PRUSSIA

(BERLIN)

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BERLIN

FO 64/332: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Viscount Palmerston, No 38, Berlin, 21 August 1851

Return to stability in Prussia after 1848; recovery of royal authority and confidence in the government; criticism of severe Austrian policy

The most satisfactory accounts have been received here of the King's reception in the Western Provinces,[1] and I hear that the feeling in favour of the reactionary System pursued by the present Government is loudly expressed, and meets with general sympathy.

All classes, I am assured, seem to be gradually recovering from the feverish excitement which has prevailed during the three last years, and a desire for a return to the old System, of the Provincial States of Prussia appears daily gaining ground.[2] The elections for these Assemblies are nearly finished, and I am informed that the result of these has been more favourable to the Government than was expected by its most sanguine Supporters. It is even said that petitions praying for a modification of the Law for the regulation of the elections of the Deputies to the Chambers,[3] which are to reassemble next month, will be sent in from all the Provinces, and that publick opinion has been so strongly and generally expressed on this subject, that the Chambers composed even as they now are, will not venture to oppose the opinion of the Country; and the new Election Law will probably be carried without serious opposition and without forcing the Government to any extreme measures, such as dissolving the Parliament.

In fact the Royal Authority appears to have recovered its former position, whilst the confidence of the People in the Government is gradually increasing. They seem tired of running after changes and novelties, and are apparently so ready to return to the former system,

[1]From 15 to 18 August, Friedrich Wilhelm IV visited the Prussian provinces of Westphalia and Rhine on his journey to Ischl, where he met the Austrian emperor on 30 August 1851.

[2]The estate assemblies were abolished in 1848 and not included in the constitution of 31 January 1850. On 15 and 28 May 1851, the Prussian minister of the interior, Ferdinand von Westphalen, ordered their reinstatement as representative bodies for Prussian circles (*Kreistage*) and provinces (*Provinzialstände*). This interim measure was finally settled by the law on provincial estates of 24 May 1854.

[3]The Prussian chambers were elected according to a three-class franchise imposed on 30 May 1849 and stipulated in Article 71 of the constitution of 31 January 1850.

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and so easily led at the present moment, that one is inclined to believe that the work of Revolution in this Country never originated with the lower orders but that the movement received its impulse entirely from foreign Agents, aided indirectly by the then ambitious projects of the King.[4]

These feelings appear now to be forgotten, and the Government is aided in recovering its natural influence by the proverbial honesty which prevails in all branches of the Administration. Great indeed is the contrast, as far as I have been able to learn, between the state of publick feeling here and in Austria, where the extreme severity of the measures adopted by the Government, and its apparent unwillingness to entertain the question of a relaxation of the present arbitrary system have created a wide spreading spirit of discontent, which threatens to bring down fresh disasters on the Country, and which necessitates the maintenance of an immense military Establishment and the unremitting vigilance of the Authorities.[5]

I may take this opportunity of observing to Your Lordship that I have had several occasions of conversing with Baron Manteuffel respecting the internal policy of the Austrian Government, and that His Excellency has invariably expressed his regret at the system pursued by Prince Schwarzenberg.

The tenour of his observations to me has been that the severity of the Austrian Government was likely to produce greater dangers than it was intended to prevent, and at the last interview which I had with His Excellency he told me that when Prince Schwarzenberg was at Berlin[6] he spoke to His Highness on this subject and that the Prince after endeavouring to defend his System, concluded by declaring that he considered it necessary at the present moment, and that it would be impossible to modify it for a couple of years.

FO 64/334: Henry Francis Howard to Viscount Palmerston, Confidential, No 145, Berlin, 11 December 1851

Manteuffel's policy to cooperate with Austria as far as possible; some measure of rivalry between Austria and Prussia inevitable; Prussian desire to maintain harmonious relations with smaller states

With reference to the subject of the relations between Prussia and Austria, which are treated of in some of Lord Cowley's recent

[4]Bloomfield alludes to the convocation of the United Diet in 1847 in order to finance a railway link from Berlin to Königsberg.

[5]Bloomfield refers to restrictive measures such as the press ordinance of 6 July 1851 and the (intended) repeal of the constitution. The imperial rescripts of 20 August were most probably unknown to Bloomfield at the time of this dispatch. See pp. 454–456.

[6]Schwarzenberg visited Berlin on 29 and 30 December 1850.

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despatches of which your Lordship has been kind enough to send me copies, I beg to observe that the policy of Baron Manteuffels Government is to cooperate with Austria on all questions upon which such a cooperation can take place without a sacrifice of essential Prussian interests and Independence, and, when questions arise, upon which a difference of opinion manifests itself, not to allow it to assume an acrimonious character. On all questions affecting the internal and external tranquillity of Germany, it is more particularly the Policy of this Government to go hand in hand with Austria, and at all really important moments of crisis, the two Governments, will I feel confident, be found to act in common as long as the present Prussian ministry remains in power.

This by no means implies the necessity of subserviency on the part of Prussia to Austria, an accusation which was launched against Baron Manteuffel a year ago[7] by a Party which, miscalculating the strength of Prussia and actuated by views of aggrandisement, were ready to hurry her into an unequal struggle with Austria and Her powerful Allies. But the fallacy of such a course has now been long recognised even by those who advocated it at the time, and the courage with which Baron Manteuffel faced his adversaries and saved his country, and with it the greater part of Europe, from the horrors of a War which, in Germany, would have been a Civil War, is now fully and generally appreciated.

That the interests and the views of the two Great German Powers should occasionally clash and that a certain rivality should exist between them, is inherent in the nature of their respective and historical positions, but the firm determination of Baron Manteuffel's Government is to prevent any feeling of the kind from degenerating into antagonism or hostility, at the same time that they naturally seek to uphold the legitimate share of influence of Prussia in Germany.

The courteous and friendly tone which distinguishes the late correspondence between the Prussian and Austrian Cabinets with regard to a question upon which they are not agreed viz: the Commercial Question,[8] proves how very different the spirit is which now pervades them as compared to that which broke out on every occasion during the discussions which preceded Baron Manteuffel's nomination to the Foreign Department.

With regard to the other States of Germany, the Prussian Government are desirous to maintain harmonious and neighbourly

[7]Howard alludes to criticism after the Olmütz Punctation of 29 November 1850 (see n. 84 in Württemberg section), when Prussia abandoned its claim to leadership in Germany.

[8]For the dispute over the inclusion of Austria within a German commercial league see the following dispatch.

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Relations. Some of the larger of those States not unfrequently show a jealousy and mistrust of Prussia which belong to other times, nor do they seem to comprehend that the Prussian Government have abandoned those ideas of aggrandisement for themselves, and mediatisation for others, which had rendered them the just object of suspicion.

The party which is at present in power in this country have their attention chiefly directed to the internal organisation and commercial development of Prussia. There is, however, one subject which leads to a diversity of views with many of the Southern States of Germany – and that is the Commercial Policy of the Prussian Government which is of a decidedly liberal tendency, but in this respect the latter are checked even by the feelings of a part of their own Provinces.

The smaller States, which are the more immediate Neighbours of Prussia, naturally look to Her for support, but I do not perceive that her interference in their affairs is by any means as active as it used to be.

Upon the whole, therefore, though differences will no doubt not be wanting in Germany, German Quarrels being proverbial for their length and tenacity, I do not forsee any danger of a rupture between the States of Germany in general, or between Austria and Prussia in particular.

FO 64/342: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Malmesbury, Confidential, No 148, Berlin, 18 June 1852

Breakdown in negotiations between Austria and Prussia over Zollverein*; Bavarian and Saxon support for Austria; division of North and South German states over free trade and protection*

The accounts which have arrived from Vienna respecting the Zollverein question shew that the negociation between the two great German Powers is broken off. The Austrian Government appear to feel that their strength is encreasing amongst the Southern States, and they therefore accept the communication of the Memorandum of the Prussian Plenipotentiary, delivered at the Conference at Berlin on 7th instant (a translation of which was forwarded in my No 145) as a refusal to entertain the possibility of admitting Austria into the Union, and are resolved to drop, for the present at all events, the discussions on the subject with the Cabinet of Berlin.[9]

[9]Berlin General Conference of the *Zollverein*, April–September 1852. The Prussian plenipotentiary mentioned was Johann von Pommer-Esche.

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I understand from good authority that Count Buol has already made a confidential communication to the States composing the Darmstadt coalition and proposed that, as Prussia refuses to admit Austria into the Union at the head of which She now stands, a new Union shall be formed of the Southern States, and that negociations on this subject shall be immediately opened.[10]

I am further assured that the Saxon and Bavarian Governments express loudly their intention of submitting no longer to be dictated to from Berlin, and Monsieur de Beust has gone so far as to propose that the Seat of the Negociations for this new Union shall be held in the Prussian Capital under the very eye of Baron Manteuffel.

This unfortunate divergence of opinion may have the effect of completely disuniting the commercial interests of the North and South of Germany for if the present Zollverein is broken up Germany will probably be divided into two rival Camps, the North under the Banner of Free Trade and the South under those of Protection and higher duties.

I have already directed the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the apparent indifference with which the Prussian Government pretend to view the disruption of the Commercial Union, and of their project of establishing in that case a more liberal system of trade, and I hear that the Eastern portion of the Kingdom desires the dissolution of the present Union, and the restoration of the rate of Duties which existed before 1818, viz. 1/10th ad valorem,[11] whereas the Western and Manufacturing Provinces are not so well disposed to adopt the change.

It is impossible however that the Prussian Government should willingly give up the Commercial position which they have occupied for so many years in Germany, and which has so greatly added to their political importance; they still think that the Southern States must return to the Union; and I believe that the opinion in some of those States is that Prussia must accept their terms, and will in the end adopt them. I may here state that nothing has transpired to lead to the belief that the Prussian Government are disposed to concede any points to the Darmstadt coalition, and their language is that if more states do not choose to renew the Union with Prussia, Prussia can do without them.

[10]At the Darmstadt Conference (6 April 1852), Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau agreed to include the question of a commercial union with Austria in the pending deliberations on the continuation of the *Zollverein*. The main goal of the Darmstadt Coalition was to secure the political autonomy and leverage of the German middle states in federal and commercial affairs. Buol's confidential communication to the Darmstadt Coalition was contained in the circular dispatches of 10 and 12 June 1852.

[11]'Based on value'; in this dispatch, Bloomfield refers to the Prussian customs law of 26 May 1818.

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The general opinion appears to be that the negociations with Hanover and Bremen will end in their junction with Prussia,[12] but I hear that the Austrian government calculate on the complete isolation of Prussia. The moving persons in the Negociations of the Southern States are undoubtedly Mr de Beust and Mr von der Pfordten, and their personal feelings of jealousy and hatred of Prussia will induce them to go any lengths in their endeavours to humiliate the Government of this Kingdom even at the cost of their own material advantage, for the geographical position of Saxony within the Elbe, the great outlet of her Commerce would naturally direct her trade to the North, and therefore one sees in Monsieur de Beust's policy nothing but a political bias in favour of Austria, in opposition to the real commercial interests of that Kingdom – Bavaria on the other hand is so connected geographically with Austria that one can more easily comprehend the tactics of her Government and her desire for a closer commercial Union with that Empire, and the same may be said of the other States of the Coalition situated South of the Maine.

FO 64/344: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Malmesbury, Confidential, No 239, Berlin, 7 September 1852

King of Prussia protests against persecution of Protestants in Tuscany and Hungary

I had the honor to dine with the King at Sans Souci a few days ago and again yesterday at the Palace in Berlin, and His Majesty spoke to me on both occasions respecting the system of persecuting Protestants carried on in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, specifying especially the late condemnation of the Modiaj [*sic*] Family.[13] His Majesty observed that he approved most highly of the conduct of Monsieur de Reumont, His Chargé d'Affaires at Florence, who, though a Roman Catholick, had taken upon himself, without waiting for Instructions, to remonstrate against this religious persecution, and that in so doing he had but anticipated his Wishes. The King then said that he had resolved to direct a further remonstrance to be made at Florence on the subject, and that He trusted such a step would be approved, if not supported, by Her Majesty's Government; that He intended writing to the Queen on the subject, and should send an instruction to His Minister at Her

[12]The commercial treaty between Prussia and Hanover of 7 September 1851 (see n. 9 in Frankfurt section) was subject to approval by the other *Zollverein* states. Bremen concluded a commercial treaty with the *Zollverein* on 26 January 1856, but did not join until 1888.

[13]On 8 June, the royal court of Florence sentenced Rosa and Francesco Madiai to forty-six and fifty-six months' imprisonment respectively for proselytism and conversion to Protestantism.

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Majesty's Court, which would be communicated to your Lordship and which He hoped would result in the combined action of England and Prussia in the cause of Religious Liberty.

I replied to the King, that a strong Protestant feeling had been lately roused in England; that there was a deep rooted attachment in the Nation to the Principles of the Reformation, which would secure our sympathies with His Majesty's intentions, but that it was impossible for me to say how far Her Majesty's Government would think it advisable at the present moment to join in the proposed Demonstration. The King spoke with the greatest fervour upon the subject, and seemed to consider that the time was come for Protestant Governments to stand together in support of each other, for the purpose of counteracting the League which appeared to be established in Roman Catholick Countries to prevent the spread of any other Religion but that which they profess.

Since these Conversations with the King, I have seen Baron Manteuffel. His Excellency told me that the Instruction to Chevalier Bunsen on the subject would shortly be despatched, and that he trusted it would be well received in London. His Excellency said that His Majesty had directed that the Tuscan Government should be informed of the pain He had felt in learning the System of persecution followed in the Grand Ducal State, and that He hoped it would be seriously mitigated; that, if such were not the case, He should feel Himself called upon as Head of the Chief Protestant Power in Germany to adopt whatever Measures the Laws of Prussia permitted by way of retaliation. Such, said Baron Manteuffel, will be the tenor of this Despatch, and we trust that England may be disposed to act with us in endeavouring to obtain an alleviation of the Sufferings of our Co-religionists.

