoked in support of them they contributed in practice to reinforcing the regional trend of the 'alliance'.

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CHAPTER VI.

SECRET DIPLOMACY AS A FACTOR IN WEAKENING  
THE 'ALLIANCE'.

"...[I]f the alliance is to be anything real and satisfactory, it is obvious that there must exist ... between the Governments .... a clear understanding by each of the policy, the objects and intentions of the other ..."<sup>1</sup>

Such is the indispensable condition of a close and cordial association between two powers. For if one power becomes aware of a secret understanding by the other with a third party, or of secret action in conscious opposition to its interests, intimacy is gone, and confidence replaced by mistrust.

This was the fate of the 'alliance' between Britain and France. Owing to the form of her government, the temperament of her ruler; the nature of her interests, France frequently resorted to secret diplomacy in this period. Each year, the British Government was confronted by evidence of some secret action by France which was assumed or discovered

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1. Lord Derby in the House of Lords, 5th February 1861.  
Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLXI, 30.

to be contrary to British interests. The effect of these actions was to cause distrust of France and to lessen confidence in her. This was revealed in a number of different ways. It was shown, first of all, in the immediate reactions of British statesmen and diplomats to the secret proceedings of France - in confidential correspondence, in communications with the French Government, and in public speeches.

At the opening of the period, the existence of a secret agreement between France and Russia was a matter of common knowledge. In one of his earliest private letters to Cowley on the 23rd June 1859, Russell indicated his opinion of the effect that agreement must have on the British attitude towards France. "The secrecy about the Russian engagement with France is not very consistent with our cordial alliance" he wrote, "Walewski might as well be reminded that if he wishes the two nations to be friends, he ought to put more zeal into the business."<sup>1</sup> Thus in his view, a secret understanding between France and a third great power was bound to raise doubts in Britain of the strength of French loyalty to the Western 'alliance'.

Britain's reaction to a further revelation of French secret diplomacy in the following year was not confined to confidential correspondence between ministers and diplomats nor yet to communications between the British and French

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 23rd June 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.

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Governments. It was openly proclaimed in the House of Commons. In February 1860, France disclosed to Britain what she had previously denied in addition to concealing, the existence of an agreement with Sardinia for the conditional cession of Nice and Savoy. Once again it was the secrecy of the transaction, quite apart from its substance, which awakened distrust in the British Government. This was emphasised by Russell in a memorable speech on the 26th March when he expressed the conviction that "if that bargain, [i.e. between the Emperor of the French and the King of Sardinia], not so unlike many others which have occurred in the history of Europe had been openly declared, I will not say what amount of indignation would have been entertained in regard to it; but I must say, looking to the circumstances under which the question has been brought forward, .... the course that has been pursued has produced great distrust in this country and I believe it will produce great distrust<sup>1</sup> all over Europe."

The Franco-Sardinian understanding over Nice and Savoy was not the only instance of French secret diplomacy on Italian questions to arouse Britain's distrust in 1860. A few weeks before his famous pronouncement in the House of Commons, Russell had been startled to learn from Apponyi that Metternich

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1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, CLVII, 1257.

had had a written understanding with Walewski engaging Austria and France to act together in the Congress that was to have met at the beginning of the year. His amazement was reflected in the three exclamation marks which accompanied the private communication of this intelligence to Cowley.<sup>1</sup>

"It is quite inconsistent with Walewski's public professions to us," he wrote, "and would have justified our declining to join the Congress."<sup>2</sup> Cowley found no difficulty in obtaining confirmation of Apponyi's assertion from Thouvenel, who was none too well disposed to his predecessor. He learnt that Russian importunities on behalf of the Duchess of Parma had induced the Emperor to offer to support the claims of the Duke of Tuscany in the approaching Congress in return for the acquiescence of Austria in the translation of the Duchess to Modena. Austria had signified her agreement, and despatches had then been exchanged between the two Governments.<sup>3</sup> Yet Cowley also learned "on pretty good authority" that it had been stipulated that the engagement could never be made use of as a document binding the French Government. "Who," he commented, "can understand such crooked ways?"<sup>4</sup>

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 25th February 1860, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 28th February 1860, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.
  3. Cowley to Russell, private, 1st March 1860. G. & D. 22/54.
  4. Cowley to Russell, private, 27th February 1860, G. & D. 22/54.
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In 1861, Britain's trust in France was still further diminished by what she regarded as another indication of secret French diplomacy. When France showed reluctance to withdraw her troops from Syria within the period of six months stipulated by the Convention of 5th September 1860, the British Government suspected that she had signed the Convention with secret and ulterior motives. Palmerston, in particular, was persuaded that this had been so. "It must be evident to any Looker-on" he wrote to Russell, "that the Emperor from the Beginning contemplated a Roman occupation of Syria, and the augmentation of his army in Syria .. This was from the beginning the understanding of the French expeditionary force and I well remember seeing in some of our Despatches that the officers had been taking Houses for Two years and more."<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of Imperial policy was probably incorrect. At all events, French troops withdrew from Syria after the period of their stay had been prolonged for three months by consent of the Porte and the European powers. Yet the construction which the British Government had placed on the French attempts to elude the stipulations of the Convention left a permanent influence on the British attitude towards France. "When the French proposal of a foreign occupation of Syria was mooted last year" Russell wrote privately at the beginning of 1861, "several of my colleagues objected

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 31st January 1861, G. & D. 22/21.

that the French would not keep their word. I said I could not believe that they would break a solemn engagement. But I am now ashamed of my credulity and will take care never to believe any promise they may make however solemn."<sup>1</sup> The eventual withdrawal of the French troops in accordance with the terms of a revised Convention may have done something to modify this resolve: but once shaken, confidence is not easily restored.

