



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Views of Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834

Author(s): Frederick Stanley Rodkey

Source: *The English Historical Review*, Oct., 1930, Vol. 45, No. 180 (Oct., 1930), pp. 627-640

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/553398>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Oxford University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The English Historical Review*

JSTOR

*The Views of Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834*¹

IN 1833 a misunderstanding arose between Prince Metternich the Austrian chancellor and Lord Palmerston the British foreign secretary over affairs in the Near East. During the previous year the sultan had been decisively beaten in a war with his powerful vassal Mehemet Ali, pasha of Egypt, Egyptian forces had advanced into Asia Minor, and the Porte in despair had made advances to the great powers for assistance. Evidently Metternich overestimated and Palmerston underestimated the danger with which the Ottoman Empire was threatened. Fearing that the Egyptian pasha was supported by France, and that his triumph would encourage the spread of 'French' ideas, the Austrian chancellor, so early as 9 September 1832, suggested the dispatch of a British fleet to the sultan's assistance in the Levant.² At a later date, after the British government had refused to aid the Turks, he approved of the tsar's sending forces to defend Constantinople and he outlined plans for a 'concert' between Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and France in the affairs of Turkey.³ Palmerston, who was misled for a time by the reports of consul-general Barker at Cairo and of other British agents in the Levant as to the strength of Mehemet Ali's forces, ignored Metternich's suggestion of 9 September, applauded the efforts of Admiral Roussin the French ambassador at Constantinople to force the Russian admiral to withdraw from Turkish waters, and refused to agree to the Austrian concert plan.⁴

After the tsar's agents at Constantinople had exacted from the Porte a treaty of defensive alliance as a price for Russian co-operation against the Egyptians, the misunderstanding between Vienna and London over Levantine affairs became even more pronounced. Metternich claimed that he had not known of the Russian move

¹ The dispatches here printed were gathered while the writer was serving as Fellow of the Social Science Research Council of the U.S.A.

² Lamb to Palmerston, no. 125, 10 September 1832, F.O. 7/235.

³ Lamb to Palmerston, no. 54, 13 April 1833, F.O. 7/241; Talleyrand-Périgord, *Mémoires, lettres inédites et papiers secrets*, v (Paris, 1891), pp. 147-9.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 125-6; Bulwer, *Life of Viscount Palmerston*, ii (London, 1871), p. 144. Metternich seemed very much disappointed because Palmerston refused to agree to his concert plan, which would have involved a congress of the Powers at Vienna. Palmerston's excuse for his rejection of the plan was that the three eastern courts had acted in bad faith in Belgian affairs. Cf. Lamb to Palmerston, no. 91, 'Confidential', 3 June 1833, F.O. 7/242; Palmerston to Lamb, no. 55, 18 June 1833, F.O. 7/239. Although Palmerston did not approve of the Austrian concert plan, he proposed in May 1833 to the representatives of Austria, Russia, and France the negotiation of a convention to guarantee the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. Russia of course was not ready to agree to such a proposal. Cf. draft of a note to Lieven, Neumann, and Talleyrand, May 1833, and draft of a convention, May 1833, F.O. 7/239; Talleyrand, *op. cit.* pp. 153-4, 162-4.

to negotiate the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi until after it was signed, but as its avowed purpose was for the defence of the legitimate authority of the sultan he was willing to give it his approval.¹ Palmerston on the other hand, exchanging roles with the Austrian chancellor in estimating the danger with which the Ottoman Empire was threatened, joined with the French foreign minister in the dispatch of identical notes of protest to the Ottoman and Russian capitals, and maintained that the conclusion of the so-called treaty of defensive alliance proved that Russia was 'intently engaged in the prosecution of those schemes of aggrandizement towards the south' which ever since the reign of Catherine II had 'formed a prominent feature of Russian policy'.² Eager to prevent the development of a European crisis, the Austrian chancellor attempted repeatedly to calm British fears as to the intentions of Russia in the Levant, but in so doing he awakened a suspicion that he had been guilty of the 'grossest treachery' during the period of the negotiation of the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi.³ Although Metternich declared that the taking of a single Turkish village by Russia would be to Austria a *casus belli*, it seemed clear to English statesmen that Austria had surrendered to Russia 'the exclusive protectorate of Turkey', and that the western powers could not count on Austrian aid even if Russian troops were to appear again at Constantinople.⁴ Indeed the misunderstanding between the Austrian and British governments over Turkish affairs was so serious that it continued for over three years and was not removed until Palmerston's distrust of Russian policy in the Levant had been in part allayed and replaced by distrust of French policy in northern Africa.⁵

¹ Lamb to Palmerston, no. 145, 3 September 1833, F.O. 7/243. Apparently Metternich knew that the tsar, influenced by the report of a Russian committee which was appointed to study the Eastern question in 1829, had accepted the theory that no power can have a better neighbour than a weak state and had come to the conclusion that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire should be preserved. Cf. Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles* (Paris, 1910), pp. 25-7, 47-50.