On my observing that I feared that Austria was engaged in backing up Tuscany in this frightful System, His Excellency said that he had many reasons for supposing this to be true, and that the Government of that Country had gained so strong a hold in parts of Italy beyond the limits of the Empire, and appeared so entirely to approve of all these Proceedings, that it was useless to look to the Cabinet of Vienna to suggest any alteration in the System pursued in Tuscany; and that he was sorry to say that the King had received lately a Petition from Hungary, where there were three Millions of Protestants, appealing to His Majesty to endeavour to devise means to supply them with Bibles, because the Government refused to allow the free dissemination of the Holy Scriptures amongst them; that they did not, it was true, withdraw from them the Bibles in their possession, but would not allow fresh ones, drawn up according to the Forms used by Protestants, to be sold.

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Baron Manteuffel mentioned further, that the explanations given by the Austrian Government for these Proceedings were, that they acted in self defence, as it had been proved that the Protestants in the Imperial Dominions were imbued with Revolutionary Principles, and His Excellency added that he was firmly convinced that this religious persecution was but a preparation and a cloke [*sic*] for a Scheme for enslaving Germany and introducing into it a System of Policy unworthy of the Age.

Having given Your Lordship an outline of what has passed between the King and Baron Manteuffel and myself on this important Question, I must at the same time state that His Majesty and His Minister perhaps see in this Project the means of rallying round Prussia the religious sympathies of Germany, and of strengthening her political Position.

I cannot close this Despatch without mentioning, that at an Audience which Monsieur de Reumont, the Prussian Chargé d'Affaires at Florence, obtained a short time ago of the Grand Duke for the purpose of remonstrating against His Proceedings, His Imperial Highness assigned as the reason for the conduct of His Government, "that Protestants were all imbued with socialist and revolutionary Schemes, and that He could not act otherwise."

FO 64/353: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 15, Berlin, 14 January 1853

Duke of Wellington's funeral; Prussian estimates of Britain's coastal defences and vulnerability to invasion

Having had several occasions of conversing with the Prussian Officers, who were sent to attend the funeral of the Duke of Wellington,[14] since their return to Berlin, I have been forcibly struck with the impressions which these distinguished men had received of the state of our national defences and of the military preparations which are being made in England to meet the possible contingency of a war.

It appears that these officers, who spoke with the deepest gratitude of the gracious reception which they had met with from the Queen, and the great kindness shewn to them generally by all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, had taken peculiar interest in examining and preparing returns of our military resources and the power we have of extending them, and I think it right to report to Your Lordship that their opinions are in the highest degree complimentary as to the

[14] The Duke of Wellington's state funeral took place in St Paul's Cathedral on 18 November 1852.

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quality and efficiency of every branch of the service; but they did not conceal their opinion that, with the vast extent of coast which we must have to defend, the facilities which would be possessed by our enemies of landing troops would require a much greater force to oppose them effectively than they believed Her Majesty's Government would be prepared with; that, notwithstanding the increase which was being made to our artillery, they did not consider that increase by any means adequate to repel an unexpected attack to which we might be exposed any day and in any direction, and that they sincerely hoped, for the security of our great commercial Country, which would suffer more than any other from invasion of a foreign enemy, that the numbers of our field guns would be considerably augmented in order to place us on a par, in that respect, with the armies as of the continent, which have all added of late years so enormously to this branch of their service.

I have thought it right to lay this statement before Her Majesty's Government in consequence of the subject having been brought to my notice by officers of great experience; but at the same time I must observe, that those forces who have spoken to me on this matter may be somewhat interested in seeing England forcefully armed, for they all look to our alliance in the event of France ever attempting to extend her frontiers, and would naturally prefer our possessing ample means of affording energetic assistance to Belgium, if the presence of a British Force were required there. However, they naturally look to the defence of that country and of the Rhenish Provinces with no common interest, and would gladly see us prepared for any emergency on the Continent, whilst at the same time they feel that the very preparations which would ensure to England the means of preventing a surprise from the French Coast, might be the means of aiding a neighbouring State, the integrity of which we have guaranteed.

FO 64/354: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Clarendon, No 163, Berlin, 22 April 1853

Conservative opposition to Prussian constitution; waning support for Manteuffel

I regret to have to inform Your Lordship that a dislike to the Constitution[15] seems to be growing up amongst the majority of the conservative members of both Houses of the Prussian Parliament, and this feeling is becoming so general at Court and amongst the higher classes, that many persons, who wish well to the continuance

[15]Constitution of 31 January 1850.

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of the present liberal institutions, are alarmed as to the result. It was hoped that the adoption by the Parliament, almost in the King's words, of His Majesty's Proposition for the future composition of the First Chamber,[16] and the facility with which most of the Government measures have been carried, would have reconciled His Majesty to the existing Parliament, but it is said that he is most desirous for further changes, and that, but for the opposition of Baron Manteuffel, the greatest risk for the Constitution would exist. There are nevertheless many persons, who approve of constitutional forms but who desire some important alterations in the election-laws,[17] and which can not be looked for in the present Session, which will be closed on the 14th of May.

The reactionary party and almost all the persons holding office about the Court are opponents of constitutional progress and are continually urging the abrogation of the present system, characterising the Parliament as an unnecessary clog on the power of the Crown, and so loud are the advocates in favour of a return to the old Provincial States,[18] that the subject was even treated from the pulpit a few days ago by one of the King's Chaplains.[19] This clergyman appears to have preached a sermon to a very numerous congregation in one of the largest churches of Berlin on Wednesday last, upon the occasion of the "Busstag," or day of repentance, when he called upon the people of Berlin and of Prussia generally to shew their deepest repentance by praying the King to restore that happy state of unity, strength and faith, in which the King and people of Prussia existed before their constitutional life began.

When such language is held by one party, it is nevertheless satisfactory to read an article in favour of the maintenance of the Constitution, which has been lately published in the "Zeit," Baron Manteuffel's Paper, a translation of which I have the honor to inclose,[20] but the existence of the present free institutions of this Country are I fear in a very critical state, and the adherents of Baron Manteuffel are growing less zealous in his support every day, the labour of a

[16]According to the government bill of 7 December 1852, passed by the chambers on 7 February and 10 March 1853, the members of the first chamber were to be appointed by the king, on either a hereditary or a lifetime basis. The law was enacted on 7 May 1853.

[17]See n. 3 in this section.

[18]See n. 2 in this section.

[19]Name not traceable.

[20]*Die Zeit*, established in 1850, was considered the semi-official organ of the *Zentralstelle für Presseangelegenheiten*, the press bureau under the direction of the minister president, Manteuffel. Enclosure: English translation of extract from *Die Zeit*, not dated.

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parliamentary life is distasteful to the majority of the conservative members, they dislike the prolonged absence from their homes, by which their own affairs and interests are neglected, and they would for the most part prefer seeing the simple forms of their ancient Government restored.

However, the rivalry, which exists between Austria and Prussia, may yet assist in the maintenance of the Constitution, for Prussia feels that the instant she ceased to be the leading liberal Power, she would lose much of her present weight and importance in Germany, and make way for the certain predominance of Austria.

FO 64/359: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, Secret and Confidential, No 155, Berlin, 24 December 1853

Conflict between King and Manteuffel over Eastern Question; growing strength of Russian faction at court; King's desire to side with Russia in crisis countered by Manteuffel

I have on several occasions reported to Your Lordship the difficulties and embarrassments caused to the administration of affairs in Prussia by the instability and vacillating conduct of the King. I have on the other hand as faithfully reported to Your Lordship the steadiness of opinion and the firmness of character, which distinguish Baron Manteuffel, and I have repeatedly expressed my conviction that so long as Baron Manteuffel remains at the Head of Affairs, I entertained no fear that the Prussian Policy would undergo any change which might place Her at the mercy of Russian dictation.

I had, indeed, confidently hoped from Baron Manteuffel's repeated assurances that, notwithstanding the innumerable intrigues of the Court Party, His Majesty had brought his mind to accept cordially the system which Baron Manteuffel had adopted, and I had been in hopes from various statements which His Majesty had made at different times to Baron Manteuffel, that there were no fears of his yielding to the pressure of his Court and the partisans of Russia.

I regret, however, to inform Your Lordship that these hopes have been deceived. During the last week a crisis of no small magnitude has taken place, the object of which has been the overthrow of Baron Manteuffel.

The circumstances which have attended this crisis are as follows.

The Russian Party at the Court have lately been most active and persevering in advocating the Russian cause, in representing the Emperor Nicholas as an aggrieved man, in holding Him up as the only and most efficient supporter of monarchical principles, and the

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antagonist of revolutionary and socialist doctrines; and in describing in glowing colours the danger to which Prussia would be exposed if She did not make common cause with Him.

These intrigues have been aided and fostered by Foreign influence, and on the 18th at a dinner given by The King, in honor of The Emperor's Fête day,[21] to the whole Russian Legation and the sycophants of Russia, who were exulting in a supposed triumph, and in the approaching success of their machinations, every engine was set in movement to excite His Majesty's personal as well as political feelings for His Imperial Brother in Law; and every artifice was resorted to induce His Majesty to throw over Baron Manteuffel, and to renounce his present political system.

The reported entry of the combined Fleets into the Black Sea[22] appears to have been the chief instrument made use of by this Party. On the spur of the moment and under a feverish excitement and irritation The King addressed a letter to Chevalier Bunsen[23] in which His Majesty stated "that his disposition towards England and all he had yet done had been in interests of Peace. That he could not conceive how the destruction of some Turkish Frigates could change the policy of England; and he specially instructed the Chevalier to inform the British Government that he could not go against Russia if England continued in the path which to judge from his (Chevalier Bunsen's) last despatch she was now pursuing."[24]

Baron Manteuffel on being cognisant of this Letter waited upon His Majesty, and expostulated on the views and opinions it conveyed. His audience lasted three hours, during which the King was very excited, and gave vent of mixed expressions of pique, distrust, and fear of England. Baron Manteuffel underwent a severe struggle, during which he expressed to His Majesty that, if the opinions His Majesty had then declared were to be carried out, he must decline to be the organ, and to act as a servant of the Crown.

[21] Loftus refers to the feast day of Saint Nicholas (6 December). The Gregorian calendar used in Russia at the time meant that the Russian celebration of the feast in Berlin fell on 18 December.

[22] On 5 December, following the naval battle of Sinope on 30 November 1853, in which an entire flotilla of Turkish ships was destroyed by the Russian navy, the French and British envoys to Constantinople decided to dispatch the allied fleet. Official orders from the French and British governments followed on 13 and 20 December. The fleet entered the Black Sea on 4 January.

[23] Friedrich Wilhelm IV to Bunsen, 19 December 1853.

[24] In his dispatch to Manteuffel of 17 December 1853, Bunsen reported that the Foreign Office believed that war was inevitable.

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His Majesty stated to Baron Manteuffel ["]with considerable warmth," that when he had signed the protocol of Vienna[25] he had not thought to sign a declaration of war against Russia; that the entry of the Fleets was "a Soufflet"[26] to the Emperor to which His Imperial Majesty could only respond by "des coups de canon."[27] That he (The King) could never allow himself to be carried away by the "fantasies" of England, and I believe he expressed even a menace of arming, – and of leaning on Austria.

Baron Manteuffel replied to The King that the protocol signed at Vienna conveyed no such meaning as His Majesty attributed to it. That it was an act which had relation to the present territorial arrangement of Europe, and more especially to Turkey, that it bore testimony to the collective unanimity of the Four Powers, and to those principles in the maintenance of which they were all alike deeply interested. Baron Manteuffel then entered at length into and explained to His Majesty the gravity of the step he was about to take. He depicted in forcible terms the financial and political position of Prussia. He conveyed to The King (as I am told) that in the present state of public opinion His Majesty would be unable to carry out a Policy of Alliance with Russia to the detriment of England; and he gave His Majesty clearly to understand that such a Policy would not be in harmony with the feelings of the Nation.

With respect to leaning on Austria Baron Manteuffel replied that Austria was, and could be no support to him; that She herself required support, but could offer none to Prussia.

After a severe ordeal in which the firmness and judgement of Baron Manteuffel were fully put to the test, His Majesty recognised the value of the arguments and reasonings of Baron Manteuffel, and at length gave way to their powerful appeal.

His Majesty confessed that he had indited that letter to the Chevalier Bunsen in stronger terms than he really felt, but he observed that he had done so intentionally as he was aware that the Chevalier would only virtually take account of half he had expressed, and that on this account he had sought to convey his opinion in stronger terms than were, perhaps, necessary.

His Majesty finally consented to withdraw his letter to Chevalier Bunsen, and has assured Baron Manteuffel that he continues fully to enjoy his confidence, and that His Majesty concurring in His

[25]In the protocol of 5 December 1853, Austria, England, France, and Prussia offered to mediate between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and declared that the maintenance of Turkey's territorial integrity was the necessary condition of the European balance of power.

[26]'Affront'.

[27]'Canon fire'.

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Excellency's views will maintain the system under which his present policy is based.

It is with the greatest satisfaction that I am enabled to inform Your Lordship that this crisis has happily passed away, owing entirely to the firmness, temper and judgement of Baron Manteuffel. I can assure Your Lordship (as I have previously done) that Baron Manteuffel will not desert the colours under which he is now acting. He may be forced to abandon his position as Minister of the Crown, but he will unflinchingly uphold the Policy he has himself instituted.