Early in 1862, moreover, British confidence in France received a further shock. For the action of French agents in Mexico revealed plainly enough that France had put her signature to the Convention of October 1861 with very different intentions from those to which she had openly subscribed. Thus when Drouyn de Lhuys complained to Clarendon of the "unfounded mistrust" of France in England in August 1863, Clarendon took the opportunity of reminding him "that a convention had been signed with us respecting Mexico with totally different intentions to those which were professed and which we were known to believe in. So that although our wish was always to remain on the best terms with France and as far as possible to act with her upon all the great questions that arose, yet that we found the utmost difficulty in doing so as we never knew what fresh project would crop up to the surface or what blame the French Government would endeavour

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 12th January 1861, (copy), G. & D. 22/104.

to attach to us for not following them wherever they chose to lead." Reporting the conversation to Russell, Clarendon wrote that his rejoinder had been made "without warmth and as a simple statement of facts" and that it had "shut him up."<sup>1</sup>

Later in 1862, Britain was again confronted by evidence of secret action by France. A series of petty disputes between the Serbs and the Turkish garrison in Belgrade culminated in the bombardment of the town by the citadel on June 17th. In the following month, representatives of the signatories of the Treaty of Paris assembled in conference at Constantinople to enquire into the cause of the collision and to suggest means of preventing a repetition of it. No sooner had the first meeting taken place than it was revealed that a Franco-Russian protocol had been signed in Paris. The disclosure was made in St. Petersburg, and apparently by accident. During an interview with the Belgian Minister, Gortchakov asked Jomini to read out the latest telegram that had been received from Constantinople. This he did as far as the sentence 'M. Moustier has shown me the Protocol signed at Paris', whereupon Gortchakov snatched the paper out of his hand, locked it up in the drawer of the table at which he was sitting, and looked "so confused" that the Belgian Minister felt obliged to refrain from questioning him about it.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Clarendon to Russell, private, 31st August, 1863, G. & D. 22/29.
  2. Lumley to Russell, No.28, confidential, 29th July 1862, FO 65/605.

He directed his enquiries instead to the British chargé d'affaires: and it was in this way that news of the protocol filtered through to the British Government. On receiving a telegraphic report of the incident from St. Petersburg, Russell wired immediately to Paris for explanations. Cowley sought out Rouher, then temporarily in charge of the Foreign Office, mentioned the information which had been received by the British Government, and asked whether or not it was correct. The object of the conferences in Constantinople, the Ambassador observed, "would be completely vitiated if two of the Powers engaged in .. [them] .. had come to a previous understanding as to the course they should follow."<sup>1</sup> Rouher declared he had no knowledge of such an agreement. He stated his belief that none existed. But the British Government, seriously alarmed, were not to be satisfied with the personal opinion of a temporary official. They sent a formal despatch to Cowley, which he was privately instructed to read to Thouvenel "in French if possible",<sup>2</sup> demonstrating very clearly the distrust of French policy that had been roused by news of the protocol. Appealing for strict adherence to the Treaty of Paris, the despatch made a special plea for greater

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.955, 5th August 1862, FO 27/1443.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 7th August 1862, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

frankness in French dealings with Britain. "It is desirable for the prosperity of Great Britain and France, and for the peace of the world" it ran, "that those two countries should act in the same direction and guide their separate policy in such a manner as not to give rise to any ill will or misunderstanding between them. This is to be effected not indeed by always following the same course, which from the different character of the two nations is impracticable, but by mutual confidence, openness, and a desire to help each other in maintaining peace, promoting commerce, and favouring the progress of civilisation."<sup>1</sup>

Thouvenel's immediate reaction to this communication was to deny the existence of a Franco-Russian protocol.<sup>2</sup> He told Cowley that he would reply to the British despatch by stating that no separate engagement had been concluded between France and Russia on the question of Servia and that the Emperor and his Government looked to the Treaty of 1856 as the basis of their Eastern policy. But Cowley felt he had played the hypocrite long enough in swallowing the French denials. Dropping all reserve with the Foreign Minister, he stated that he could almost say he knew of the existence of a protocol. This provoked the unusually frank admission

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.821, 7th August 1862, FO 27/1426.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.963, 8th August 1862, FO 27/1443.

that "[a] negative in Diplomatic language carried little weight with it." "If I denied the existence of a protocol," Thouvenel was reported to have said, "you would not believe me. It is better, therefore, to leave this matter untouched. What I affirm to you upon my honour is that there exists no tie or obligation between the French and Russian Governments at variance with the stipulations of the Treaty of 1856."<sup>1</sup> Thus did Cowley succeed in drawing "Thouvenel's protocol tooth."<sup>2</sup> Russell expressed his satisfaction that "Your Excellency's plain and straightforward mode of dealing with M. Thouvenel has elicited from him a more candid avowal than he had hitherto made. But it is not satisfactory" he wrote "to know that the existence of this Protocol was at first positively denied by M. Thouvenel. It is not satisfactory" he reiterated "to find that two of the Powers in the Conference at Constantinople of the greatest weight and influence are bound by ties and engagements unknown to the other Powers."<sup>3</sup> He did not doubt that the protocol would