² Palmerston to Ponsonby, no. 23, 6 December 1833, F.O. 78/220; *ante*, xliii. 83-9.

³ Lamb to Palmerston, no. 130, 25 July 1833, F.O. 7/242. On one occasion, after a heated discussion with the Austrian chancellor about Russian policy in the Levant, the British ambassador at Vienna wrote: 'There was so much irritation and vehemence in Prince Metternich's manner that I could not have stated to him how deeply his own credibility is bound up with the proof we have a right to expect from him of his ignorance of the negotiation while it was pending at Constantinople, without bringing on a degree of open acrimony which it was better to avoid.' Cf. Lamb to Palmerston, no. 155, 1 October 1833, F.O. 7/243.

⁴ Lamb to Palmerston, no. 180, 26 December 1833, F.O. 7/243; Palmerston to Ponsonby, no. 23, 6 December 1833, F.O. 78/220.

⁵ Lamb to Palmerston, nos. 6 and 7, 5 August 1836, F.O. 7/257; Palmerston to Lamb, no. 34, 11 November 1836, F.O. 7/256. The tension between the British and Russian governments had relaxed considerably earlier in the year 1836 when the tsar's army of occupation was withdrawn from the Turkish frontier fortress of Silistria. Cf. Palmerston to Durham, no. 44, 2 May 1836, F.O. 65/221.

Perhaps the divergent sentiments and ideas which Metternich and Palmerston entertained upon Turkish affairs during this period of misunderstanding are revealed most clearly and unreservedly in documents that passed between London and Vienna in 1834. In July of that year Prince Metternich attempted to explain his Turkish policy and to re-establish a cordial understanding with the British government upon the Eastern question by means of a long dispatch which was communicated by the Austrian representative at London, Hummelauer, to the foreign secretary. As this communication served only to confirm his suspicion that Great Britain and France ' would have to encounter the active hostility of Austria ' if they sought in war ' to maintain the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire against Russia ', Palmerston made no immediate reply. In September 1834 Metternich forwarded a second dispatch which was to be communicated to him ; in that dispatch he expressed disappointment because his ' friendly overtures ' of July had not met with a more cordial reception in the British capital. Palmerston's suspicion in regard to Austrian policy in the Near East was not allayed by the second communication from Metternich, but in October 1834 he finally prepared two dispatches in reply. One of these was intended for communication to the Austrian chancellor. In it Palmerston declared that His Majesty's government had received Metternich's dispatch of July as a mark of friendly confidence. While the king's ministers could not agree with some of the statements it contained, they were pleased to find that the Austrian government continued to attach the same importance which His Majesty's government did to the maintenance of the independence and integrity of Turkey. It appeared by the dispatch of September that the Austrian government had expected that its communication in July would lead the British government to make ' some overtures ' to the cabinet of Vienna on the affairs of the Levant. His Majesty's government had no proposals to make, but if Austria had a plan to suggest that appeared to her to be well calculated to avert the dangers with which the peace of Europe was still threatened in Turkey, Great Britain would not fail to give to it all the attention which was due to any proposals from a friendly Power whose real interests in the matter were the same as hers.¹ Palmerston's second dispatch in reply to Metternich's communications was intended solely for the information of the British ambassador at Vienna, and in it he spoke without reserve of the real differences between British and Austrian policies in the Levant. This paper and Metternich's communications of July and September are printed below.

FREDERICK STANLEY RODKEY.

¹ Palmerston to Lamb, no. 41, 9 October 1834, F.O. 7/246.

No. 1. Metternich's first communication to the British government on the Eastern Question in 1834.¹

J'ai pris connaissance avec tout l'intérêt qu'ils méritaient, des rapports en date du 26 Juin, par lesquels vous m'avez rendu compte des entretiens que vous avez eu avec M. le Principal Secrétaire d'État et avec Lord Grey, sur les questions orientales.

Ces questions sont d'une nature éminemment grave pour l'Autriche ; elles le sont également pour l'Europe dont elles menacent de troubler en définitive la paix politique, comme elles en troublent déjà la paix morale ; elles pèsent, enfin, sur le corps social comme une nuée d'orage, et la comparaison me paraît d'autant plus juste, qu'il serait difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible, de déterminer la base sur laquelle elles reposent.

Qu'entend-on par les questions orientales ? De qui et de quoi prétend-on parler ? Est-ce de la Porte Ottomane, de la Russie, de la Perse, de l'Inde ? S'agit-il du présent ou de l'avenir, d'une pondération de forces, de faiblesses ou d'influences relatives ; des intérêts politiques directs de la Grande-Bretagne, de ceux de la France, de l'Autriche, du Sultan, de l'Empire Russe ? S'agit-il, enfin, de questions morales telles que les progrès de la civilisation, l'amélioration du sort des peuples musulmans ? Toutes ces matières peuvent assurément être comprises sous la dénomination *d'affaires de l'Orient* ; et c'est sans doute parce qu'il en est ainsi que tout le monde en parle sans se comprendre.