I have now given Your Lordship a faint but a truthful picture of the crisis which has occurred. It is not in my power to inform Your Lordship of all that passed between His Majesty and Baron Manteuffel. I can alone only faithfully report it's origin, it's outline, and what is perhaps more essential the Result which has endured. This crisis has been similar in nature and of a gravity as regards European Policy at the present moment not inferior to that which took place during the Emperor of Russia's personal visit at Potsdam.[28]

Nor can I conceal from Your Lordship my fears that, with The King's excitable temperament and easy seduction from the right path, returns of similar vacillation may periodically occur. They will even be attended with more or less risk to the position of Baron Manteuffel, involving like dangers to the best interests of this country and to Europe, but I mention likewise to affirm that, in the present state of public feeling in Prussia (when the hopes and the confidence of the nation repose more in the Minister than in the Sovereign) – whatever changes may occur, and whatever mischievous effects they may produce, they will be but temporary and of brief duration. I am fully persuaded that if a personal or dynastic policy were substituted for that now based on the national sympathies, and the national feeling, it would be but ephemeral and would only lead eventually to a more violent reaction in a contrary and popular sense.

Baron Manteuffel who has confidentially reported to me the substance of my present despatch, assures me that His Majesty has now given his entire adhesion to his views and wishes, and His Excellency seems to think that he may rely upon their steady continuance.

I almost feel in addressing this report to Your Lordship that I may be suspected of stating what is scarcely credible, but however fabulous this inconceivable conduct on the part of His Majesty may appear, I can assure Your Lordship that the facts have occurred as I have stated them, and that I have rather diminished than exaggerated the colouring in which they were related to me.

[28]The Tsar was in Potsdam from 7 to 10 October 1853.

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Baron Manteuffel has thus again added a fresh proof of his firmness of principle; his straightforward honesty of character, and of his patriotic devotion to his country, and cannot fail to invoke afresh the respect of His Sovereign, and the gratitude of the Nation.

FO 64/372: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Clarendon, Most Confidential, No 300, Berlin, 25 May 1854

Recall of Bunsen from London; Prussian unwillingness to join war; increasing pro-Russian tendency at court

With reference to my preceding number I have the honor to report some details connected with the dinner to which Her Majesty's Legation were invited yesterday by The King, which may not be without interest for Her Majesty's Government, as throwing some light on the political feelings of this Court, and the influences with which His Prussian Majesty is surrounded and which seem to leave no present hope of any change coming over his opinions.

The King told me that he had just finished a long letter to Her Majesty The Queen,[29] in which he had explained the reasons which had obliged him to recall Chevalier Bunsen from London. He said they were too long to be re-capitulated at this moment, and that it would suffice for him to ask if it was possible to retain at his cost a man who had declared that he would no longer obey orders. I here observed that Her Majesty's Government had expressed their sorrow at the decision which His Majesty had taken because they contemplated with regret the departure of a Minister who was most desirous to cultivate a close Alliance with England, and they apprehended that his removal indicated a change of policy.

The King replied that he had not changed his policy, and should not do so, and that it was for this reason that he was obliged to recall Chevalier Bunsen who wished to engage Prussia in War when he was resolved to remain at peace; that however, formally he bore him no ill will; on the contrary he entertained the most friendly sentiments towards him, and should never forget the good services he had rendered him of which he should ever bear the most lively recollection.

[29]Friedrich Wilhelm IV to Victoria, 24 May 1854. Bunsen was dismissed as envoy to London on 26 April, owing to his unauthorized attempts to promote an alliance between Prussia and the Western allies in the Crimean War. Bunsen presented his letter of recall to Queen Victoria on 31 May.

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His Majesty then spoke of his unwavering good feeling towards England, that we had many interests in common, and which it would always be his desire to attend to, but that he was determined not to be driven into war, that the attitude of France alarmed him, and he felt satisfied that danger was coming from that direction, that he knew from certain sources that the Emperor Napoleon was making his preparations, but He could assure me that he should be ready for him, that Prussia would do Her duty, and be able to repel an attack from whatever quarter it came.

I endeavoured to calm His Majesty's apprehensions as to any danger from France, but he declared that he had this intelligence from the best authority, and spoke with much excitement on the subject. I was hoping to have time to make some further remarks, and to endeavour to remove the false impulsions which appeared to have taken possession of his mind, for The King had withdrawn to a little distance from the other guests in order that our conversation might not be misheard, but The Queen[30] suddenly appeared and it was announced that we should miss the train to Berlin if I was delayed another minute, and we were hurried away, the King leaving the circle and literally accompanying me to the door.

It appears to me to be clearly demonstrated from what I saw and heard yesterday that His Majesty is not master in his own Palace; his mind is completely poisoned by those around him, He is misled by false impressions and real truth rarely reaches him.

In the midst of all the intrigues that are being carried on, The King however has no ill feeling towards England, but he hates and fears France, and he cannot be made to believe in the long continuance of what he considers an unnatural Alliance.[31]

The Court is more Russian than ever; there was not one person at dinner who could be accused of having the least tendency towards the Western Powers. Even Baron Humboldt, who has been invariably invited to meet Her Majesty's Legation at this anniversary dinner, for the King is in the habit of giving it every year, was not present. Baron Manteuffel was the only member of The Ministry invited, and I cannot refrain from stating to Your Lordship that when I see the persons by whom The King is surrounded, I only wonder that His Excellency is able even occasionally to defeat their machinations, and to obtain The King's assent to any act which has a semblance of sympathy with the Western Powers. He still seems to expect that circumstances will force the King to leave his present path, but I apprehend that Prussia

[30] Elisabeth Ludovika.

[31] On 27/28 March 1854, France and Great Britain declared war on Russia. The Anglo-French alliance rested on the treaties of 12 March and 10 April 1854.

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will never be brought to act with us of Her own accord, and that she will only feel herself called upon to take up arms when Germany shall be attacked or seriously menaced by Russia.

FO 64/377: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, No 151, Berlin, 3 November 1854

Conversation with Manteuffel on Anglo-Prussian relations; public opinion in Britain hostile towards Prussia for not supporting Western Powers

After the conversation which I had with Baron Manteuffel today with respect to the Russian Loan as reported to Your Lordship in my previous despatch,[32] His Excellency touched on some general topics with respect to the relations between England and this country. He remarked that the public opinion of another country was no reason why Prussia should be forced to pursue a policy in accordance with it. He referred in strong terms to the article of the Times, adding that however he regretted the language, personally for himself he cared not what the Press said.[33] He stated that it could not be supposed that The King would dismiss General Gerlach and the members of that Party, as was the system in England, for it must not be forgotten that the direction of affairs here was in the hands of The King, and not as in England in those of the Ministers. He referred to reports of blockading Prussian Ports,[34] when he remarked that however unfortunate and disastrous those measures would be, they must be borne. He expressed in vague terms that if hopes were entertained of a division between Austria and Prussia they were illusory, and he further stated (as if to invite a discussion) that it had been incorrectly surmised that the invitation which the Prussian Government had lately addressed to St. Petersburgh, had been instigated by Baron Budberg.[35]

[32]On 8 June, Russia floated a foreign loan of 50 million silver roubles at 5%. In his conversation with Manteuffel, Loftus expressed the British government's wish that the loan should not be quoted in Prussian newspapers.

[33]*The Times* of 31 October 1854 reported that the *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (established 1848; called *Kreuzzeitung* after its emblem, an iron cross), the organ of the pro-Russian camarilla, received a formal warning from the police to abstain from attacks against France and the 'political measures of other Governments'.

[34]Manteuffel alluded to the rumours of England's intention to blockade east Prussian ports as an extension of the blockade of Russian ports.

[35]In his dispatch of 21 October 1854, Manteuffel advised Werther, the Prussian envoy to St Petersburg, to call upon Russia to make a peace proposal through Austria on the basis of the Four Point Peace Proposal of Vienna (see n. 27 in Frankfurt section) and assure Russia of Prussia's support for this initiative for peace.

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I expressed myself as unwilling to enter into any discussion with His Excellency on these topics, as I felt that it could tend to no advantage. I said however that he must not be surprised if Public Opinion in England was extremely irritated against Prussia, for he must recollect that there was scarcely a family in Great Britain who was not now thrown into mourning by the losses incurred in the Crimea, and that it was naturally felt that if Prussia had cordially and heartily joined the Western Powers, whose cause She had declared to be just, the War might possibly have been wholly prevented, or at least that it would have been of short duration. I stated to His Excellency that England and France were determined to carry on the War with vigour, and not to lay down their arms until the conclusion of an honourable and durable Peace.

Although His Excellency during this interview conversed with calmness and composure, I could evidently perceive symptoms of anxiety and alarm at the critical relations of this Country with the Western Powers. He appeared more anxious than I have usually found him to invite a discussion, and he evidently referred to the invitation transmitted to St. Petersburgh for the purpose of extracting some observations or reply from me in return; but I allowed it to pass in silence, refraining from addressing to His Excellency any remarks whatever on that subject.

FO 64/391: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Clarendon, No 83, Berlin, 6 March 1855

Death of Russian emperor; official and military mourning in Prussia

No written despatches having reached The Prussian Government since the death of The Emperor Nicholas[36] we are indebted to the telegraph for the few details which have arrived connected with this Event, and which I have already forwarded to Your Lordship. The effect of the intelligence on The King of Prussia, The Royal Family and the Court is desponding; they feel that they have lost a Friend who possessed the means of assisting them in case of need: a portion of the public partake also of this feeling, but it is only partial, for many rejoice that Germany has been relieved from the oppressive Influence which has been exercised over the Country for so many years past.

To mark the Event to The Prussian Army, with whom The Emperor was very popular, a mourning of four weeks has been ordered, and this is the more remarkable as it is not usual for so long a mourning

[36]Nicholas I died on 18 February 1855.

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to be worn except for a King of Prussia, three days being the period for which it is worn for one of The Princes of the Blood, or a Field Marshal.

As a token of reminiscence to the Prussian regiment[37] of which He was Colonel, The Emperor Nicholas has directed in His Will that His Prussian Uniform should be deposited with His Regiment, and I believe that this intention has been well received.

I have thought it right to mention the forgoing, in order that Her Majesty's Government may be aware of the influences which are now at work at Berlin to keep alive the spirit which has directed the policy of this Country for so many years past.

The Great Theatres at Berlin have been closed for three nights, but all other places of amusement have been more than usually crowded which shows the little feeling really entertained by the public on this occasion.

FO 64/400: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, Confidential, No 217, Berlin, 1 December 1855

Prussian elections lead to strengthening of ultra-conservatives in chambers; predicted conservative changes to constitution; rising public discontent with the government

I have already reported to Your Lordship that the result of the late elections[38] has given a decided majority to the Party in the Chamber styled the "Extreme Right" or in other terms the Kreuz Zeitung Party, of which Messrs Gerlach and Westphalen are the leaders. The party of Bethmann Hollweg[39] has been almost completely broken up and its remaining members will probably fuse with the left.

It is necessary for me to have stated this in order more clearly to portray to Your Lordship the position of Baron Manteuffel. Being no longer able to fall back for support on the Bethmann Hollweg Party as formerly when driven to extremes by the Kreuz Zeitung Party, feeling likewise that he had not sufficient personal influence to resist the present majority in the chamber in favour of M. Westphalen, Baron Manteuffel, as I am informed, has completely given himself up to the Kreuz Zeitung denomination, and is content to preserve his place at the price of consenting to the changes which are to be proposed in the constitution.

[37] *Kaiser Alexander Garde-Grenadier-Regiment No 1.*

[38] The elections were held on 8 October 1855.

[39] Liberal-conservative Party, also named the *Wochenblattpartei* after the *Preußische Wochenblatt* (established 1851). For the *Kreuzzeitung* Party see n. 33 in this section.

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I am informed that it is intended to bring forward:
1° A law for the regulation of the feudal rights.
2° A modification of the Electoral law.[40]
3° Biennial in lieu of Annual Sessions of the Chambers.

These inroads into the Constitution[41] will no doubt invoke much opposition in the Chamber but their success is undoubted, and it only remains to be seen how far the dominant party in their triumph will presume to carry their aggression. The violence of the Kreuz Zeitung party flushed with victory and conscious of their strength is so great that they will no doubt hasten the political crisis to which this country is fast hurrying. The public discontent has attained an alarming height: the mine is already laid and is being daily more heavily charged with powder. An explosion sooner or later is inevitable. The high price of provisions and the great scarcity of food, the corruption and intimidation resorted to by the Government at the last elections, the despotic severity of the Police, the continual confiscation and suppression of the Press, and the constant follies in the internal administration committed by the King and his Government, are among the many causes which are producing this universal uneasiness and discontent. There is moreover a general want of confidence in His Majesty, and the common belief is, that should His Majesty survive longer, his country will be brought to ruin and disgrace.

The King is surrounded with persons who are continually giving to His acts as well as their own the character of Religious Piety and Devotion, and this Pietism is sought to be infused into all ranks. His Majesty is further kept in continual fear of Democracy and Revolution, and whenever He shows any resistance to the fetters with which he is so bound, He is frightened into submission by the Hydra of Revolution.

It is quite impossible to foresee what may occur here, but I cannot think that this state of things can last. The Prussian people are patient and forbearing: but if once roused, as was seen in 1848, they are dogged and determined. I think they are prepared to undergo a great amount of internal misgovernment in the hope that a change of reign may soon occur and that matters will then assume another aspect: the Berlin people have not forgotten the terror and losses they suffered by the Revolution of 1848 and are certainly disinclined to any such recurrence. If however the King were to attempt an Alliance with Russia, I feel certain that the people would rise openly against it.

I am informed from a high source that within the last few days the King is under the influence of fear and that he is greatly alarmed at positive intelligence which has reached him that Sweden would

[40] See n. 3 in this section.
[41] Constitution of 31 January 1850.

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cooperate actively with the Western Powers in the Spring; that Austria was arming and would attack Gallicia at the same time; and that Spain was to give a quota of 25,000 men to the Alliance.[42]

Fear is the prevailing influence on His Majesty's mind; and it is entirely by fear that the Party who surround him gain that powerful ascendancy over him.