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.984, 14th August 1862, FO 27/1444.
  2. Cowley to Russell, private, 14th August 1862, G. & D. 22/58. Professor Riker, on the basis of material in the French archives, has revealed that the protocol was "an agreement on the part of the two governments to co-operate at the Conference of Constantinople in reducing the menace of the Turkish occupation of Servia and in seeking to have Turkish residents of that country placed under Servian jurisdiction." Vide T.W. Riker, The Making of Roumania, [1931], 382 note.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.862, confidential, 21st August 1862, FO 27/1426.

turn out to be "a very little baby."<sup>1</sup> But as the British chargé d'affaires wrote from St. Petersburg, the conclusion of a secret agreement was calculated to create "mistrust if not uneasiness."<sup>2</sup>

In 1863, the British Government had grounds for suspecting France of a further "act of disingenuousness":<sup>3</sup> and this at a time when the two powers were ostensibly acting in the closest association. Again the source of information was the British Embassy at St. Petersburg. Shortly after the presentation of the Austrian, British and French notes on the subject of Poland, Napier telegraphed that Drouyn de Lhuys had sent a confidential letter to the French Ambassador in which he spoke "apologisingly of the combined remonstrance ... referring it to pressure on the part of England."<sup>4</sup> Cowley was unable to conceal the surprise with which he learnt of this "extraordinary" proceeding of Drouyn de Lhuys. Experience had taught him that "the dealings of the French foreign department with its agents abroad are not always in strict conformity with the language held by the Head of the Department in Paris." Even so, the assertions

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 29th August 1862, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.
  2. Lumley to Russell, No.112, confidential, 16th September 1862, FO 65/607.
  3. Napier to Russell, No.277, most confidential, 26th April 1863, FO 65/630.
  4. Napier to Russell, No.267, telegram 9.45 p.m., 24th April 1863, FO 65/630.

attributed to the Foreign Minister were so directly contrary to the facts as well as to the language he had been holding at Paris, that Cowley was inclined to doubt the accuracy of Napier's information. If it were substantiated, however, Cowley indicated the inevitable consequence: that confidence in the French Minister's statements must be "much diminished."<sup>1</sup>

It does not seem that the British Government were ever able to ascertain the facts of the case. But when Napier extended his telegram in an official despatch he stated that although he had been unable to procure a copy of the letter from Drouyn de Lhuys, he had had it in his hands and had actually read it. "[T]he general effect left on the mind of any dispassionate person after a perusal of the letter" he wrote "would in my judgment be that the object of the writer was to excuse his course of action and to throw the blame of it on another."<sup>2</sup> Thus although Cowley was unable to confirm Napier's information, the evidence on which it was based was too well authenticated for it to be entirely disregarded.

In 1864 and 1865, the last two years of the administration, Britain again had cause to suspect that France was acting secretly in contradiction to her professions. At the beginning

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.498, confidential, 28th April 1863, FO 27/1490.
  2. Napier to Russell, No.277, most confidential, 26th April 1863, FO 65/630.

of 1864, with war imminent between Denmark and the German powers, Cowley's reports left the British Government in little doubt that France was secretly undermining the British peace efforts she affected to support.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, towards the end of 1864, and subsequently in 1865, the British Government were no less convinced that France was secretly countenancing the interference of her agent in Tunis whilst openly professing to censure and deplore it.<sup>2</sup> Palmerston was particularly indignant about the French proceedings in Tunis. He regarded the "Whole Matter" as "a Juggle between the Emperor, Drouyn and Beauval." "It is difficult to believe" he wrote to Russell, "that if Drouyn had really sent Beauval the Directions and Reproofs which he told us he had sent, Beauval would have continued to act as he did, unless those ostensible Instructions were accompanied by others of a contrary kind or unless he (Beauval) had private Instructions from the Emperor himself ..."<sup>3</sup> In his view the incident tended "to lower one's opinion of French Honesty and to destroy Confidence in French assurances."<sup>3</sup> This he represented to the French Government through their Ambassador. "I told La Tour the other day" he informed Russell in February 1865,

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1. c.f. Supra p.89.

2. c.f. Supra pp.136-7.

3. Palmerston to Russell, private, 15th December 1864, G. & D. 22/15.

"that the whole of that affair [i.e. Tunis] was calculated to destroy Confidence in the French Government."<sup>1</sup>

Not a year passed, therefore, without prominent British statesmen and diplomats testifying to their waning confidence in France on account of some secret action which they suspected or discovered to be contrary to British interests. But it was not only in their commentaries on French secret diplomacy that they revealed their deepening distrust. It was also in their actions, in their conduct of both foreign and domestic policy.

In the sphere of foreign politics, the British Government revealed their uncertainty about French intentions by an acknowledged policy of "restraining France by the shackles of diplomatic Trammels."<sup>2</sup> This policy was directly inspired by the French annexation of Nice and Savoy and first applied in the Syrian question. Thus when the French Government proposed the despatch of foreign troops to the Lebanon, Britain made her consent conditional upon the conclusion of a Convention between the Porte and the Great Powers.<sup>3</sup> She asked in addition for the signature of a protocol on the lines of the earlier one of 17th September

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1. Palmerston to Russell, private, 14th February 1865, G. & D. 22/15.