J'essayerai, Monsieur, de vous expliquer d'une manière bien claire ce que cherche notre Cour, et ce qu'elle trouve dans les questions de l'Orient. Peut-être rendrons-nous un service à la cause générale en nous imposant cette tâche.

Je commencerai par tirer une ligne positive entre le passé et le présent.

Dans le *passé* je comprends les événemens des dernières années, et je n'en excepte que les conséquences de la guerre soulevée en 1833 par le Pacha d'Égypte. Dans le *passé*, l'Autriche, dans les questions orientales, s'est trouvée constamment sur une ligne opposée à celle que suivait la politique russe. Il en a été ainsi, et il ne pouvait pas en être autrement, car alors la politique russe était dirigée contre l'Empire Ottoman, dont la conservation forme l'une des bases de notre politique.

Je ne me perdrai point ici dans la recherche et dans l'énumération des faits qui prouvent que les Puissances maritimes n'ont pas toujours suivi sous ce rapport la ligne de nos principes, ou qu'en la suivant, leur marche a souvent différé essentiellement de la nôtre. Il devra me suffire de rappeler les événemens qui ont amené la création d'une Grèce indépendante, et comme conséquence, la guerre entre la Russie et la Porte, ainsi que la paix d'Andrinople ; et ce sont certainement ces événemens qui ont eu l'influence la plus directe sur la situation *présente* des choses dans l'Empire Ottoman !

Quant à la politique du jour la première question à prendre en considération est, sans contredit, celle de la conservation de cet Empire. Parmi les Puissances, celles qui par la nature des choses, par la situation topographique de leurs États, par leurs intérêts politiques, par ceux de

¹ Metternich to Hummelauer, 17 July 1834, Austrian Staatsarchiv, England (*Weisungen*) 272 ; copy with marginal notations by Palmerston in F.O. 7/251. Hummelauer communicated this dispatch to Palmerston on 29 July 1834.

leur commerce et de la navigation, se trouvent placées dans une catégorie particulière à l'égard de l'Empire Ottoman, sont nommément l'Autriche et la Russie, en leur qualité de Puissances limitrophes de cet Empire, et les deux grandes Puissances maritimes. Mais ces quatre Puissances sont-elles également animées en faveur de Trône du Sultan d'un même esprit de conservation ?

Quant à l'Autriche, on ne saurait douter qu'elle attache la plus haute valeur à la conservation de cet Empire : en est-il de même des trois autres Cours ?

De toutes les Puissances l'Autriche est certainement celle qui est le plus directement intéressée à l'existence d'un Empire turc indépendant ; aussi, dans les circonstances les plus graves, n'a-t-elle point hésité à se prononcer hautement pour le principe conservateur, pour son application en faveur de la Porte ; et entre les années 1825 et 1830 elle a porté à ce principe le sacrifice de considérations politiques de la plus haute valeur pour elle ; or c'est cette même Autriche qui s'est rendu garante en 1833, vis-à-vis de l'Europe, de la parfaite uniformité des vues de l'Empereur de Russie avec celles de l'Empereur notre Auguste Maître, relativement à la conservation de l'Empire Ottoman. Toute garantie morale doit être fondée sur une conviction bien entière et celle dont l'Autriche n'a point hésité à se charger repose en effet sur cette base.¹

Si, dans l'histoire des Empires, il se trouve des exemples que des assurances politiques aient été données avec mauvaise foi, je ne connais aucune circonstance dans laquelle une Puissance se serait chargée d'une garantie morale, par suite d'une erreur palpable ; et cela pour la défense d'un Système diamétralement opposé à ses intérêts ; en se rendant ainsi gratuitement coupable, non seulement d'un méfait politique, mais même d'un suicide réel !²

Existe-t-il chez nous des doutes sur l'uniformité de vues conservatrices à l'égard de la Porte de la part des deux Cours maritimes ? Je vous avouerai franchement, Monsieur, que ces doutes n'existent pas. Nous avons eu, à la vérité, dans le cours des événemens de l'année dernière, des vues à combattre qui tendaient à séparer le sort du Sultan de celui de l'*Empire Ottoman* et qui ne pouvaient par conséquent s'accorder ni avec nos sentimens ni avec la connaissance parfaite que nous avons de la situation morale et matérielle de cet Empire ; mais nous croyons que ces vues ont subi depuis des modifications essentielles, et qu'elles ont fait place à une pensée plus rapprochée de la nôtre ; à celle, enfin, de la conservation pure et simple de cet Empire.

Sur quoi, dès lors, peut se fonder le mouvement moral qui continue malheureusement à agiter encore la politique dans les affaires de l'Orient ? Quelles sont les sources qui continuent à alimenter la méfiance des Puissances maritimes, et dans quelle direction doivent être cherchés les moyens d'y porter remède ?

Nous n'en connaissons point que ne fussent simples de leur nature ;

¹ Marginal comment by Palmerston : ' It was at the end of 1833 that Russia forced the Sultan to make a considerable cession of territory in Asia and that the Emperor himself demanded the cession of Kars from Achmet Pasha.'