Matters may possibly take another turn and sooner than we expect, but I much fear that during this reign there will be no beneficial change of any lasting duration nor capable of saving this country from the abyss into which she is plunging.

FO 64/411: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Clarendon, No 18, Berlin, 12 January 1856

Reactions to rumours of possible British blockade of Prussian ports; Prussia adopting a pro-Russian course; smaller German states ambivalent towards Prussia

The Allusions which have been frequently made during the last ten days in the English and Belgian Newspapers to the possibility of a Blockade of the Prussian Ports,[43] if the Trade in contraband of War continues to be carried on as heretofore with Russia, have naturally attracted the attention of this Government and of the public. I do not think that much impression has yet been produced on either, or that any serious apprehension is entertained that a Blockade will be carried out until at all events the British Government are enabled to bring forwards as Evidence more positive facts of the culpability of the Prussian Authorities than we as yet possess. That Russia derives endless advantages from the friendly feelings of the Prussian Government towards her, nobody in this Country attempts to question, and such a state of things is declared to be the natural consequence of the geographical position of Prussia, and that it is inevitable and must continue as long as she maintains her present undefined attitude of neutrality, without having made any declarations as to the conditions thereof.

[42] On 21 November 1855, France, Great Britain, and Sweden concluded a defensive treaty that guaranteed the integrity of Swedish territory against Russian aggression. It was not communicated to the Prussian government until 18 December 1855. Spain's offer to join the Anglo-French alliance against Russia with 25,000 men dated back to July 1855, and was still under discussion. The 'Galicia' mentioned in the dispatch most probably refers to Western Galicia, the southern part of the Kingdom of Poland under Russian rule (the Kingdom of Galicia belonged to the Austrian Empire).

[43] See n. 34 in this section.

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Public attention has been directed to the general question of the interests of neutral states within the last few days by the publication of a pamphlet at Brussels, as supposed, under the inspiration of the Russian Government, called "La ligue des neutres,"[44] I hear that this pamphlet has created a sensation amongst my Colleagues especially the Representatives of the Small States of Germany at this Court, and as the interests of their Governments would materially suffer from their being involved in a war they are all naturally clinging together to ward off the danger. Prussia as we have good reason to believe has, for the moment, drawn away the sympathies of these States from Austria, and She will always be able to do so when the question of war becomes imminent, but at the same time I think that I may safely assure Your Lordship that there is no feeling of attachment on the part of the small States to Prussia – on the other hand they dread her ambitious projects and her desire for territorial acquisitions, a feeling which may be dormant under the peaceable disposition of the present King – but which is as much alive in the nations as ever.

For these reasons the smaller States will endeavour to avoid allying themselves sincerely with Prussia, of whom they are in constant dread, and would, but for the present terror of losing the good will of Russia, to which Country they always look for protection against the encroachments on themselves of the two Great German Powers, much prefer a steady alliance with Austria, from whose ambitious policy they have less to dread. Again, if Austria becomes involved in war, it can scarcely be expected that the smaller States will desert her for the hollow friendship of Prussia, but as long as the present indecision reigns in the policy of Austria, Germany will unquestionably push herself forward in the cause of neutrality with a view to prevent Austria from all active co-operation with the Western Powers.

It has been rumoured here, but I am unable to trace the rumour to an official source, that the Prussian Government has put out feelers at Vienna, and at the small German Courts to the Attitude that Austria and Germany would assume if the British Government were to determine to blockade the Prussia Ports. I have been spoken to on the subject by some of my German Colleagues and they one and all disapprove of the measure, not for the pressure which would thereby be exercised on Prussia, for many of them would not be averse to this, but for the embarrassments which it would cause to themselves by the effect such a measure would produce in Germany, and from the action which Prussia would bring to bear on them in order to prevent their falling away from Her Alliance.

[44]The anonymous author of the pamphlet claimed that Prussia and Russia had concluded special conventions in January 1855 and called for a league of neutral states.

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The Austrian Government might be perplexed also by the breaking of the Treaty of 20 April 1854, between Prussia and Austria which was acceded to afterwards by the Germanic Confederation.[45]

The question however of a Blockade seems never to have been foreseen when that Treaty was negotiated, and as I believe the Germanic Confederation refused in 1848 the appeal of Austria for assistance on the occasion of the Blockade of Trieste by Sardinia,[46] a precedent would be readily found against any claim that Prussia might put forward for like assistance.

FO 64/412: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Earl of Clarendon, Confidential, No 66, Berlin, 6 February 1856

Discussions on representation of Prussia at Congress of Paris

The subject which absorbs public attention at the present moment is whether Prussia is or is not to be represented at the approaching Conferences at Paris.[47] The opinion of the Russian party is that it may be regrettable for Prussia as a Great Power not to be there, but that it would be equally so if She bound Herself by any engagements that would interfere with Her freedom of action hereafter, as their desire naturally is that in no case should Prussia ever be called upon to take part against Russia, and I have good reason to know that Baron Budberg gives them no encouragement to seek for admission to the Conferences, as he is perfectly contented with things as they are, and that he has now brought forward a fresh agreement, that the Emperor Alexander in accepting the Five Points[48] has raised a clamour amongst the old Russian party, and that if Prussia were now to join the Western Powers, His position would become one of extreme danger from internal commotion, and that He would be perhaps forced to continue the War.

The Liberal Party regret the humiliating position of their Country, and seeing it reduced by the policy of the present Government to a mere German State; they, however, do not desire to see The King take engagements at the suggestion of Austria, which would bind Prussia to the position of a second-rate Power in Germany. Then again there

[45]In the treaty of 20 April 1854, Prussia and Austria agreed to mutual assistance for the duration of the Crimean War and guaranteed the integrity of each other's German and non-German provinces. The Federal Diet subscribed to this alliance on 24 July 1854.

[46]While Trieste was within the boundaries of the German Confederation, the Federal Diet did not go beyond making a protest against the blockade on 18 June 1848.

[47]See n. 28 in Frankfurt section.

[48]See n. 27 in Frankfurt section.

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are many of both parties who, putting aside the question of the dignity of their Country, are glad to see it free from any immediate danger, and they trust to The King's political ingenuity to secure Prussia from being involved in serious difficulties hereafter.

The language of the Austrian Minister in his late communication to this Government has been to induce a common attitude at The Diet,[49] and he has latterly declared the anxiety of his Government that Prussia shall be represented at the Conferences. The language of the French Minister has been of friendly admonition, stating that if Prussia pursued Her Ancient impulses She could not be admitted, but he has not concealed from Baron Manteuffel that the unfavourable disposition of his Government towards Prussia has been increased by arguments from England. We are therefore held up as the determined opponents of the pretensions of the King of Prussia to be invited to take part in the Conferences, and Your Lordship can well imagine that the partizans of Russia are not idle in promoting the Anti-English feeling which unfortunately exists to a considerable extent.

The Marquis de Moustier sets out for Paris tomorrow on a short leave of absence for family affairs. He saw Baron Manteuffel last night, and on asking if His Excellency could not charge him with a favourable word for Paris, some argument which would enable Count Walewski to shake the present disposition of England towards Prussia, he was told in answer that the opinions of the Prussian Government have not undergone any modification, but that Prussia in order to avoid giving a "spectacle" to Europe will not appear in a different line from Austria at the Diet.

For the moment, the opinion of this Government appears to be that they will enter into no binding engagements as to the future, that they will not seek such an invitation to the Conferences to which as a Great Power they consider they have a right of access, and that further no European arrangement can be completed without their participation.

The question now rises in how far it might be for the interests of Europe, to admit Prussia to these Conferences, and whether Her presence would be advantageous or not.

It must not be expected that She can at once change the part She has been playing in the interests of Russia, for one of tendency towards the policy of the Western Powers, but with Her great desire for the re-establishment of peace on a good and solid foundation, might not Prussia be found useful in assisting us in obtaining from

[49] On 28 January 1856, after having received a dispatch from Buol on 25 January, Esterházy communicated Austria's wish for Prussian support for putting the Austrian Five Point Peace Proposal to a vote of the Federal Diet.

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Russia concessions, if She felt that withholding them would curtail a continuance of hostilities?

The terror of War is such that She might be better disposed than we imagine to act with us in the Conferences; though at the same time it is not likely that She would even take a decided part.

That Austria should wish for Prussia in the Conferences is natural. If She can obtain Her adhesion to The Five Points, She will find Her a ready Ally to support Her to the extent of Her own objects, and also to prevent The Western Powers from pressing on the Conference more than She wishes them to obtain with regard to the additional articles.

FO 64/435: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, No 47, Berlin, 2 May 1857

Debates in Prussian chambers on freedom of the press

Among the Political debates which have taken place in the Prussian Chamber during the Session there is none which has excited more publick interest or which is more likely to produce more beneficial results than the discussion which was originated by the motion of Mr Mathis with reference to the Press.[50] Your Lordship has been frequently informed that constant seizures of the Publick Journals have been made in Prussia under a simple mandate of the Police, and although in certain cases the Law[51] prescribes that such Journals should be submitted to the Legal tribunal, the administrative authorities of the Police under an assumed legality have exercised larger powers than rightfully appertained to them.

Scarcely a week during the latter years has elapsed without the seizure of the "Wochenblatt", the "National Zeitung", the "Volkshalle", and on several occasions even of the "Kreuz Zeitung",[52] exclusive of the constant admonitions and warnings to the extent even of prescribing to the Journals the peculiar colour and tone in which they would be permitted to represent Political Events.

At the end of the last Session Mr Mathis (a former Employé under the Censorship of the Press) now a leader of the Liberal Opposition Party in the Lower Chamber brought this subject to the notice of the

[50] Mathis's motion of 19 December 1856 (originally submitted in spring 1856) was discussed from 16 to 23 April 1857.

[51] Press law of 12 May 1851.

[52] For the *Preußische Wochenblatt* and the *Kreuzzeitung* see nn. 39 and 33 in this section. The *National Zeitung* was a liberal Berlin daily founded in 1848. The Catholic *Deutsche Volkshalle* was founded in October 1848 in Cologne.

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House, but as the Session was on the point of Closing, the motion was postponed, and accordingly Mr Mathis lately submitted to the Chambers a proposal drawn up in the following Terms

"That the Government shall bring back the competence of the Police Authorities in matters of the Press within limits legally prescribed and shall prevent the exercise of this authority from destroying and arresting the constitutional and legally provided Liberty of the Press."

This Motion, to which were annexed 13 Specific Articles, was submitted to a Committee of the House, who not only rejected all the articles but evinced an anxiety to avoid any discussion on the motion by their recommendations to the Chamber on its introduction to pass to the order of the day.

On the questions whether this motion should be laid aside and disposed of, an interesting discussion took place in which the grievances of the Press were fully laid bare, and the necessity made apparent that some more legal and less despotic jurisdiction for the Press should be established than the mere fiat of the Police Authority. This debate has perhaps more than any other proved the competency of Prussia for a Parliamentary system. It was carried on with great judgment and talent on all sides without political animosity or violence, and the temperate language of the author of the motion gave additional support to the cause of which he was the advocate.

But perhaps the more remarkable feature in this debate was the part taken by the President von Gerlach and M. Wagener members of the extreme right, both of whom have been and are more or less connected with The Kreuz Zeitung. Both spoke in favor and support of the Motion, although both voted against it. M. Reichensperger the Liberal Chief of the Catholic Party joined issue with President von Gerlach, and it is somewhat remarkable that both agreed though on different grounds on maintaining that the Safety of the Country depended on the liberty of the Press.

It would occupy too much of Your Lordships time to report the various speeches which were delivered during the course of this long debate. It may suffice to state that Monsieur de Gerlach expressed his desire to see a greater extension of Liberty accorded to the Press, referring to the frequent seizure which had been made of his own Journal the "Kreuz Zeitung", a Journal which he stated to have been a most efficient organ in reestablishing after the Revolution of 1848 Sound Conservative opinions, and to have been the most ardent supporter of the Crown and Monarchical institutions. He ridiculed the replies which were made to Foreign Governments that the Press in Prussia was free, adding that this answer was insufficient so long as Foreign Governments were persuaded of the contrary. Mr Wagener

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went even further stating that Prussia not only required the Liberty of the Press, but could not do without it, and that with the existence of Railways and Telegraphs it was illusory to expect to arrest the progress of ideas.

Great benefits will no doubt be produced among the reasoning publick by this debate, although the motion of M. Mathis was negatived by 154 against 102 votes.

M. Wagener after having carried an amendment by a majority of one against the Government (which was again brought forward in consequence of an informality and rejected on the following day by a majority of 6) finally carried by a large majority a proposal to the Chamber couched in the following Terms. "It is proposed in consideration that the Debates on the motion of M. Mathis have proved incontestably that evils exist in the treatment of the affairs of the Press, in consideration further that a definitive correction of these evils and one of a nature equally to satisfy all requirements can only be looked for by legislative means, and finally in consideration that the initiatives in this question may be expected shortly on the part of the Government, to pass to the order of the day on the motion of Mr Mathis."

This question is now therefore confided by the Chamber into the hands of the Government, and in consequence of the discussion which has now taken place, and the views which have been exposed by prominent Leaders of all Parties, the Government will be obliged at the earliest opportunity during the next Session to introduce such a measure as will obviate the evils now complained of by abolishing or restraining within legal bounds the present excessive and despotic authority of the Police Authorities in all matters concerning the Press and substituting in lieu thereof a proper legal appeal to the Tribunals of the Country.