2. Palmerston to Russell, private, 8th February 1861, G. & D. 22/21.

3. Russell to Cowley, No.710, 19th July 1860, FO 27/1326.

1840, declaring that the Powers sought no separate advantage by their intervention in Syria.<sup>1</sup> The policy of control by 'diplomatic Trammels' was still more apparent when France sought to prolong the period of her occupation. The conditions upon which the British Government were prepared to agree to an extension of three months in the stay of the French troops were stated in terms which were as offensive as they were explicit. "I have to instruct you .. to be prepared to accede to the proposal of the French Government" ran the official despatch to Cowley "provided it is expressed in the clear and precise terms which are contained in the draft of Convention transmitted as an enclosure in this despatch and 'provided that by no condition direct or indirect expressed or implied is it to be agreed to or understood to be agreed to that the fulfilment of the positive engagement that the evacuation is to be completed by the 5th June is to depend upon anything other than a faithful and honorable execution of the words of the Convention.'<sup>2</sup>"

Nor was it for want of precautions in defining the scope of the combined operations against Mexico that the British Government were outwitted by France. Indeed, the

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.725, confidential, 23rd July 1860, FO 27/1327.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.274, 7th March 1861, FO 27/1373. The passage in parentheses was inserted by Palmerston in his own hand.

project had no sooner been broached, than the British Government stated their opinion that if such operations were to take place, the participating powers should declare that they did not seek "any augmentation of territory or any special advantage" and that they would "not endeavour to interfere in the internal affairs of Mexico..."<sup>1</sup> Subsequently they insisted upon the functions of the expedition being consigned to a Convention in which "[i]t must be provided ... that the forces of the contending parties will not be employed for any ulterior object ..."<sup>2</sup>

Distrust of France, and uncertainty about her intentions were again apparent in the way in which the British Government endeavoured to fetter the freedom of French action in questions arising from the Greek Revolution in 1862. Shortly after the flight of King Otho, and the establishment of a provisional government at Patras, the British Government took the precaution of reminding both France and Russia of the self-denying clause they had signed in the Treaty of 6th July 1827. "In any negotiations on the subject of Greece" the despatch ran "the letter and the spirit of this Article must be kept constantly in view."<sup>3</sup> The British policy of imposing

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1. Russell to Cowley, No.1023, 27th September 1861, FO 27/1380.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No.1049, 5th October 1861, FO 27/1380.
  3. Russell to Cowley, No.1090, confidential, 1st November 1862, FO 27/1429.

restraint upon France was carried a stage further by Cowley. In conversation with Drouyn de Lhuys, he suggested that the three powers should make a joint declaration to the provisional government of Greece to the effect that in electing a new Sovereign, the engagements contracted between the protecting powers should be scrupulously observed.<sup>1</sup> Russell took up the idea in an official despatch three days later. "... Her Majesty's Government consider it of importance" he wrote "that the views which the three Protecting Powers take of the obligations of the Protocols to which they are Parties touching the election to the Throne of Greece of any Prince selected from among the Princes forming part of the Families reigning in the States which signed the Treaty of 1827 should be made known at Athens without delay through their respective Ministers in Greece."<sup>2</sup> Provided France and Russia were willing to do likewise the British Government were prepared "to instruct Her Majesty's Minister at Athens to declare that Great Britain will not consent ... to the throne of Greece being assumed by such a Prince."<sup>2</sup> Cowley was instructed to press for an early decision from the French Government. But the Emperor did not care to be bound in so positive a manner.

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1. Cowley to Russell, No. 1271, 14th November 1862, FO 27/1447.
  2. Russell to Cowley, No. 1134, 17th November 1862, FO 27/1429.

He expressed adherence to the engagements that had been contracted by the protocol of 3rd February 1860, but declined to make known at Athens that he would refuse his consent to the throne of Greece being assumed by a Prince from the royal family of one of the three protecting powers, if such a Prince proved to be the spontaneous choice of the Greek nation.<sup>1</sup>

Finally the British Government devised potential "diplomatic Trammels" to meet the contingency of French military intervention in the Polish and Schleswig-Holstein questions. These embryo fetters figure only in Russell's private correspondence. But both were a direct consequence of experience of French secret diplomacy in the Italian question. At a crucial stage in the Polish negotiations, Russell wrote privately to Cowley that "[i]f the French were to go to war alone for Poland and begin as they probably would on the Rhine, we should not, I hope, repeat the blunder which Derby made in 1859 - We should, I hope, bind the French down strictly not to add to their European possessions on account of the "idea" of helping Poland as they helped Italy and themselves."<sup>2</sup> He was no less determined to "bind the French down strictly" at an equally crucial stage in the

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.1308, 21st November 1862, FO 27/1477.
  2. Russell to Cowley, private, 27th June 1863, (copy), G. & D, 22/105.

Schleswig-Holstein question. "In case the Emperor should ever quit his pacific attitude" he wrote privately in June 1864, "there are two things to be borne in mind whether we go with him or remain neutral. 1. There ought to be renewed assurances in case the Rheno-Prussian provinces are attacked that Belgium shall be left independent and neutral. 2. In case Italy is assisted we cannot consent that any part of the Italian continent or islands such as Sicily or Sardinia shall be separated from Italy."<sup>1</sup>

It was not only the French propensity for secret diplomacy, of course, which prompted Britain to pursue this policy of attempting to set diplomatic limits on French action. It was partly a conviction that French interests, both in the Mediterranean and northern Europe were opposed to her own; partly the knowledge that France had made one addition to her territory in the direction of the Alps and might well make another in the direction of the Rhine. Yet the very secrecy of French diplomacy did much to convince Britain that French interests conflicted with her own and also that French intentions were aggressive. It reinforced her suspicions of France and accentuated the need for adopting measures of precaution.