² Marginal comment by Palmerston : 'Suicides are committed in public affairs as well as by private individuals.'

mais, comme les moyens simples ne sont applicables que sur un terrain déblayé des obstacles qui l'encombrent, il importe avant tout de s'assurer de l'existence de ces obstacles, et de calculer les efforts nécessaires pour les écarter.

La lecture de vos rapports du 26 Juin m'a laissé l'impression qu'il serait bien difficile de se rendre un compte exact des motifs ou de la véritable cause des récriminations auxquelles se livre le Cabinet Britannique. Ces récriminations¹ portent-elles sur *l'existence d'une Puissance russe telle que celle-ci existe réellement ?* ou se bornent-elles à *la supposition de l'existence de vues de conquête ou de prépotence de la part de cette Puissance, qui pourraient devenir menaçantes pour l'indépendance souveraine du Sultan ?*

Dans la première de ces hypothèses, nous sommes forcés de déclarer en conscience, que nous ne connaissons pas de remède à un fait matériel tel que celui que croirait devoir nous signaler le Cabinet Britannique. Les regrets, comme les vœux qui se trouvent en opposition avec des faits, n'ont, à nos yeux, aucune valeur politique.² Il existe, sans aucun doute, une Russie puissante, placée sous des considérations d'existence, de force et de faiblesse, qui lui sont propres ; tout comme il existe un Empire Ottoman placé également sous des conditions analogues. C'est par des faits qu'on doit s'opposer à des faits. Aussi l'Empereur, dans le cas où la Puissance forte tenterait d'abuser de sa force, au détriment de la Puissance faible n'hésiterait-Il point à vouer tous ses efforts au soutien des droits, de l'indépendance et de l'existence politique du Sultan.

Dans la seconde hypothèse, nous devrions, avant tout, nous assurer de quel côté viennent les dangers pour le trône ottoman. Ce n'est pas de nous, et nous le répétons, ce n'est également pas de la Cour de Russie qu'il peut avoir quelque chose à craindre. De leur côté les deux Puissances maritimes manifestent à son égard des dispositions conservatrices. Où se trouve donc le danger ? En partant du point de vue, que les quatre Puissances le plus directement appelées à influencer sur la marche des événemens dans l'Orient seraient uniformément placées sur un même principe, le danger devrait nécessairement se trouver autre part ; et s'il existe effectivement, on ne peut attribuer son existence qu'à l'état intérieur même de l'Empire ottoman ou à une bien regrettable rivalité politique entre les Puissances Européennes. Quant à celui que présente, sans aucun doute, la situation matérielle et morale du Gouvernement turc, et du peuple qui lui est soumis ; le meilleur moyen d'en diminuer les effets se trouverait certainement dans un parfait accord entre toutes les Puissances qui veulent sincèrement sa conservation. Quant aux questions de rivalité, ne serait-ce pas également dans un pareil accord que pourrait se trouver le seul moyen efficace d'empêcher que ce dangereux élément politique ne finisse par faire naître des complications sérieuses, que toutes les parties sont intéressées à prévenir ?

Il ne me reste que peu de mots à ajouter à cet exposé sincère, de la manière dont nous jugeons la situation dans laquelle se trouve placée l'une des grandes questions du jour. Ce que je vais consigner encore ici servira du moins à prouver, que notre Cabinet est prêt à aborder franchement

¹ Marginal comment by Palmerston : ' This word does not describe anything that has passed.'

² Marginal comment by Palmerston : ' But it is not necessary to let the Evil grow greater.'

toutes les chances qui faute d'une entente préalable entre les Puissances intéressées pourraient devenir menaçantes pour la paix de l'Orient.

Nous ne connaissons que les trois chances suivantes :

- (1) La Russie pourrait abandonner le principe conservateur qui sert aujourd'hui de base à sa politique à l'égard de la Porte.¹ Dans ce cas nous resterions fidèles à notre alliance intime avec le Sultan, alliance qui ne repose pas sur des intérêts de circonstance et passagers de leur nature, mais qui doit son origine à des intérêts du premier ordre que nous considérons comme vitaux pour notre propre existence, et qui n'ont pas besoin, en raison de cela, d'être corroborés par un acte diplomatique quelconque.
- (2) Il se pourrait que des dangers intérieurs vinssent à menacer le trône du Sultan, son indépendance souveraine et l'existence de son Empire. Dans cette seconde hypothèse notre ligne de conduite serait conforme à celle que nous avons suivie dans le cours de la dernière guerre de Mehemet Aly. On nous trouvera rangés à côté du Sultan.
- (3) Il se pourrait enfin, que des différends sérieux entre les Puissances maritimes et la Russie vinssent à troubler la paix politique de l'Orient. Dans ce dernier cas, nous nous trouverions placés entre deux dangers assurément fort graves de leur nature ; entre celui que nous viendrait de l'Orient, par une suite naturelle de ceux auxquels se trouverait exposé l'existence même de l'Empire Ottoman, et entre le danger du mouvement général que cet événement imprimerait à l'Europe entière. Placés entre ces deux dangers, nous ne nous laisserons point distraire par ceux de l'Orient, et nous disposerions nos forces de manière à être en mesure de faire face aux dangers qui pourraient nous menacer du côté de l'Occident.