FO 64/438: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, Confidential, No 171, Berlin, 3 July 1857

Rastatt dispute; increasing jealousy between Austria and Prussia; Bismarck's anti-Austrianism and intemperate language

In conversations yesterday with Mr Bulow I casually referred to the Question of dispute between Austria and Prussia concerning the garrisoning of the Fortress of Rastadt.[53]

[53]The Rastatt dispute originated with the joint motion of Austria and Baden to the Federal Diet of 18 June 1857, aiming for the strengthening of Austrian forces at the Rastatt federal

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He treated the affair as being one of no importance and as he expressed it as "une affaire de menage."[54] He stated that it would be decided by a vote of the Diet in a fortnight or three weeks, but he betrayed no seeming anxiety as to whether the decision would be favorable to Prussia or not. He said that Prussia had approved of the replies which the Baden Government had addressed to France in answer to their communications on this Question[55] (but without stating what those replies were) and that Count Hatzfeldt had been instructed to explain to The French Government that it was purely a Question of internal arrangement regarding the Germanic Confederation, and was not to be considered in any way as referring to France.

I am told that the general opinion of the German Governments on this Question is adverse to the Prussian views. It is alleged that Prussia has no reason to oppose the proposed arrangement inasmuch as She entered into a similar agreement only six months ago with the Netherlands Government for an increase of the Garrison of Luxembourg which agreement was unanimously assented to by the Germanic Diet.[56]

I am also informed that Count Buol's Despatch of the 10th June to Baron Koller (of which I enclosed a Copy in original to Your Lordship in my Despatch No. 158 of 26th Instant) explanatory of the motives which have led the Austrian Government to enter into the Convention with the Grand Duke of Baden, has not yet been replied to by the Prussian Government and it is generally thought that the Prussian reasons for opposing this measure are so groundless that when the moment for a decision arrives in face of an adverse majority, she will withdraw all further opposition to the measures.

There is no doubt that a considerable and even an increasing jealousy exists between Austria and Prussia which is apparent on all occasions when any Questions arise for the exercise or display of any influence in Germany, but I do not think that this feeling has as yet attained the magnitude or importance which Monsieur de Bismarck would appear to attribute to it, as reported in Sir Alexander Malet's Despatch No 49 of the 26th [*sic*] Instant.[57] Monsieur de Bismarck enjoys

fortress. The plan, which was agreed by Austria and Baden at the end of April 1857 and communicated to Prussia on 2 May, was contrary to Prussia's policy of containing Austrian influence in southern Germany.

[54]'A domestic affair'.

[55]In a circular dispatch to the French missions in Germany from early June, the French government objected to the strengthening of the Rastatt fortress.

[56]Convention of 17 November 1856 between the King of Prussia and the King of the Netherlands as Grand Duke of Luxembourg, approved by the Federal Diet on 26 February 1857.

[57]In his dispatch of 16 June, Malet reported on Prussia's hostile intentions and Bismarck's 'remarkably strong language' towards Rechberg, Austria's envoy to the Federal Diet.

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a high reputation for indiscretion and for holding unreasonable and intemperate language, and on various occasions has received severe reprimands from his Government. He is well known for his Anti-Austrian tendencies and it is his misfortune that he is so prone to allow his passion to get the command of his reason – more particularly on questions where his personal vanity and ambition are brought into play.

In as far as my judgment goes there cannot be the slightest ground for supposing that Prussia meditates any such adventurous or daring Policy which Monsieur de Bismarck appears to harbour in his mind, and which is so little in consonance with the pacific character of her present Sovereign.

FO 64/460: Augustus B. Paget to Earl of Malmesbury, No 157, Berlin, 11 November 1858

Conversation with Schleinitz; prince regent's English connections and his desire to keep good relations with Britain

I had my first interview with Monsieur de Schleinitz, as I informed Your Lordship by Telegraph, on Monday morning the 8th Instant.

Nothing could be more cordial than the reception which His Excellency gave me, or more agreeable than his Manner. He began at once to speak of the desire of the Prince Regent[58] and of His present Government to keep up the best understanding with England; and said that all his own efforts would tend to this object. The Prince Regent he continued, had been placed in a most painful position, but he had felt it necessary in order to carry out the Policy on which he was determined, to call around him those persons whom he honored with his Confidence and he might say Friendship. On this ground, and on this ground alone did he (Monsieur de Schleinitz) now find himself in the important position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. He had need not only of my confidence (meaning of course that of Foreign Representatives in general) but of great indulgence, as he was at present quite new to Public Affairs on which he had been lately looking merely in the character of an Amateur. His Excellency added that all his own predilections were English; he had been for some time employed in England,[59] of which Country and the reception he met with there he preserved the most agreeable recollections. His Excellency then alluded to the marks of kindness and consideration which he had received from Her Majesty The Queen, and His

[58]Wilhelm assumed the role of prince regent on 9 October 1858.
[59]Schleinitz was secretary of legation in London in 1840–1841.

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Royal Highness The Prince Consort, and added that although he was unfortunately not acquainted with Your Lordship, he hoped you would have heard sufficiently respecting him to be convinced of the sincerity of this profession "de foi"[60] which he had just made, and His Excellency begged that I would assure Your Lordship of the pleasure he felt at being brought indirectly into official communication with you.

I answered Monsieur de Schleinitz by assuring him in the first place of my own gratification at being brought into personal intercourse with His Excellency, whom I must beg leave to say in answer to the observations he had made about himself, had long been pointed out by public opinion as the person on whom the choice of His Royal Highness should fall for the important Post he now occupied. I then went on to say that it was the sincere desire of Her Majesty's Government to cultivate the most intimate relations with Prussia whom they desired to see occupy in Europe the high position to which She was so fully entitled, that they were of opinion that intimate Relations between them were the best security for the preservation of the Peace of Europe, and that by the observance of mutual confidence and interchange of ideas the object desired might be easily effected. It appeared to me that there were very few questions of importance on which our Interests could be divergent, that the bonds of Union were many, and an additional one had lately taken place, for although we were now bound to admit the Prussian Nationality of Her Royal Highness The Princess Frederick William[61] we could never look upon Her Royal Highness but as still in great measure belonging to us, and that therefore whatever affected Her Royal Highness either for weal or for woe must be a subject for national rejoicing or the reverse in England. With regard to the conduct of His Royal Highness The Prince Regent during the last crisis[62] it was such as to draw forth the highest admiration and appeared, in my humble opinion, to be of the best augury for the future of that Country over whose destinies he is now called to preside.

Monsieur de Schleinitz said that even this must be in some measure indirectly attributed to the fortunate circumstances of His Royal Highness, during the troubled times in 1848 having gone to England instead of elsewhere.[63] During the time which His Royal Highness passed there he could not but be struck by the contrast between the

[60] 'Of faith'.

[61] Princess Victoria.

[62] Paget refers to the transitory phase since October 1857, when Wilhelm deputized for Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

[63] Wilhelm fled to London on 22 March 1848, and stayed until the end of May.

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calm which there prevailed, and the agitation and turmoil which reigned supreme in other Countries. This Contrast had naturally led His Royal Highness to a study of its causes, and he could not but come to the conclusion that it was because our institutions were based upon a solid foundation.

Monsieur de Schleinitz then went on to say in allusion to the estrangement which had taken place between England and Prussia during the time of the Russian war,[64] that if unhappily circumstances of a similar Nature should again occur the whole weight of any influence which he might possess would be used to bring Prussia into strict alliance with England, and with this observation and a repetition on his part of the desire for the utmost freedom of communication between the two Government [*sic*] and the assurances on mine that nothing should be wanting, as far as I was concerned, in the realization of his wish, our conversation for that day ended.

Having received on Monday Evening Your Lordship's Telegrams recorded in my Despatch No. 154 of this day, I waited on Monsieur de Schleinitz the following morning for the purpose of communicating it to him. His Excellency was evidently much struck and gratified by the speedy responses thus made to him from Your Lordship to what he had said to me the day before, and he desired that I would thank Your Lordship for it.[65] Monsieur de Schleinitz was in the point of going to the Palace, and he wished me to allow him to take the text of Your Lordship's message with him, but as it had come to me in Cypher I did not feel justified in leaving it in his hands. That His Excellency however gave a faithful report of it to the Prince Regent there can be no doubt from the allusion made to it by His Royal Highness in the conversation with which he honoured me on the following Evening.

FO 64/479: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Lord John Russell, No 403, Berlin, 16 July 1859

Prussian policy of neutrality in Second Italian War of Independence; distrust of Prussia among smaller German states; good understanding between Austria and Prussia jeopardized

Considerable anxiety prevails here as to the manner in which the policy, which has been lately pursued by Prussia, will be appreciated in Austria and France, and the effect it may have on the future relations

[64]The Crimean War, 1853–1856.

[65]In his telegram of 8 November 1858, Malmesbury reciprocated Schleinitz's wish to be on the most cordial terms.

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with these Empires. The Prussian Government naturally defends itself on the advantage of remaining neutral until the necessities of Germany required her to act in defence of German Interests, but the Austrian Government know full well that it was solely through the influence of Prussia that Austria's appeal for the support of Germany was tardily acceded to, and acted upon only when it was too late to be useful to her.[66] The smaller States were clamorous for War at the very outset and it was entirely owing to the prudential interposition of Prussia that they were restrained from at once entering into the Contest; the smaller States were however by no means prepared for War, neither was Prussia, and time was essential to enable each Power to place its Armies on a footing to take the Field. All have used great exertions and expended large Sums of Money and the German Armies would have been at the different Stations assigned to them early in August.

The small Courts always jealous and suspicious of the policy pursued by Prussia which they well knew was mainly inspired by the desire to wrest the direction of Affairs at the Diet from the hands of Austria and place herself at the Head of Germany have been so roughly handled by Prussia in various communications which have passed between them, that they will readily return to that guidance which is most congenial to their feelings, and seek for advice and Counsel at Vienna in preference to Berlin and they will begin by explaining to the Imperial Court that but for the tardy decision of Prussia there would have been no cause for complaint against them.

As a consequence of this State of things, the maintenance of a good understanding between the two great German Powers is problematical, and Germany may shortly present a scene of violent political struggles and serious difficulties.

The faith of Prussia in the assurances of the Emperor Napoleon[67] has not gained by the late proceedings and I may observe that it is apprehended that the passage in his proclamation to the Army dated Valeggio the 12 Instant, in which he alludes to the possible extension of the War, meant the military preparations of Germany and that it is his intention at the first convenient moment to seek a cause of quarrel.

Prussia thus feels herself isolated between France and Austria, and is moreover convinced that the latter will be neither able nor willing,

[66]The Second War of Italian Independence ended on 11 July 1859 with the preliminary Peace of Villafranca (see n. 61 in Frankfurt section). For Prussian and federal policy during the war, see pp. 56–58 and 483–486.

[67]Bloomfield refers to French assurances – as put down in the circular of 26/27 April 1859 – that France did not aim for territorial expansion.

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if the hour of trial again comes, to assist Germany in the Event of a War on the Rhine.

FO 64/480: William Lowther to Lord John Russell, No 25, Berlin, 5 October 1859

Evaluation of Prussian political parties; conservatives generally pro-Russian and opposed to liberalism and centralization; constitutionalists opposed to Austria and Catholicism; democrats inactive since 1848

As some slight account of the political Parties in Prussia may be of interest to Your Lordship I venture to give the following information on the subject.

Though Socialist, Democratic, Republican, Liberal, Gotha, Pietist, Conservative and Constitutionalist Parties may be said to exist they cannot be divided into separate distinct parties, as those holding quite opposite opinions on one subject may, and do agree upon another. I consider they may all at present be classed under the following denominations namely the Conservatives, the Constitutionalists and the Democrats.

The Conservative Party's chief organ is the New Prussian Paper, commonly called the "Kreuz Zeitung" which came into life in 1848 and was then the only Paper which dared to oppose the Revolutionary Party existing in this Country; nobles of middling property, pensioned officials, and a considerable number of Ecclesiastics belong to this Party which is given to what is called here Pietismus (Piety) hence the origin of the Party called the "Pietists" and though its members are Protestants it stands well with, and is in close connexion with the Roman Catholics. Their endeavors in Politics tend to a maintenance of the Holy Alliance in a Metternich point of view.[68] Formerly they looked to Russia with favor but since the Emperor Alexander II has introduced liberal Reforms,[69] which have found more or less Sympathy with persons of Property in Russia they seem to have given up Russia and now look with confident hope towards Austria, they are opposed to the German Diet as they would gladly see Prussia holding a more independent position; objecting to freedom they are opposed to the

[68]The Holy Alliance, initially a declaration of intent on 26 September 1815 by the rulers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia to defend the legitimacy of the monarchic principle, agreed to offer mutual support and to work for the preservation of the principles of the Christian religion.

[69]From his accession in 1855, Alexander II had distanced his policy from the reactionary period of Nicholas I and had initiated discussions on several reforms, most importantly the serf question, which was resolved by the emancipation statute of 1861.

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more liberal system existing on the Rhine[70] and would wish to see, were it possible, that part of Prussia treated as a separate State, for they consider that on the Rhine elements of conflict exist not only useless to themselves but dangerous to the State, and they have difficulty in convincing themselves that privileges which they formerly enjoyed, such as the Administration of Justice on their own estates, and game laws as they formerly existed, are no longer compatible with the existing state of things. In the Country districts this Party is more anxious than any other and more careful to promote and maintain the old corporations and guilds. They are by principle opposed to Officials and Officialdom and look upon them as their greatest enemies, they are opposed to the centralisation of the Government in the Capital and would wish to see more done in the Provinces where it would tend to increase their own power. As a body they are well organized and wealthy, and have a majority in the Upper House, from the simple fact that during the time their party had the power in their own hands they constituted themselves and out of their own Ranks chose their Members who were made members for life.

They are in opposition to the present liberal Ministry and throw obstacles in the way of important Reform bills, desired by the Country, proposed by the Ministry and accepted by the Second Chamber. They exercise great economy in questions of Finance, and have on several occasions prevented the Ministry from carrying into effect great government works.