Similarly with the other manifestation of Britain's distrust - the unprecedented scale of her armament and defence programme in time of peace. It was not solely attributable

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 30th June 1864, (copy), G. & D. 22/106.

to the secrecy of French diplomacy, yet it was considerably influenced by it. At the opening of the period, Britain's military and naval estimates stood at a total of over £26,000,000. Leaving out of account the estimated expenditure on the Chinese War, they showed an increase in the following year, then a slight but gradual decrease. Transition in the character of naval construction was largely responsible for this unparalleled peacetime expenditure. The introduction of the screw in place of the paddle, and the substitution of iron for wood were innovations that were being incorporated in the French navy more rapidly than in the British. In 1859, Britain no longer enjoyed the relative naval superiority to France which it was her established principle to maintain.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Russell referred to this principle when Persigny came to inform him at the end of July 1859 that the Emperor had resolved to place his forces by land and sea on a peace footing. "Her Majesty's Government received this announcement" he told the French Ambassador, "in the spirit in which it was made, namely as affording a proof of the Emperor's desire to be at peace in Europe. If anything more precise and detailed were attempted it must fail. Great Britain .. was a great maritime Power and must continue to be so. In 1817, when this country had no reason to fear any enemy, Lord Castlereagh had declared that we ought to have a naval force equal to that of any two of the Maritime Powers of Europe. This basis was assented to by the nation, and for many years we had acted upon it. Latterly, however, new machinery, the employment of Steam Power and its application to Screw line of Battle Ships had made our old reserve of Ships of war unavailing. We had therefore begun and should continue to construct Ships and to raise seamen so as to place our navy in the same proportion of relative force to those of other Powers as in 1817 it was decided that it ought to bear."  
Russell to Cowley, No.197, 30th July 1859, FO 27/1284.

Indeed, British naval power stood in danger of falling below that of France. Thus it was that the French Colonels' demonstration against England at the time of the Orsini plot gave rise to panic of invasion in England. Thus, too, that Derby bequeathed a legacy of swollen service estimates to the Liberals and the nucleus of a local volunteer force. But it was not only the mounting strength of the French navy which determined the Liberals to press on with these defensive arrangements. It was also a general uncertainty about French intentions for which the secrecy of French diplomacy was largely responsible. The knowledge of a secret understanding between France and Russia at the beginning of the period gave impetus to the task of raising Britain's naval strength to a two power standard.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent instances of secret action by France all conspired to place a premium on adequate defence.

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1. "We cannot disarm here" Russell wrote privately to Cowley on 28th July 1859, "for our Navy is not yet in proper relative proportions to France and Russia." Russell to Cowley, private, 28th July 1859, (copy), G. & D. 22/103.

The influence of the Franco-Russian understanding on the British naval programme is again apparent from a letter of Palmerston's. "Considering the strength of the Navy of France" he wrote on 30th September, "and the certain Reconstruction of a Fleet of some 27 or 30 line of Battle Ships at Cronstadt, we ought steadily to go on adding to our Ships of War of all Classes for 3 or 4 Years to come."

Palmerston to Russell, private, 30th September, 1859, G. & D. 22/20.

Without reading in the French archives, it is impossible to judge the extent to which the French attitude towards Britain was similarly affected by evidence of British reserve towards France. From the British archives and published sources it would seem that France rarely complained of the secrecy of British action. There were occasions on which the French Foreign Minister revealed suspicions to Cowley of the existence of a secret understanding between Britain and other powers directed against France. But this was more of a tu quoque. When the British Ambassador was enquiring about the existence of a secret Franco-Russian protocol, Thouvenel rejoined that "he had as much right to suspect some secret understanding between Her Majesty's and the Austrian Governments."<sup>1</sup> Similarly in 1863, when Drouyn de Lhuys was aware that Britain suspected him of having taken steps to excuse French participation in the combined remonstrance against Russia, he mentioned to Cowley reports which had reached him - "... very detailed ... and from various quarters..." - of an understanding between the British, Austrian and Russian<sup>2</sup> Governments against France.

Nor is it possible to deduce very much about the confidence which France was disposed to place in the British Government from France's actions. She made no attempt to

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1. Cowley to Russell, No.996, 15th August 1862, FO 27/1444.
  2. Cowley to Russell, No.512, confidential, 1st May 1863, FO 27/1490.

introduce restrictive clauses into instruments of cooperation with Britain. And so far as the high level of her expenditure on armaments was concerned, it is probably fair to assume that this was dictated as much by the military character of the Imperial régime as by fear of Britain: and that fear of Britain was the fear of attack provoked by French aggression.

In fact, it would seem that Britain was extremely reluctant to resort to secret diplomacy. She did so only in exceptional circumstances. The only notable instance in which she acted secretly against France in this period was when she entered into secret agreements with Austria and Prussia after the annexation of Nice and Savoy.<sup>1</sup> But these agreements were essentially defensive compacts, and cut across no legitimate interests of France. But the fact that Britain so rarely employed secret diplomacy against France does not mean that France was not convinced of the contrary. And such conviction may well have diminished her trust in Britain.