Veillez, Monsieur, porter la présente dépêche à la connaissance de MSS. les Ministres Britanniques. La franchise avec laquelle notre pensée s'y trouve exprimée, ne leur laissera, je m'en flatte, rien à désirer. La question qui y est traitée n'est pas d'une valeur passagère pour notre Cour, elle porte, au contraire, sur l'un de ses premiers intérêts. Un Cabinet sage ne court jamais le risque d'être pris au dépourvu relativement à de pareilles questions ; aussi le Cabinet britannique, en prenant connaissance du présent travail, n'y trouvera-t-il que les mêmes opinions, les mêmes vœux et les mêmes principes que nous lui avons manifestés antérieurement.

Lord Grey vous a répété, dans l'entretien que vous avez eu avec lui le 26 Juin dernier, qu'il était convaincu que les intérêts de l'Autriche et ceux de la Grand Bretagne se confondent dans la question orientale. Nous avons le même sentiment, et c'est sans doute, parce que tel est le cas, que nous n'éprouvons point de gêne à nous expliquer envers le Cabinet de Londres avec une franchise qui porte le caractère de l'abandon.

Il appartiendra à ce Cabinet de tirer des explications franches dans lesquelles nous venons d'entrer, et que nous mettons à sa disposition, un parti utile pour mettre un terme aux complications du jour.

¹ Marginal comment by Palmerston : 'We deny that Russia acts upon such a Principle.'

No. 2. Metternich's second communication to the British government on the Eastern Question in 1834.¹

J'ai reçu le 17 Août, vos rapport Nr. 37. Je commencerai par rendre une pleine justice à la manière franche dont vous vous êtes acquitté des directions que je vous avais adressées le 17 Juillet d[ernie]r. C'est, d'un autre côté avec un regret véritable que nous avons été informés du peu d'accueil qu'ont rencontré les ouvertures amicales dont nous vous avons chargé d'être l'interprète envers le Cabinet anglais.

Les intérêts si divers et si multipliés des Puissances dans les questions de l'Orient ne peuvent rester étrangers à notre sollicitude. La Cour de Londres nous avait autorisés par maintes assurances antérieures à admettre, comme une vérité autant constatée à ses yeux qu'elle l'est aux nôtres que l'intérêt de la Grande-Bretagne et celui de l'Autriche se rencontraient dans les affaires de l'Orient.² Pénétrés de ce sentiment, nous nous sommes expliqués envers Elle avec un abandon parfait non seulement à l'égard de notre manière de voir et de juger les questions dans le présent ; mais, afin de bien fixer le Cabinet Britannique sur la valeur de notre pensée, nous avons embrassé dans notre dernier travail les chances de l'avenir. L'accueil qui a été fait à Londres à nos explications a si peu répondu à notre attente, que nous regarderions comme contraire à la cause à laquelle nous sommes toujours prêts à porter des sacrifices utiles, d'établir entre notre Cabinet et celui de Londres une discussion sur des questions politiques, à laquelle celles-ci ne prêtent point en réalité.

Notre attitude passée et présente dans les affaires de l'Orient est généralement connue ; le Cabinet Britannique lui-même s'est plu en plusieurs occasions à lui rendre justice. Nous nous sommes expliqués avec une franchise entière sur les chances de l'avenir. Un Cabinet ne peut aller au delà.

Veillez, Monsieur, donner connaissance de la présente Dépêche au Principal Secrétaire d'État. Nous désirons que des malheurs soient évités dans des contrées, à l'état desquelles nous prenons le plus vif intérêt. Nous serons toujours empressés de seconder les vues des Puissances que partageront à cet égard nos vœux, et le terrain sur lequel elles peuvent être sûres de nous rencontrer, ne saurait leur paraître douteux. Ce que nous désirons éviter, ce sont des discussions qui n'auraient pas une autre valeur que celle d'une polémique politique qui, loin d'éclaircir les positions, parvient avec facilité à les obscurcir.³ Ce sera toujours, au contraire, avec un véritable empressement que nous accueillerons les ouvertures que le Cabinet Britannique croira devoir nous adresser par la suite dans l'intérêt du maintien de l'affermissement de la paix dans l'Orient ; de cette cause, qui est celle de l'Autriche, comme elle est celle de l'Angleterre et de l'Europe entière.

¹ Metternich to Hummelauer, 11 September 1834, Austrian Staatsarchiv, England (*Weisungen*) 272 ; copy with marginal notations by Palmerston in F.O. 7/251. Hummelauer communicated this dispatch to Palmerston on 24 September 1834.