Great influence was exercised by this party formerly through their Members who surrounded the King. The Leaders are wealthy, but I believe I am correct in stating that in general they do not possess much influence in the country. The Constitutional Party may be considered as more Protestant in its feelings than the Conservative. It's chief supporters are to be found in the Officials, Professors, Councillors (Geheime Räthe)[,] Teachers[,] Doctors, and Merchants. Their organs are the two oldest established papers in Berlin the "Voss" Paper and the "Spener";[71] on the Rhine the Cölnische Zeitung which has most of its supporters in the Rhine Provinces. This Party is anxious for the aggrandisement of Prussia even if it should be at the expense of the Smaller German States.

It is strongly opposed to Austria and Roman Catholicism, it wishes and strives for a close connexion with England whose Institutions it takes for models and wishes to imitate. It has the majority in the Second Chamber having on it's side the best speakers, the President Wenzel,

[70] The liberal system was based on the Napoleonic *Code Civil*, introduced in the areas on the left bank of the Rhine in 1804 when they were annexed within the French Empire.

[71] *Vossische Zeitung* and *Spenersche Zeitung*.

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Professor Simson and Baron Vincke, and to this Party the present Ministry belongs. It wishes for no provincial changes but desires a strong and good government for the whole Country and inclines to the principle of Centralisation. It has as a Party considerable adherents in other parts of Germany while the Conservatives have adherents only in Austria and Mecklenburg. This sympathy in other parts of Germany has encouraged the Constitutional Party to work in favor of a political Unity of Germany and for a constituted Representative Body or German Parliament, which has gained for it adherents from the Democratic Party.

The Democratic Party in matters of Religion leans towards great freedom of thought and the different dissenters and Church Reformers belong almost without exception to it, as well as public teachers, artisans, manufacturers, students and young medical men. In Silesia and on the Rhine some adherents are to be found but it cannot be said that it has many supporters in the Provinces generally. Since it's defeat and overthrow in 1849 it has not taken any very active part in public affairs and it is only since the present Ministry came into power that it has given fresh signs of life. The former leaders of this Party[,] men of talent and of Good Birth[,] left the Country either from compulsion or of their own freewill, and those who remained did not take any prominent parts in politics. It strenuously supports the education of the people and is strongly opposed to Communism and Socialism having two powerful Organs, for the Upper Classes the "National Zeitung" and for the lower the "Volkszeitung"[72] which are the two newspapers that have the largest circulation and the most influence of all the papers in Prussia. The proprietors and Managers of Newspapers in general in Prussia are Jews. In general questions of external Policy this Party agrees almost entirely with the Constitutionalists and with Regard to internal Policy they are opposed to centralisation, they support self-government in Parishes are advocates for universal suffrage as opposed to the Elections of the Deputies according to Classes as is now the Case, and they more particularly wish to see an even qualification for Jews and Christians; opposed to guilds they wish for free trade without restrictions whatever. It can hardly be said that this Party is represented in the Chamber, but since the present Ministry came into Power many of the Principal Supporters of the Democratic Party have gone over to the Constitutionalists and it cannot be said that the Democrats as a distinct body have at present any very great influence in Prussia. There exists also what is called the Gotha Party[73] which is a section of

[72]Berlin *Volks-Zeitung*, left-liberal daily (established 1853). For the *National Zeitung* see n. 52 in this section.

[73]For the Gotha Party see n. 7 in Frankfurt section.

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the Constitutionalists and at this moment most active in favor of the National Question[,] German Unity and German Parliament.

The Republican Party may be classed with the Democratic but for various reasons it does not at present give signs of life.

FO 64/481: William Lowther to Lord John Russell, No 67, Berlin, 12 November 1859

Schiller festival in Berlin; laying of first stone for monument

I have the Honor to inform Your Lordship that the Schiller Festival took place yesterday[74] in Berlin, on which occasion the first stone was laid for the Schiller Monument;[75] the Prussian Ministers of State having been invited attended at this Ceremony in which His Royal Highness the Prince Regent[76] of Prussia took no part, but on his appearance at a window of a house near the Scene of the Ceremony, he was received with great Enthusiasm by the large concourse of people assembled, there being present the magistrates, officers of the Town and Deputations from the University, all the different Trades Societies and Companies etc: of Berlin; in the Evening the Town was partially illuminated, and all passed off without any serious disturbance.

This festival instead of being one purely in Honour of the great German poet, had a semi-political character, the Schillerites being chiefly of the Liberal Party. This was in a great measure owing to the formation of the Schiller Committee, which consisted of Democrats who have rendered themselves famous for their ultra opinions, and Jews of whom there are 17,000 in this capital but [against] whom there is a strong national prejudice; many who would have been anxious to celebrate the memory of the Poet abstained from participating in the festival lest they should be supposed to side with the Liberal or here denominated democratic, Party.

I have the Honor to enclose herewith a copy in duplicate and translation of a letter from Prince Frederick William of Prussia to the magistrates of Berlin stating his regret at being absent from Berlin on this occasion.[77]

A prize of 1000 Prussian Dollars and a gold Medal will be given every 10th November by the crown to the Author of the best Dramatic

[74]10 November 1859.

[75]The Schiller monument on *Gendarmenmarkt* was completed and formally unveiled on 10 November 1871.

[76]Wilhelm.

[77]Enclosures: newspaper cutting, detailing Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's letter marked Berlin, 6 November 1859 (original and English translation).

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Work in Prose or Poetry; the subject always to be taken from German History.

FO 64/481: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Lord John Russell, No 479, Berlin, 24 December 1859

Junker opposition to Jewish landowners being granted equal status in provincial sittings

An incident not a little characteristic of the intolerant spirit which animates a great portion of the landed gentry in this country (that portion from which the reactionary Junker-Partei, or Party of the Squirearchy, is mainly recruited) has lately occurred at the opening of the Quarter Sessions of the circle of Breslau. As illustrating moreover the feeling of vindictive hostility which pervades that party against all acts emanating from the present advisers of the Prussian Crown it is not altogether unworthy of attention.

For its right comprehension however it is necessary that I should premise that one of the first acts of the present liberal Ministry was to enforce, as regards the admission of Jewish landed proprietors to participation in the "Provincial States" and in the "States of the Circle" (a ramification of the former), that article of the Prussian Constitution which places all religious creeds upon a footing of equality with reference to the exercise of civil rights.[78]

Both the "Provincial States" and the "States of the Circle" as medievally reconstituted under the auspices of the present King, when Crown Prince, had been abolished by the Constitution of 1851. They were revived however under the Ministry "Manteuffel-Westfalen"[79] and in open contradiction to the abovementioned article of the Constitution the proviso limiting membership of such "Estates" to persons belonging to one of the three recognized Christian Churches[80] was at the same time restricted.

An Injustice was thereby inflicted on all landed proprietors not coming within those three categories – for, whilst by the organic reforms of 1806[81] the acquisition of real property was opened to all classes of the community without reference to religion, the exclusion from the "Provincial" and "Kreis-Stände" ("States of the Province & Circle") on the Score of religion placed the rating (for purposes of local administration such as poor rates &c.) of the properties of such

[78]Article 12 of the constitution of 31 January 1850.
[79]See n. 2 in this section.
[80]The Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches.
[81]Bloomfield refers to the edict of October 1807 and the emancipation edict of 1812.

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landowners as did not belong to one of the three established churches entirely within the controuls of their orthodox coproprietors.

At the opening of the Quarter Sessions (Kreis-Tag) of the Circle of Breslau last week, (the first since the publication of the Ministerial rescript admitting Jews to participation in such Sessions)[82] the Royal Commissary, who presides ex officio, introduced three Jewish landed proprietors, upon which a Count Haugwitz entered a protest against the proceeding as illegal. The Royal Commissary, Landrath von Ende, replied that as a Government official he could not admit of a discussion upon the legality of the transaction. At the same time however he expressed his own private opinion to be totally hostile to the admission in question, and notwithstanding his official character he returned the three Israelites present[83] upon the encroaching spirit of their coreligionists, and, recalling to their recollection the immense concession that had been made to them within the last 50 years he warned them in the Spirit of prophecy of the possible reaction and persecution which a persistency in this Spirit of encroachment might evoke.

Thereupon a Count Saurma-Jeltsh gave notice, for discussion at the next meeting, of a motion to the following effect:

"That for every voluntary act of non-attendance at the sittings of the "Estates of the Circle" on the part of the Jewish proprietors the sum of two Fredericks d'or[84] should be awarded out of the fund of the "Circle" to every such non attending Israelite."

I should not omit to State that these grotesque proceedings were confined to the "First Estate" that, namely, composed of the proprietors of the "Rittergüter" or Large Manors, and consequently that the persons thus publicly and wantonly insulted by their brother Squires belonged to the class of large landed proprietors in one of the richest provinces of the Kingdom.

The above account is taken from the Silesian Gazette as copied into the columns of the "Kreuz Zeitung", in which organ of the party so gravely compromised by proceedings in question, it stands without one word of comment or attempt of any kind at refutation or extermination.

The light thrown by such incidents as these upon the State of feeling pervading a class professed of such vast influence both social and political as that which undoubtedly falls to the share of the landed gentry in this country tends to bring out in strong relief the immense

[82] Rescript of 16 February 1859.

[83] The three Jewish *Rittergutsbesitzer* (lords of the manor) present were Boas, Werther, and Cohn.

[84] *Friedrich d'or*, Prussian gold coin introduced in 1750.

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difficulties with which a liberal Ministry in Prussia has to contend – and it inclines one rather to appreciate the little that is done than to wonder at the much which is left undone.

FO 64/490: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 108, Berlin, 17 March 1860

Political crisis over military reforms; prince regent's unwillingness to compromise; anti-constitutionalism of the military party

The only measure of importance that has been discussed in the chambers during the course of the current week has been a Bill for the Repeal of the usury Laws[85] which was carried by a large majority in the lower House last Wednesday, but which, in common with every other practical reform in a liberal sense is certain to be thrown out by an equally large majority in the House of Nobles.

The whole interest of the parliamentary public, both in doors and out of doors is, for the foremost engrossed by the impending debate on the Government measures for military Reforms, nor is this to be wondered at when it is considered that in its financial as well as in its social aspect this measure far exceeds in importance any that has been passed in Prussia since the original military Reforms which at the commencement of this century gave to the Prussian Army its present Constitution.[86]

The general Debate is hardly likely to come off till after the Easter Recess, the Committee being still employed in discussing their Report, but what has oozed out with respect to the proceedings within the walls of the Committee room, especially in connexion with the sitting of last Saturday is little calculated to allay the anxiety of the Government or to promise a satisfactory solution of the question. I am sorry to add that from a variety of causes and especially owing to the intrigues of the reactionary party, who by an affected zeal for the Prince Regent's[87] military plans hope to lure His Royal Highness back from the comparatively constitutional path which he has hitherto followed, an element of personal bitterness and party rancour has been introduced into the subject which bids fair, at a moment when

[85]Section 263 of the Prussian criminal code of 1851 made it an offence to take higher interest rates than those established by law.

[86]As a consequence of its defeat by France, the Prussian army was reformed in the years 1807–1814. The reform bills laid before the house of deputies on 10 February 1860 included a law on military organization and terms of service, as well as a financial law granting 9.5 million thalers for the military reform.

[87]Wilhelm.

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the utmost unity between the Government and the Parliament is of such paramount importance to the interests of Prussia and Germany, to bring out in all its worst features the implacable animosity existing between the small but united and well organized reactionary party, and the more numerous but unfortunately divided and disorganized fractions which compose the great liberal majority of the country.

Enclosed herewith in original and translation is the account given in the Allgemeine Zeitung of the proceedings in the sitting of the Committee above adverted to which I have reason to believe is in the main a correct one.[88]

Your Lordship will perceive that the ground taken up by Baron Vincke, whose fraction[89] is far the most numerous in the House of Representatives, is that of opposition to the 3 and 4 years' service, an essential portion of the measure, and one, with regard to the adoption of which, the Government have officially announced their intention of admitting of no compromises. Besides the restrictions of the term of service,[90] however, Baron Vincke requires as an essential condition of his support that guarantees shall be given for the same share of advancement being awarded to officers belonging to the bourgeois classes of society as that which falls to the lot of officers of noble birth. In so doing he has touched upon one of the most delicate points in the social as well as the political organization of the Prussian Monarchy, and has, as it were, thrown down the gauntlet to the party whose whole efforts are directed towards bringing about a breach between the Prince Regent and the constitutional party on this very question of military Reform. This step therefore under present circumstances however meritorious the object may be on more abstract principles seems ill advised, and is much to be regretted.

An objection of a far more serious nature as regards the practical merits of the question is that of which the Deputy Kühne, a well known financial authority, has made himself the mouthpiece. It is based on the incompatibility of the measure in its present form with the financial resources of the country. From this point of view it is confidently asserted that the adoption of the proposed system will entail a yearly increasing deficit, for covering which no means have been provided, and that thereby the whole financial system of the country, the admirable economy of which has hitherto been one of the principal mainstays of the monarchy, will be thrown into inextricable confusion.

[88]Enclosures: extract from the *Allgemeine Zeitung* quoted in the *Volks-Zeitung* (original and English translation).

[89]Liberals.

[90]Service was to be restricted to two years.

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How far a modification of the plan is possible, which whilst retaining its more essential features should yet afford a prospect of keeping this deficit within manageable bounds, is a question on which opinions are divided, but I believe that a great number of the liberal majority in the Lower House are of opinion that such a modification is practicable.

Unfortunately however the belief has gained a firm footing that the Government and more especially His Royal Highness the Prince Regent are determined on passing the measure in all its details and will not listen to anything the least approaching to a compromise even on comparatively unimportant points. The Prince Regent has gone so far as to declare on several occasions that if the measure were not adopted "en bloc" he would resign the Regency in favour of his son[91] – a measure I may observe totally unprovided for by the articles of the Constitution.

This attitude of the Government instead of evoking a submissive spirit on the part of the chambers has on the contrary, as I have reason to believe, produced no little irritation, and stimulated rather than otherwise the tendency to opposition.