A study of the British archives, therefore, leads to the conclusion that the Anglo-French 'alliance' was much weakened by the secret diplomacy of France. Throughout this period, Britain was repeatedly confronted by evidence of secret action by France: evidence of how little she knew of

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1. Supra pp.41-2.

the real intentions and policy of France; evidence of how readily France would depart from the spirit of the western 'alliance'. This provoked distrust which was revealed publicly as well as in private. Public expressions of British distrust - whether in speech or action - then roused irritation in France and ill-feeling between the two countries. Thus the secret diplomacy of France operated a vicious circle which played its part in destroying the cordiality of their association and preventing the 'alliance' from being, in Derby's words, "anything real and satisfactory."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Supra p.155.

## CONCLUSION

.... "The fact is that in our alliance with France we are riding a runaway horse, and must always be on our guard; but a runaway horse is best kept in by a light hand and an easy snaffle. It is fortunate for us that we are thus mounted instead of being on foot to be kicked at by this same steed; and as our ally finds the alliance useful to himself, it will probably go on for a good time to come ...." (Palmerston, 1857).<sup>1</sup>

In 1865, the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, England was not only at peace with France but still in nominal alliance with her. Yet the 'alliance' had long ceased to be an effective instrument of diplomacy; at no time between 1859 and 1865 did Britain feel able to place that reliance upon France which was a necessary condition of any forceful cooperation. She suspected France of desiring to undermine her position in the Mediterranean; also of seeking to extend the French frontier at the expense of arrangements designed to secure the safety of her own shores. These fears were traditional. They were enhanced at this time by the

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1. E. Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, 1846-1865, [1876], II, 127. Palmerston to Clarendon, 29th September 1857.

unique combination of circumstances which placed a Bonaparte on the throne of France with arbitrary control over formidable military, and mounting naval resources. They were still further accentuated by the character of the principles behind Imperial policy and by the Emperor's leaning towards secret diplomacy. All these factors conspired to produce a fixed distrust of France in Britain, even without the additional circumstance of rivalry overseas. Indeed, it was this distrust which was the dominant characteristic of Britain's approach to her relationship with France between 1859 and 1865. At the opening of the period it was veiled by the circumstances in which the Liberals came into power. It was gradually uncovered in the autumn of 1859 and reached a climax with the French annexation of Nice and Savoy in the following year. Thereafter it persisted as a constant background to the improved relationship of the two powers, colouring the whole tone of their association. It caused Britain to insist upon what Russell called a "jog trot pace"<sup>1</sup> in her cooperation with France and this proved irksome and irritating to the French steed. So that a rider on a runaway horse was no less apt a description of Britain's relations with France

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1. Russell to Cowley, private, 3rd December 1863, (copy), G. & D. 22/105.

in Palmerston's second administration than it had been in his first. And such a precarious combination was clearly no match for the singleness of purpose behind Prussian diplomacy.

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## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

### 1. Unpublished Material

#### A. The Foreign Office Papers in the Public Record Office.

F.O. 7. : despatches to and from Vienna, 1859-1865.

F.O.27. : despatches to and from Paris, 1859-1865.

[It is significant of the importance attached to British relations with France in this period that practically all despatches dealing with questions of policy, as distinct from routine, were drafted personally by Russell in his own hand. Occasionally Palmerston contributed a complete draft of his own; frequently he revised or added to those of Russell].

: correspondence between the Foreign Office and the French Ambassador in London, 1859-1865.

[Specially useful for the despatches communicated by the French Ambassador].

: interdepartmental correspondence, and correspondence with the general public, 1859-1865.

- F.O.146. : Archives of the British Embassy in Paris.  
 : despatches to and from London, 1859-1865.  
 : communications to and from the French  
 Government, 1859-1865.  
 : case volumes: Slave Trade, 1859-1865.
- F.O. 64. : despatches to and from Berlin, 1859-1865.
- F.O. 65. : despatches to and from St. Petersburg,  
 1859-1865.
- F.O. 84. : Slave Trade : despatches to and from  
 Paris, 1859-1865.

Case Volumes:-

- F.O.97/154: Denmark, 1864. Schleswig-Holstein  
 Conference, Protocols.
- F.O.97/155: Denmark, 1864. Schleswig-Holstein  
 Conference, Protocols, Rough Notes.
- F.O.97/207: France, 1860. Commercial Treaty;  
 Correspondence.
- F.O.97/220: France, 1855-1861. Madagascar.
- F.O.48/31 : Madagascar, 1843-1878. French Proceedings.  
 Vol.2.
- F.O.69/39 : Siam, 1861-5. Treaty between, France  
 and Cambodia.
- F.O.78/3186: Turkey, 1859-1872. Egypt : claims to  
 sovereignty in the Red Sea, Africa and  
 Arabia (Somali Coast), Vol.2.

Miscellaneous Boxes:-

- F.O.96/26 : 1859-61. Minutes, memoranda, etc.,  
 Lords Malmesbury and Russell.
- F.O.96/27 : 1862-1867. Minutes, memoranda, etc.,  
 Lords Russell, Clarendon, and Stanley.

[These two boxes contain a few pertinent minutes by Palmerston on the policy of the French Government; also some interesting sidelights on the preparation of Blue Books in questions involving relations with France].<sup>1</sup>

B. Private Papers.

(A) In the Public Record Office.

(i) Gifts and Deposits. G. & D. 22 : Russell Papers.