² Marginal comment by Palmerston : 'Yes, the real interests of the two ; and we lamented that Austria was not acting in a manner conformable with her real interests.'

³ Marginal comment by Palmerston : 'If this ground is traced in the former Dispatch it is one which cannot suit England ; it consists in confidence in Russia ; guarantee of the Personal authority of the Sultan ; and Systematic Interference to preserve internal Tranquillity in Turkey.'

No. 3. Palmerston's comments to the British ambassador at Vienna on Metternich's two communications to the British government on the Eastern Question in 1834.¹

My dispatch No. 41 of the 9th Instant is intended to be communicated by you to P[rin]ce Metternich, and I have therefore abstained from making in it any detailed or controversial remarks upon the Prince's Dispatch of the 17th July to Monsr. Hummelauer.

H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment] are led to infer from that Dispatch and the subsequent one of the 11th Ult[imo], taken together, that Prince Metternich has some proposal to make upon the subject of Turkish Affairs ; H.M. Govt. have not much expectation that he will propose any practical measure likely to lead to useful results, but they are desirous not to appear to discourage him from making a proposal if he is inclined to do so, and they think that he might consider them as intending to repulse his overture, if Y[our] E[xcellency] were instructed to state to him in detail, the several points of difference between the two Govts., which may be found in his Dispatch.

At the same time it is desirable that Y.E. should be in possession of Copies of Pce. Metternich's two Dispatches ; and yet I could not transmit them to you without comment, lest I should thereby mislead you, by inducing you to suppose, that H.M. Govt. concur in the views, and assent to the opinions of the Austrian Govt. as set forth in these Documents.

I shall therefore shortly state for your own personal information and guidance, some of the principal observations which suggest themselves upon a perusal of Prince Metternich's two Dispatches.

In the last Dispatch dated the 11th Sept., Prince Metternich expresses disappointment that ' the friendly overtures ' which he had made in that of the 17th July had not met with a more cordial reception from H.M. Govt. He says, that the Court of London had often declared its opinion that the interests of Austria and England with regard to the Affairs of the Levant are the same ; and that as he himself fully shares this sentiment, he had not only explained without reserve his own views and opinions as to the present state of the question, but had also taken into consideration the chances of the future : but he adds that he wishes to avoid any discussions which should merely lead to political controversy ; though he will always be ready to receive with pleasure any overtures from the British Govt. tending to consolidate the Peace of the Levant.

It appears from this, that the foundation of Pce. Metternich's communication of July was the opinion repeatedly expressed on former occasions by H.M. Govt., that the real and well understood Interests of Gt. Britain and Austria with regard to the Affairs of Turkey, are the same ; and assuming apparently as a corollary from thence, that because the real interests of the two countries in these matters are the same, therefore the specific opinions and practical views of the Two Governments with respect to them must be the same also, the Prince by his Dispatch of July explains his own opinions and develops his own views, and implies, though he does not actually say so, that if the British Govt. shares his opinions, and enters into his views, a concert may upon that basis be established between the two Govts. upon the Affairs of Turkey.

¹ Palmerston to Lamb, no. 46, 16 October 1834, F.O. 7/246.

In this sense, and in this only, can the Dispatch of July be considered as containing any overtures ; because in point of fact it really contains none.

It neither proposes any measures, or system of measures to H.M. Govt., nor does it invite H.M. Govt. to propose any such to that of H[is] I[mperial] Majesty : And it appears moreover, from the concluding Passage of the Dispatch of the 11th Septr., that the wish of Prince Metternich in making the former communication was to be informed of similarity of sentiments, if such similarity existed, but by no means to invite controversial discussion, if there was any essential divergence between the views of the two Cabinets.

Now though it is perfectly true that H.M. Govt. has frequently declared that in its judgment the real and well understood interests of Gt. Britain and Austria with respect to the Affairs of Turkey are the same, yet that declaration has always been accompanied by an expression of regret, not unmingled with surprise, that where interests are so nearly identical, opinions and views should be so widely different ; and H.M. Govt. have more than once observed to the Cabinet of Vienna that notwithstanding this identity of interest, the divergency of views rendered community of action on Turkish Affairs hardly possible between Great Britain and Austria.

But in what has this difference of opinion mainly consisted ? And does the Dispatch of the 17th July tend to shew that this difference has ceased to exist ?

The difference of opinion between the two Govts. relates to the source and nature of the danger which threatens the Ottoman Empire ; and to the means by which that danger should be guarded against.