Hence as matters now stand there is imminent danger of a conflict, the most fatal that could possibly be conceived at the present stage of the constitutional development of the Prussian State – namely one between the "de facto" Sovereign on the one hand, who though honestly bent upon treading a constitutional path, yet deems himself thwarted on what according to the fundamental principles and the historical traditions of the Prussian Monarchy has hitherto been the most absolute prerogative of the Crown, i.e. the organization of the Army, and the trustees of the public purse on the other, the latter being naturally enough sensibly alive to the responsibility of giving their sanction to a system that may involve an organic unsettlement of the finances of the country.

That which adds however a peculiar element of danger to the crisis is that the military advisers of the Prince Regent belong for the most part, and more particularly General Manteuffel, the cousin of the late Minister, to the party whose whole energies are diverted towards the destruction of the Constitution,[92] and who therefore, there is every reason to fear, are not so much actuated in the advice they bestow upon His Royal Highness by their zeal for the success of the new organization, as by the desire to bring about a breach between him and those who have hitherto been his warmest supporters which should throw His Royal Highness with his hands tied behind him into the arms of his former bitterest opponents.

[91] Friedrich Wilhelm.
[92] Constitution of 31 January 1850.

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I have, at the risk of forestalling the debate itself, dwelt thus at length upon the foremost aspect of this question, because the crisis is on all hands admitted to be of a most serious kind, and one therefore the earlier stages of which require to be carefully noted. I should add however that within the last day or two symptoms have manifested themselves of a more yielding object on the part of some of the more conspicuous opponents to the bill in its present form, and that it is considered not impossible that by judicious management a majority may be obtainable for this measure "en bloc." On the other hand an opinion is also becoming prevalent that at the last moment the Government may be induced to yield in some of the less important points, and that a compromise may therefore be after all arrived at.

FO 64/490: Lord John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield to Lord John Russell, No 115, Berlin, 17 March 1860

Meeting of Nationalverein *in Berlin; Bennigsen's speech on the French threat and need for Prussia to regenerate Germany; Mommsen's ambivalent censure of current Prussian government*

The Committee of the National Association (National Verein) the Head Quarters of which are at Coburg have held a meeting in this Capital, and with M. de Bennigsen the founder of the Association at their head, have received a public ovation in the form of a dinner at which some 500 guests including a large number of members of the Lower Chamber were present.[93]

As Your Lordship is aware, the object of this association is the keeping alive by all lawful means of the National Question for German Unity, the want of which had once more been so painfully felt by Germany and Europe during the events of last year.[94] The necessary restriction of their programme to means of moral influence, and to the recommendation of measures not too glaringly inconsistent with the order of things at present recognised in Germany, stamps upon the efforts of this association, in its present stage at least, a certain vagueness which precludes it in the eyes of many well wishers to the cause from the chance of bearing much practical fruit. I understand however that the numbers of the association are steadily increasing and that hopes are entertained of their reaching a considerable amount within a short time.

[93]The banquet was held on 11 March 1860. For the *Nationalverein* see n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

[94]Bloomfield refers to the Second War of Italian Independence.

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The main object of the foundation which is that of establishing an organisation ready for use when the moment comes will in that case have been attained.

On the present occasion several speeches were made, most of which besides their patriotic tendency were distinguished by moderation and good sense.

The speech of the evening was that of M. de Bennigsen who in returning thanks for the honor bestowed upon him remarked that 10 years uninterrupted hopeless contest as champion of the Constitutional Cause in Hanover[95] had convinced him and his fellow combatants that these constitutional struggles could not be fought out on the narrow platform of the individual States, and that sooner or later they must be shifted to the broader field of the common country where alone the decisive action could be fought out. Turning from the internal state of Germany to its external relations he described the dangers with which the revival of Napoleonic ideas[96] threatened her. She had at one and the same time to make a double front, to the chance of foreign aggression without to the ideas of absolutism and ultramontanism within.

The speaker then related how the events of the preceding year had shewn the total inability of Germany to meet these exigencies and explained how the present association had had its origin in the attempt to remedy these evils. He then entered at full into a description of what he considered the relation to be that Prussia and Germany ought to stand in towards each other. The rise of Prussia had been simultaneous with the fall of the old German Empire; it was her duty to complete the work of regeneration. She should remember however that she could expect no assistance in this work from the other Governments of Germany, nor from any foreign Power, her only ally was the German people, and on it she should rely. He concluded by proposing as a toast "The Historical Mission of Prussia and the resuscitation of the Germanic Empire."

The next most important speech of the evening was that of Professor Mommsen, the well known historian, who was called on to propose the health of the Ministry, and did so in a speech which consisted entirely of an enumeration of the shortcomings and failings of which in the speakers view the Ministry in question had been guilty since their access to power. The Speech in fact amounted to a strong censure from the liberal point of view of the whole policy of the Prince Regent's[97]

[95]See pp. 271–275.

[96]In his speech, Benningsen referred to the French threat to the territorial order of 1815 and France's suspected aspirations to reconquer the Rhine frontier.

[97]Wilhelm.

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present advisers. It concluded nevertheless in proposing their health as the only Ministers that for the present could keep a reactionary Ministry out, and in expressing the hope that they might mend their ways.

FO 64/506: William Lowther to Lord John Russell, No 6, Berlin, 4 January 1861

Accession of Wilhelm I; assessment of political state of Prussia

The Prussian Chambers will meet at Berlin on the 12th instant and this session is looked forward to with considerable interest as it will probably be more than usually animated.

The position of the present Government cannot be looked upon as very secure, and if a judgment can be formed from the language of the press, it would appear that they have but few supporters, for the Kreuz-Zeitung[98] or old Conservative Party accuse them of having too liberal tendencies while the Liberal and Democratic Party equally consider them as too conservative. One of the principal subjects which will cause discussion will probably be the Stieber affair of which Your Lordship has been informed.[99]

Perhaps some indulgence may be shown the Government on account of the recent accession to the Throne[100] of His present Majesty, but on the other hand it must be borne in mind, that with the exception of the title of King instead of Regent things remain just the same as they were.

The present King is honest straightforward and courageous, very like his father Frederick William III and consequently popular, but he does not possess the great talents of his brother, and those who look for any remarkable changes on his accession look in vain; nothing will at present I believe be altered beyond some of the nominations of persons about the Court. It was said that the present King, while Regent and governing for his brother acted more according to what he believed would be the late King's wish than according to his own feeling thus being over scrupulous.

[98] See n. 33 in this section.

[99] In 1860, Wilhelm Stieber, head of the criminal investigation department of the Berlin police, was brought to trial for illegal conduct. Despite reaching a verdict of not guilty, the trial revealed the arbitrary conduct of the Berlin police, the prosecution service, and the minister of justice.

[100] Friedrich Wilhelm IV died on 2 January 1861, and was succeeded by his brother Wilhelm I.

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In looking at the political state of Prussia there should be kept continually in view the military education to which Prussians one and all have been subjected, and the bureaucratic influence incessant in its interference which pervades everything and which prevails everywhere; till these have considerably diminished it cannot be expected that they will break with the old system to enter upon or rather work out a new and more enlightened course.

FO 64/508: Lord Augustus Loftus to Lord John Russell, No 96, Berlin, 23 March 1861

Reactions to incidents at Warsaw; Polish statements in Prussian parliament

Since the late disturbance at Warsaw[101] there has existed much fermentation among the Poles who are subjects of the King of Prussia.

Religious services were celebrated at Posen and in other towns of the Grand Duchy as a mark of sympathy and respect for those who had fallen in the affray at Warsaw, and it has been observed that of late there has been considerable movement and activity among the several Polish members of the Prussian Legislation.

Immediately after the affair at Warsaw M. Beninsky a Member of the Prussian Upper House repaired to Paris and during his residence there was presented to the Emperor of the French. He returned a few days ago, and it is conjectured that his visit to Paris was in some way connected with the affairs of Poland, and that his object was to concert with the Polish emigrants residing there as to the line of action which it would be desirable for the Polish Party to pursue under existing circumstances.

I may here observe that M. Beninski is well known for his patriotic feelings in favor of Poland, and that he was gravely compromised in the revolutionary attempts of 1830 and 1846.[102]

Soon after the return of M. Beninski here from Paris, and (as is supposed at his instigation) a motion was submitted to the Second Chamber by a M. de Niegolewski a Polish Deputy, in which he invites the Chamber to insist upon the "status quo" stipulated for by the Congress of Vienna, which he describes as the national and territorial integrity of Poland (the territorial boundaries being those of 1772)

[101]Demonstrations against Russian rule were held in Warsaw on 25 and 27 February; five students were killed.

[102]November Uprising of 1830–1831 and the Cracow and *Wielkopolska* (Greater Poland) uprisings of 1846.

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under three sceptres it is true, but as forming in all other respects national, political, commercial in a compact and undivided whole.[103]

This motion was opposed by Baron Vincke who considered it as infringing the constitution which declares the integrity of the Prussian State,[104] and he proposed that it should be referred to the Committee which regulates the public business of the Chamber, for the purpose of testing its admissibility as a topic of discussion. After a short debate of which I annex herewith a report in original with a precis by Mr. Fraser the proposal of Baron Vincke was agreed to by a very large majority.

For Your Lordship's more complete information on this subject I likewise enclose a copy in original with a translation by Mr. Morier of the motion in extenso with the "motives" accompanying it, by which according to the rules of the Legislative Chambers in Prussia every motion must be supported.[105]

These motives will place very clearly before Your Lordship the view at which the Polish Party in general is aiming, and although there can be no doubt that the proposal of M. de Niegolewski will be rejected by an overwhelming majority in the Prussian House of Deputies, still the object of the Poles will have been obtained; this object is apparently to bring before the notice of Europe the Polish Question, and to set forth the grievances under which the Polish nation is now suffering. It is doubtless sought thereby to invoke the sympathy of Europe in behalf of an oppressed nationality, and to produce a "cry of anguish" which may later procure for them material aid in support of their cause.

FO 64/512: Lord Augustus Loftus to Lord John Russell, No 322, Berlin, 6 July 1861

Wilhelm I's disputes with ministers over coronation ceremony; disagreements over conduct of coming elections; liberal New Era not living up to expectations; struggles between liberals and conservatives in chambers

Various rumours have been in circulation for some days past of discussions in the Prussian Cabinet and of differences between the

[103]At the Congress of Vienna of 1815, the final partition of Poland was confirmed. Article 1 of the Treaty of Vienna of 9 June 1815, to which Niegolewski referred in his motion of 20 March 1861, stipulated that 'Poles, who are respective subjects of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, shall obtain a Representation and National Institutions.' In 1861, Polish territories were held by Prussia (Duchy of Posen), Austria (Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria and Grand Duchy of Cracow), and Russia (Congress Kingdom of Poland).

[104]According to Paragraph 1 of the Prussian constitution of 31 January 1850, all parts of the monarchy constituted the territory of the Prussian state.

[105]Enclosures: cutting of article entitled 'Kammer-Verhandlungen. 28. Sitzung des Hauses der Abgeordneten', dated 20 March (original and English translation).

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King and His Ministers, which seemed to prognosticate either a total disruption or a partial modification of the Cabinet.

It is not easy to ascertain how far these rumours are founded and what have been the exact Causes which have given rise to them. As far as I am enabled to learn the primary cause which led to a difference of opinion between the King and His Ministry was the question of a "Huldigung."[106] This subject has given rise to very animated discussions between the King and His Cabinet but I believe the members of the Ministry, (with the exception of the Minister for War)[107] were united in the opinion that this Ceremony was not consistent with the principles of a Constitutional Monarchy.

This question has however been now decided, and His Majesty has published a Proclamation, decreeing that, in lieu of a "Huldigung" a Coronation shall take place at Königsberg in October next.[108]

This ceremony will be one of a religious character unattended by the administration of any Oath. It will take place in the presence of the Two Legislative Houses – of the Great Officers of State and of Persons summoned by the King from all the Provinces of the Kingdom.

The difficulties therefore, which had arisen between the King and His Ministry on this subject are now adjusted.

But, I am privately informed that a difference of opinion exists in the Cabinet on other matters, and more especially on the course to be pursued with regard to the coming Elections,[109] and that it is to this cause that the rumours of a Ministerial crisis are to be attributed. The Liberal portion of the Cabinet composing Monsieur Auerswald[,] Count Schwerin, Monsieur de Patow, and Monsieur de Bethmann-Hollweg are in favour of making known to the Country and the Electors the political Principles of the Government with a view to prepare a favourable reception of the Ministerial Candidates at the new Elections. The other portion of the Cabinet of less advanced Liberal views are opposed to the issue of a Ministerial Program – preferring to name persons for each Electoral district to appear before the Electors as the Ministerial Candidate. The discussion of this subject may naturally have given rise to a difference of political opinions as to the nature of the programme, and, if I am not mistaken, it has been on this point that a discussion has arisen between the

[106] After his accession to the throne on 2 January 1861, Wilhelm I wished for the traditional *Erbhuldigung* ceremony (homage), which included a mutual vow of the king and the deputies of the estates.

[107] Albrecht von Roon.

[108] Royal proclamation of 3 July 1861.

[109] Elections for the house of deputies took place on 6 December 1861.

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members of the cabinet, and likewise between the King and His Cabinet.

I think that I may confidently state that the present Cabinet is the maximum of a Liberal Government which will be accepted by the King but the position of the present Cabinet is one of great embarrassment.

I may here observe to Your Lordship that the present Cabinet, on its advent to Power,[110] was hailed with great satisfaction by the Nation: it was composed of men who were regarded with confidence by the Nation as statesmen of liberal and progressive principles who would infuse life and action into the Political Body which had become torpid and corrupt under the administration of Baron Manteuffel.