An invaluable collection for the study of British relations with France, from which only a few papers have been published in G.P. Gooch's Later Correspondence. Besides Cabinet Memoranda, and rough drafts of despatches, it contains Russell's private correspondence with the Queen, members of the Cabinet, British diplomatic representatives abroad, and foreign diplomatic representatives resident in London. The correspondence with Palmerston and with Cowley is specially useful. Few copies have been kept of Russell's letters to Palmerston; but Palmerston's letters to Russell have been preserved in considerable quantity and throw important light

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1. V. infra p. 188.

on the formulation of British policy towards France. The correspondence between Russell and Cowley is more extensive and there appear to be few gaps in the copies of Russell's letters. When in Paris, Cowley wrote to Russell almost daily: and Russell, when in London, wrote almost as frequently to Cowley, and more frequently to him than to any other diplomatic representative abroad. Russell's letters are particularly valuable in revealing Cabinet decisions and explaining the policy contained in official despatches. Cowley's letters are specially useful in recording the more confidential parts of his conversations with the Emperor; in conveying secret information; and in suggesting - with due deference - the future course of British policy. The importance of this regular correspondence between Russell and Cowley can be judged from the fact that it is sometimes essential to the understanding of a negotiation. Without this correspondence, for instance, it would be impossible to follow the course of the negotiations between Britain and France on the central Italian question in November and December 1859.

(ii) Gifts and Deposits. G. & D. 29: Granville Papers.

Granville's private correspondence with the Queen and Prince Albert; with members of the Cabinet; and with Earl Canning. Contains accounts of Cabinet meetings which Granville was authorised to send to Canning, and which he took upon himself to send to the Court. Little of importance for this period, however, which has not already appeared in Lord Fitzmaurice's Life.

(iii) F.O. 391 : Hammond Papers.

Hammond's correspondence with Russell and Palmerston; memoranda by Palmerston; letters from Cowley and Clarendon. Specially interesting for Cowley's candid opinion of Russell's conduct as statesman and chief, and his periodical criticism of both. No record, unfortunately of Hammond's letters to Cowley.

(b) In the British Museum.

Additional Manuscripts 38951-38953; 38959.

Correspondence of Layard with Hammond, 1861-1865.

Additional Manuscripts 38987-38991.

Correspondence of Layard with Russell, 1861-1865; minutes by Palmerston, Russell and Layard, 1861-1865.

Additional Manuscripts 39101-39117.

Letters to Layard from British representatives abroad, particularly Cowley, Hudson, and Odo Russell, 1861-1865. Cowley's correspondence with Layard, like his correspondence with Hammond, was not designed for the eyes of Russell or Palmerston.

Additional Manuscripts 44271-44273.

Letters to Gladstone from Palmerston, mainly on questions of defence and naval rearmament.

Additional Manuscripts 44291-44292.

Letters to Gladstone from Russell.

## 2. Published Material.

### A. Contemporary Publication of Despatches, Debates, Newspapers and Treaties.

#### (a) Britain.

##### (1) Accounts and Papers.

Blue Books were published in extraordinary profusion during this period. Their main interest, from the point of view of Anglo-French relations, lies in the extent to which the British Government was disposed to conceal or expose differences with France. In general the British Government were anxious to avoid

offending French susceptibilities and only revealed sufficient of their representations to France to satisfy the demands of public opinion. In laying papers on the question of Nice and Savoy, for instance, the British Government published in full their remonstrance of 22nd March; but they deferred to the French Government in withholding extracts on the controversy that arose from France's attempts to justify her annexation of Nice and Savoy<sup>1</sup> by reference to the Treaty of 1814.

Blue Books were usually sent to Cowley in draft so that he could suggest the omission of passages likely to offend the French Government:<sup>2</sup> and towards the end of the period, it seems that Cowley was in the habit of submitting these draft publications to

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1. Supra p.57 note 3.

2. This was done, for instance, in the case of papers on the Syrian question in 1861. Minute by Hammond, 4th April 1861. FO 96/27.

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the French Foreign Minister.

The following are the main collections that have been used. A full list is contained in: Temperley, H.W.V. and Penson, L.M.: A Century of Diplomatic Blue Books 1814-1914. Cambridge 1938.

### Italy

- 1860 : Correspondence respecting the proposed Annexation of Savoy and Nice to France.  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2624], p.43.
- 1860 : Further Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Italy. Part II (Jan.-Feb. 1860).  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2636], p.95.
- 1860 : do. Part III. (Feb.-Mar. 1860).  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2633], p.167.
- 1860 : do. Part IV. (Mar. 1860).  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2656], p.211.
- 1860 : do. Part V. (Mar. - Ap. 1860).  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2660], p.243.
- 1860 : Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Italy, Savoy and Switzerland. Part VI. (Mar. - June 1860).  
A. and P. LXVII, (1860), [2702], p.251.
- 1860 : Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Italy from the signature of the Preliminaries of Villafranca to the Postponement of the Congress.  
A. and P. LXVIII, (1860), [2609], p.1.

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1. This is inferred from a private letter of Cowley's. Writing to Russell in January 1863, Cowley reported that he had taken Drouyn de Lhuys to task for including a despatch in the Yellow Book of that year which misrepresented Odo Russell to have offered the Pope an asylum at Malta. "I hope that you will send as usual your blue book before it is published" he added. "It will prove how differently we do things of this kind." Cowley to Russell, private, 26th January 1863. G. & D. 22/59.

Syria

- 1860 : Papers relating to the Disturbances in Syria,  
June 1860.  
A. and P. LXIX, (1860), [2715], p.583.
- 1860 : Further Papers. (27 June - 6 Aug. 1860).  
A. and P. LXIX, (1860), [2720], p.605.
- 1861 : Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Syria,  
1860-1861.  
A. and P. LXVIII, (1861), [2800], p.17.
- : do. (Mar. - June 1861).  
A. and P. LXVIII, (1861), [2866], p.551.