H.M. Govt. think that the great source of danger to the independence and integrity of the Turkish Empire is to be found in the Ambition and in the Interests of Russia. H.M. Govt. believe that the annexation of large and important portions of the Turkish Dominions to the Russian Empire would be greatly conducive to the commercial prosperity, to the military strength, and to the political power of Russia ; they consider it to be an historical Fact, that the active policy of the Russian Govt. has for a long course of years been directed systematically, perseveringly, and with no small degree of success, to the accomplishment of this annexation. They see no reason whatever for supposing that the deliberately formed Plans of Russia upon Turkey have now on a sudden been abandoned ; They see no signs of a change of system, but on the contrary observe, that larger and more serious encroachments have been made by Russia upon the territorial limits, and upon the political independence of Turkey during the reign of the present Emperor, than during any equal period of former time. Nor are these particular indications at all contradicted by the general tenor of the Policy of the Russian Govt., for if we look to the Conduct of that Govt. in other Quarters ; to its vast military arrangements ; or to its active Naval Preparations ; to the extensive Fortifications which it is constructing at extreme points of its Territory, obviously to serve as the basis of offensive operations ; or to the Industry with which it endeavours to pave the way for its arms, by its diplomatic Transactions ; we are unable to find in the acts of the Russian Govt. Proofs of anything but a system of encroachment on every side, pushed forward as rapidly as is consistent with the internal

Resources of the Empire, and with the external obstacles, opposed by the resistance of other Powers.

But the fundamental Basis upon which, as appears by the Dispatch of the 17th July, as well as by previous communications, Pce. Metternich rests his proposed system of policy with regard to Turkish Affairs, is the Assumption that Turkey is no longer exposed to any danger whatever from the designs of Russia ; that the policy of the Russian Govt. with respect to the Ottoman Empire is entirely changed ; that instead of seeking for aggrandizement at the expence of Turkey, the Emperor of Russia is now steadily bent upon upholding the integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire ; and that upon this subject there is no difference between the Intentions of Russia and those of Austria.

Prince Metternich says that Austria declared herself in 1833 a Guarantee for the disinterested views of Russia with respect to Turkey ; and he seems ready to repeat this Declaration in 1834 ; his Confidence in Russian disinterestedness being apparently in no degree shaken by the Treaty concluded in Jany. last with Achmet Pasha at St. Petersburg, by which the Sultan has been persuaded to cede to the Emperor an extensive District upon the Asiatic Frontier of Turkey—There being moreover reason to believe that the Emperor himself demanded from Achmet Pasha the further cession of the important Fortress of Kars, which however he failed to obtain.

Here then is a difference of opinion between the two Govts. which must necessarily influence all their reasonings and practical views upon these Affairs. The starting point of the Austrian Govt. is implicit confidence in the disinterested policy of Russia towards Turkey ; the starting point of H.M. Govt. is a deeply rooted conviction that the policy of Russia towards Turkey is to weaken and degrade the Sultan so long as she may be obliged by circumstances to acquiesce in his nominal independence ; and to avail herself of every opportunity to aggrandize Herself by the progressive acquisition of Portions of Turkish Territory.

But what then are the sources of danger to Turkey which Prince Metternich points out ? They are two ;—‘ The internal condition of the Turkish Empire and the much to be lamented political rivalry of the Powers of Europe.’

H.M. Govt. are quite ready to admit that the internal situation of Turkey and ‘ the physical and moral condition of the Turkish Govt. and People ’ are a source of *weakness* to the Turkish Empire, and consequently, a cause of incapacity to resist danger ; but these things can scarcely be said to be primary sources of danger themselves. The remedy suggested by Prince Metternich for these evils is a perfect understanding between all the Powers who sincerely wish for the preservation of the Turkish Empire ;—H.M. Govt. undoubtedly think that such an understanding would be highly desirable, but they are of opinion that the object to which such an understanding ought to be directed should be, not an interference in the internal condition of the Turkish Nation, or in the administrative arrangements of the Turkish Govt., but the protection of the Ottoman Empire against the Ambition of any foreign Enemy.

And here it is necessary to notice a difference which seems to exist between the meanings which the Austrian Cabinet and H.M. Govt. respectively attach to the expression, ‘ The Turkish Empire ’.

The Austrian Govt. seems to consider the Turkish Empire to be identical with the Person of the Sultan, and when they speak of maintaining the independence of the Ottoman Porte, they appear to mean only to express their desire to support The Authority of the reigning Sultan. H.M. Govt. would greatly regret any internal convulsion in Turkey which should transfer the Sovereign Power to other Hands, or place any other Dynasty upon the Turkish Throne. But that which chiefly concerns the interests of Great Britain is, that the Countries which constitute the Turkish Empire, by Whomsoever or howsoever they may be governed, should form an independent and substantive political State, capable of bearing its proper part in the adjustment of the general balance of Power; and H.M. Govt. cannot by any means attach to a change, even of dynasty, in Turkey, the same importance which they would, to a transfer of Turkish Territory to any foreign Power; the former they might regret, but if it could be effected without leading to any interference of other Powers, they might not feel called upon to oppose it; the latter would be a legitimate, and might be a necessary cause of War.¹

With respect to the political rivalry of the States of Europe, that would seem rather to be a source of safety than of danger to Turkey: because no one state would be permitted by the rest, to aggrandize itself by the conquest of Turkey: and Mutual jealousies, would prevent any general agreement for a Partition.