Schleswig-Holstein

- 1863 : Correspondence respecting the Affairs of the  
Duchies of Holstein, Lauenberg, and Schleswig.  
(Mar. 1861 - Jan. 1863).  
A. and P. LXXIV, (1863), [3083], p.1.

Poland

- 1863 : Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Poland.  
(July 1862 - Mar. 1863).  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3111], p.19.
- 1863 : Correspondence relating to the Insurrection in  
Poland. (Dec. 1862 - April 1863).  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3150], p.25.
- 1863 : Further Correspondence. (Ap. May 1863). Part II.  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3154], p.203.
- 1863 : Correspondence respecting the Insurrection in  
Poland. (June 1863). Part III.  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3203], p.279.
- 1863 : do. (July 1863). Part IV.  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3213], p.285.
- 1863 : Further Papers respecting the Affairs of Poland.  
(July 1863). Part V.  
A. and P. LXXV, (1863), [3223], p.297.

Schleswig-Holstein

- 1864 : Correspondence respecting the Affairs of the Duchies of Holstein, Lauenburg and Schleswig. (Jan. - March 1864).  
A. and P. LXV, (1864), [3300], p.1.
- 1864 : do. (Dec. 1863 - March 1864).  
A. and P. LXV, (1864), [3371], p.215.
- 1864 : do. (25 June - 6 July 1864).  
A. and P. LXV, (1864), [3382], p.215.
- (ii) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, Vols. CLII-CLXXX, 1859-1865.
- (iii) The Times. 1859-1865.

This has been used primarily for the reports of speeches by Ministers in the Guildhall, London and elsewhere. No evidence has been found of speakers complaining they had been misrepresented: and in the absence of such evidence, the reports have been assumed to be reasonably accurate.

## (b) France

- (i) Affaires Etrangères. Documents Diplomatiques. 1860-1866. 3 vols. Paris [1861-1866].

A very meagre selection of despatches, published annually from 1861 onwards. Contains despatches from the French Ambassador in London which are not published elsewhere; also despatches between the French Foreign Office and their representatives at continental Courts; but most of the despatches from the French Foreign Minister to the French

Ambassador in London had been already communicated to the British Government, and so are to be found in F.O.27.

(ii) (a) 1859-1860.

Procès-Verbaux des Séances du Corps  
Législatif. Session de 1860. 6 vols.  
Paris 1860.

Compte-Rendu des Séances du Corps Législatif.  
Tome Unique. Paris 1860.

(These résumés of speeches in the Corps  
Législatif were reproduced in the Moniteur,  
where, occasionally, permission was also  
given to report debates in the Sénat).

(b) 1861-1865.

Annales du Sénat et du Corps Législatif.  
1861-1865. Paris 1862-1866. 17 Vols.

Verbatim reports, reproduced from the Moniteur  
where they were published the day following  
the debate. Contains the annual Exposé de  
la situation de l'Empire.

Specially useful for the pronouncements of  
Government officials. But these pronouncements  
have to be treated with caution as statements  
of Government policy. They were essentially  
apologies from orators who had no working  
knowledge of the material in the French  
Foreign Office.

- (iii) Le Moniteur Universel. Journal officiel de l'Empire Français. 1859-1865.

Apart from reports of the debates in both Chambers, contains official pronouncements, occasional despatches, and reports of Ministers to the Emperor. Interesting in reproducing extracts from the British press, notably reports of speeches by British Ministers, and announcements of the meetings of the British Cabinet.

- (c) Martens, le Baron : Recueil manuel et pratique de Traités, Conventions et autres actes diplomatiques sur lequel sont établis des relations et les rapports existant aujourd'hui entre les divers états souverains du globe depuis l'année 1760 jusqu'à l'époque actuelle.
- Ch. de, et Cussy,  
le Baron F. de

Tome Septième, Leipzig, 1857.

B. Later Collections of Despatches, Treaties etc.

(a) Britain.

- (i) British and Foreign State Papers. 1859-1865.

Vols. XLIX-LVI, London, 1867-1870.

- (ii) Hertslet, E. : The Map of Europe by Treaty; showing the various Political and Territorial Changes which have taken place since the General Peace of 1814.

London, 1875.

- (iii) Temperley, H.W.V. : Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt to Salisbury.  
and Penson, L.M.

Cambridge, 1938.

(b) France.

- (i) Les Origines Diplomatiques de la Guerre de 1870-1871.  
Recueil de Documents publié par le Ministère des  
Affaires Etrangères.  
Tomes I-III, 25 décembre 1863 - 31 juillet 1864.

Paris, 1910.

A full account of French official policy in the  
Danish question: but silent on French secret  
overtures to Prussia.

(c) Germany

- (i) Die Auswärtige Politik Preussens 1858-71.  
Band III Oktober 1862 bis September 1863,  
Oldenburg 1932.

Band IV Oktober 1863 bis April 1864, Oldenburg  
1933.

Particularly useful for reports of Goltz and Reuss  
on French overtures to Prussia in summer and  
autumn of 1863.

- (ii) Oncken, H. : Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons  
III von 1863 bis 1870 und der  
Ursprung des Krieges von 1870/71,  
3 vols., Berlin and Leipzig 1926.

Contains Metternich's reports of French overtures  
to Austria in February 1863.

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