Pce. Metternich towards the end of his Dispatch of the 17th July enumerates the different events which might happen with respect to Turkey, and states the course which in each case Austria would pursue. Let us enquire how far these explanations are calculated to inspire H.M. Govt. with the hope of finding effectual support in Austria, to aid in warding off the dangers which in their opinion may arise out of Turkish Affairs to threaten the Peace of Europe.

The first supposable case which is stated is, that Russia might abandon the conservative principle which now forms the basis of her policy with respect to the Porte.

In this case Prince Metternich declares that Austria would remain faithful to her intimate Alliance with the Sultan; an Alliance founded upon the vital interest of Austria, and *not requiring to be cemented by any diplomatic instrument.*

This Passage is no doubt intended to be understood as conveying an intimation that in the case supposed, Austria would take up Arms against Russia in defence of Turkey. No such declaration indeed is actually expressed by the words of the Passage; and were the occasion to arise the Austrian Govt. might perhaps contend that they had sufficiently executed the intentions here announced, by remaining neutral in the War, or by

¹ Undoubtedly Palmerston meant by this statement that, if the British government found itself reduced to the necessity of choosing between the establishment at Constantinople of the power of Mehemet Ali and the subjection of that capital to the power of Russia, it would unhesitatingly prefer the former. On at least one occasion Lord Ponsonby, the British ambassador at Constantinople, frankly warned the Porte that, if the sultan chose 'to throw his crown into the lap of the Emperor Nicholas', he must be prepared to see Great Britain and France unite closely with the pasha of Egypt. Cf. Palmerston to Ponsonby, no. 23, 6 December 1833, F.O. 78/220; Ponsonby to Palmerston, 'Secret', 19 December 1833, F.O. 78/225.

giving to Turkey the aid of their good offices. It is fair however to state that if the more vigorous determination to take up Arms in defence of Turkey is at present felt, and is intended to be intimated, such a determination could not perhaps with propriety have been expressed in a communication of this kind in distinct and positive terms ; at the same time it is to be remarked that the Austrian Govt. here implies that it would not bind itself prospectively as to its conduct on such an occasion, even by an engagement towards the Sultan himself.

The second case supposed, is that internal dangers should threaten the Throne of the Sultan, his independence as Sovereign, and the existence of his Empire ; and in such a case it is stated that Austria would follow the same line of conduct which she pursued during the last war between the Sultan and Mehemet Ali.

It must be presumed that the case here supposed refers to a renewed attack upon the Sultan by Mehemet Ali ; no minor Insurrection of any petty Governor of a Province could create the serious kind of danger which Pce. Metternich here describes.

But what was the course pursued by Austria during the late war in the Levant ? As far as that course is known to H.M. Govt., it was in principle very much the same as that adopted by the Govt. of England ; and so far the views of the two Govts. may be said to agree. But would not Austria in the supposed case look at a second entrance of Russian Troops into Turkey in a very different light from that in which H.M. Govt. would regard such an operation ? And would not her conduct thereupon be very different from ours ?

Thirdly, Prince Metternich supposes that serious differences between Russia on the one hand and England and France on the other, might disturb the Peace of the Levant ; and in this case he declares that Austria, placed between dangers of an opposite kind, the one, the conquest of Turkey by Russia, the other, some general European Commotion, would consider the latter danger as the most pressing, and would '*dispose her Forces*' so as to be prepared to encounter the danger that might come from the West.

Now it does not very clearly appear how or why a War in the Levant carried on by England and France against Russia, on account of the Affairs of Turkey, should produce any commotion in the West of Europe, unless some of the Powers which lie between the States which would then be Belligerents should intend to take up arms in favor of Russia, and in that case the commotion would be of their own creating.

But however unexpected such an intention on the part of Austria may be, this passage in Pce. Metternich's Dispatch seems meant to make known such an intention :—for construing this passage by the same rule by which in the first supposed case Austria may be considered as declaring her intention to defend Turkey against Russia, we can only understand this passage as announcing that, if England and France should be involved in War with Russia about the Affairs of Turkey, Austria would join Russia against England and France, at the risk of allowing, and even assisting Russia to make the Conquest of Turkey. For it is certain that the only ground upon which England and France could unite to take up arms against Russia with reference to the Affairs of Turkey, would be, either to prevent Russia from making another Military occupation of the Turkish Territory,

or else to defend the Sultan against Russian attack.—In either case it seems that Great Britain and France in their endeavours to maintain the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire against Russia, would have to encounter the active hostility of Austria. It must be confessed that it is somewhat strange to find such a declaration as this winding up ‘*an amicable overture*’ upon Turkish Affairs; and it would at all events be necessary that this menace should be retracted or explained away, before steps could be taken upon any Proposition however acceptable, which Pce. Metternich might make to H.M. Govt.

I have thus stated to Y.E. the principal remarks which have occurred upon the two Dispatches addressed by Pce. Metternich to Monsr. de Hummelauer; and I have only to repeat that these remarks are not intended for communication to the Austrian Govt., but simply for the purpose of putting you in possession of the sentiments of your own Government.