Great expectations were then formed that a new Era was about to dawn on Prussia and that a really Liberal and sound constitutional system would be honourably adopted: that with the new regime the reactionary principles which had till now retarded the Development of Free institutions should be cast aside and that both as regarded her Internal and her External Policy, Prussia would assume that position which would assure to Her the sympathies and support of Public opinion in Germany, and enable Her to take that leading part in the councils of Europe to which she might justly aspire. Nor can it be said that the nation was not fully authorised to entertain these expectations.

The opinion frequently expressed by the present King before His assumption of the reins of Government,[111] and the opposition which He had manifested towards the late Ministry and the system then pursued led the nation to expect that His Majesty would enter upon a progressive and constitutional course; and the choice of the Statesmen to whom He confided the Government gave the fairest hopes to the nation.

The result then was that the Elections which then took place shortly after the installation in office of the New Ministry were triumphant to the Liberal Cause and assured to the King's Government a large majority in the House of Representatives.

Such was the position of affairs when the King entered on His Duties as Regent. But very different is the present position of the Ministry. In lieu of union it is disunited within its own ranks. In lieu of commanding the support of the Nation it has disappointed all classes and has lost its prestige and the confidence of the country.

It has shewn itself too liberal to engage the support of the Aristocratic Party in the Upper House whilst it has not been

[110]The cabinet of the 'New Era' took office on 6 November 1858.
[111]See n. 58 in this section.

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judged sufficiently Liberal either in its External or Internal Policy to command the confidence of the Second Chamber.

The consequence has been that before the close of the last session the Ministry was deserted by its own supporters and only succeeded in carrying its measures even by a trifling majority with support of the Ultra Conservative Party. The probability is that in the new Chamber of Representatives the Ministerial Party will be still more reduced, and that the two extreme parties viz. the Ultra Conservatives or Kreuz Zeitung Party and the Ultra Liberal, or so styled Democratic Party will both gain numerical strength at the expense of the ministerialists.

The Question will then arise – and it will be one of no small difficulty:– From which party will the King select the future Ministry?

I may here state to Your Lordship that there are two opposite currents which are continually working on the King's mind and which alternately influence his political decisions.

His Majesty has constantly before Him the fear of a Revolution and a repetition of the events of 1848 whilst on the other hand he looks for the safety of the State and the preservation of its Institutions to the Reactionary party who are supported by the Military party.

Since His accession to the throne The King has apparently become far more reactionary in his political sentiments, although His Majesty is conscientious in his expressed intentions – faithfully to observe and maintain the Constitution.

The cause of this apparent contradiction may be attributed to the different manner in which, as compared with England, Constitutional Government is regarded and practised in this Country by the Sovereign as well as by the Higher Classes.

Here the right of the Chambers to interfere in the action of Government is not admitted. The Representatives of the People in the eyes of the Feudal Party have only the right of passing laws submitted to them by the Government and of voting the supplies. A wide distinction is drawn here between the legislative attributes and functions of the Chamber, and what is generally termed Parliamentary Government. The Conservative Party – styling themselves Constitutionalists assert that the King must govern, and that Prussia in Her position as a Great Military Power cannot be ruled by the same Parliamentary action as England.

The struggle between these two political Parties is fast approaching and the Battle will be fought at the coming Elections. For the moment the Ministerial Crisis is adjourned – but the difficulties of the position have not diminished and there exists a general feeling that the fate of

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the present Cabinet is sealed and that their continuance in Power is merely a question of Time.

I am informed that the question of a change, or even partial modification of the Ministry is now deferred until after the King's return from Baden.[112]

FO 64/512: Lord Augustus Loftus to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 357, Baden-Baden, 26 July 1861

Assassination attempt on the king; international shock; desire of ultra-conservatives to use event for political purposes; king's assurances attempt will not change his political course

Seldom has a political crime ./if the atrocious act of Becker can be so termed./ produced so unanimous a feeling of horror and disgust, or so universal a sympathy both in Germany and in Europe as the late attempt on the life of the King of Prussia.[113] It has called forth one expression of sympathy of admiration and of respect for the noble and chivalrous character of His Prussian Majesty, and has given to His Majesty the most convincing and consolatory proofs of the Loyalty and affection of His people.

Altho' crimes of this nature have frequently attended with political consequences of great importance – leaving a deep impression on the mind of the Sovereign, and exercising thereby a great influence on the internal relations of the State – it is confidently to be hoped, that this sad occurrence will not induce His Majesty to deviate from the Policy He has hitherto pursued, and that His mind will be impervious to the attempts which will be doubtless made by a large and influential Party in His Kingdom to persuade Him to abandon the Liberal path on which He has entered and adopt a Reactionary Policy.

I am informed that on the first intelligence of the sad incident reaching the King of Italy, His Majesty addressed by Telegraph His sincere congratulations to the King on his miraculous escape, and expressed a hope that it would not deter His Majesty from continuing in the path on which He had entered. I am also informed that similar advice was tendered to His Majesty by the Grand Duchess Helen of Russia who is now residing here.

The Ultra-Conservative or reactionary Party are making every attempt to turn this regrettable event to their own political purposes,

[112]Wilhelm arrived at Baden-Baden in July 1861. See the following dispatch.
[113]Assassination attempt on Wilhelm I at Baden-Baden on 14 July 1861.

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and to profit by the loyal enthusiasm in favor of the King, to influence the coming Election in their behalf.

General Manteuffel, who is the Chief of the King's Military Cabinet,[114] and a Leader of the Reactionary Party (and who I may observe has arrived here, having received a full remission of his sentence of imprisonment)[115] was lately heard to say, "that matters had now arrived at that point when the King must either make up His mind to go forwards or backwards (de marcher en avant ou de reculer) and that it was no longer possible to remain stationary["] – and he added "that in the latter event, which he should deplore, he would be under the necessity of resigning his Post."

His Majesty has given very positive assurances, that the attempt on His life would make no change in His political feelings, or in the line of Policy which He had hitherto pursued; but there have been some expressions in His reply to the Berlin Municipal Deputation and in the Letter He addressed to the Common Council of Baden,[116] which have not given this impression, but which rather seem to demonstrate that His Majesty is becoming fearful of the rapid progress of liberal ideas, and that He is less disposed than before to grant His confidence to the Liberal and Constitutional Party. It would be unwise and unjust however not to accept the professions of His Majesty with the sincerity with which He has made them, and those professions, repeated on various occasions, give the most solemn assurances of His determination to maintain the Constitution inviolate.

It is impossible to foresee what will be the result of the approaching Elections[117] – or indeed how they may be influenced by the sad incident of the attempt on the King's Person. It appears evident however, that whether the Ultra-Conservative and reactionary – or the Ultra-Liberal party come out victorious from the struggle, the part of the present Cabinet will be wholly swamped and merged in the two extremes.

The existence of the present Ministry will therefore depend on their accepting or not the Policy which will be dictated by the majority of the second Chamber.

[114]The military cabinet was an instrument of direct royal control and sovereign command of the army.

[115]Edwin von Manteuffel was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for duelling. He was released after two weeks.

[116]The deputation from Berlin was received by Wilhelm in Baden-Baden on 17 July. His letter to the Baden council was dated 15 July 1861.

[117]See n. 109 in this section.

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FO 64/525: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl Russell, No 394, Berlin, 28 June 1862

Resolution of the Hesse-Cassel Question

It is not necessary for me to trouble Your Lordship with any detailed statement of the various phases through which the Hessian Question has passed, and of the intrigues to which it has given rise – nor to refer to the comic end of a drama which at one time seemed to portend tragic results. It may suffice to state that the differences which have existed for a period of twelve years between the Elector of Hesse Cassel and his people have been brought to a conclusion, and that the latter have obtained after an unexampled display of patience and firmness, a full restoration of their legal rights and privileges.[118]

I may further remark that this result is of some importance in a general sense inasmuch as it offers a favorable precedent, that the Legal Constitution of a German State cannot be successfully set aside by the absolute will of the Sovereign, in opposition to public opinion, and that the People, when legally asserting and consistently maintaining their rights without having recourse to acts of disloyalty and violence may confidently look to the triumph of their cause.

The result however obtained in Hesse Cassel is not such as to give entire satisfaction to the Prussian Government, nor to inspire the Hessian people with much confidence in the future. It is true that the Constitution of 1831 and the Electoral Law of 1849 so long withheld by the present Elector supported by the Germanic Diet, have been at length restored, but the charge of carrying out these measures has been confided into the hands of a Ministry composed of the very men who for years have been strenuously and openly opposed to them.[119]

It is surmised that this course has been adopted by the Elector by the advice of Austria and Hanover – both of whom were desirous that the Prussian influence at Cassel should be counteracted by the formation of a Ministry of known opposition to Prussian policy, in lieu of a Liberal Ministry, whose policy it is supposed would have been subservient to the views and opinions of Prussia. Be this as it may, it is evident that the Elector in order to gain delay sought at first to appease and disarm the Prussian Government by appearing to call to

[118]On 21 June 1862, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm – under threat of Prussian military intervention – complied with the federal resolutions of 13 and 24 May 1862 and restored the constitution of 1831. On 24 June, elections were announced, seemingly putting an end to the Hesse-Cassel Question.

[119]On 26 May 1862, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm dismissed his ministers, which suggested a change of policy. However, despite projections of a liberal ministry (which submitted a programme on 6 June), the Prince Elector installed a conservative cabinet on 22 June 1862.

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his councils men of the Liberal Party. His Royal Highness obtained from them a Programme not as is now believed with the intention of entrusting to them its execution but solely for the purpose of making it the basis on which a reactionary Ministry should be formed, and of thus annulling any future opposition of the Liberal Party by disarming them and placing their arms in the hands of their opponents.

It is generally observed here that the Elector has thus taken example by the course pursued by the King of Prussia, who has placed a reactionary Ministry[120] in power to carry out Liberal measures, and the position in which the two States are likely to find themselves will be exactly the same, namely that of a Government unsupported by the Representatives of the People. It is consequently urged that – in the event of a Chamber being elected in Hesse hostile to the new Ministry the Prussian Government will be powerless to act and unable to remonstrate from being itself in a similar position.

On the other hand it cannot be denied, that without the energy and pressure of Prussia, the Hessian people would scarcely have obtained the restoration of their legal rights: Having regained their Constitution and the Electoral Law of 1849 it will now remain with them to exercise their rights and privileges in the way most conducive to the wellbeing and prosperity of their country.

I have the honor to forward to Your Lordship herewith an Article from the "National Zeitung" in original with a Precis by Messieurs Seymour and Grosvenor supervised by Mr Lowther, which gives a fair statement of the manner in which the adjustment of the Hessian Question is judged by the Liberal Party in Prussia.[121]

FO 64/529: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl Russell, No 562, Berlin, 18 October 1862

Conflict between the government and liberals in lower chamber; assessment of Bismarck's conduct

Since the close of the Parliamentary Session a certain lull has succeeded the fever of political excitement which had previously existed: although this apparent calm does not betoken any change in the disposition of either of the contending parties or give hopes that

[120] On 14 March 1862, the ministry of the 'New Era' was replaced by the conservative ministry of Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen.

[121] Enclosures: cutting of article entitled 'Regierung, Heer und Volk' from *National Zeitung* of 27 June 1862 (original and précis).

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salutary concessions may be expected on the part of the Ministry to the Lower Chamber.[122]

The liberal party feel themselves strong by the support of the enlightened part of the Nation – by the justice and legality of their cause and by a conviction that the principles which have actuated their conduct will finally triumph. They are resolved to remain strictly within the limits of the constitution and of the Law and are fully determined to maintain a firm and passive opposition to the illegal acts of the Upper Chamber without yielding to intimidation on the one hand and without allowing themselves on the other to be led to the commission of any overt Acts which would justify their Opponents in having recourse to measures of Violence beyond the limits of the Constitution. The attitude assumed by Monsieur de Bismarck and the vagueness of his political declarations which altho' professing constitutional doctrines are strongly tainted with reactionary feelings and tendencies, has entirely alienated from him the confidence of the Liberal constitutional Party. All the principal Organs of the Press both here and in the Provinces loudly censure the course he has taken and evince an open hostility to him.

They consider that in lieu of counteracting the Reactionary Party which surrounds the Throne, whose principles are unmistakably shared by the Sovereign he is going with the stream without attempting to stem it.

It may be however premature and unjust to judge Monsieur de Bismarck before he has had sufficient time to overcome the many difficulties which surround his Path, and to alter the Course which has been hitherto pursued.

As far as I can learn it is his present intention not to convoke the Chambers until the ordinary period in January when he will submit a new Budget to the Lower Chamber and simultaneously with it a Law for the Organisation of the Military Service.

The question of the Conflict between the Two Houses will be thereby it is hoped laid aside and the deliberations of the Chambers will commence with an entirely new Budget. In the interval M. de Bismarck looks to obtain certain Concessions from the King

[122]The session was closed owing to the irreconcilable differences over the military budget (see n. 86 in this section). On 3 October, the house of deputies passed an amended version of the draft budget that rejected all expenditures for the reorganization of the military. On 11 October, the *Herrenhaus* (first chamber) dismissed the house of deputies' amended budget and – going beyond its constitutional rights – passed the budget as originally presented by the government. On 13 October, the house of deputies declared this procedure to be 'null and void'. The royal message closed the session on the same day, and proclaimed that the government would carry out the spending plans of the original budget and have it legally ratified at a later date.

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of a nature to enable him to come to an understanding with the moderate Fraction of the Lower Chamber and thus he hopes to form a ministerial Party in support of his Government.

How far these hopes and expectations may be realised remains for the future to reveal but I confess to Your Lordship that judging by the Language used by the King in his replies to several Deputations which have presented their addresses of Loyalty and devotion and also by the firm and decided attitude of the constitutional Party backed by the Public opinion of the Country, it appears to me very doubtful whether M. de Bismarck's attempts towards an understanding between the Crown and the Lower Chamber will be attended with a successful Result.

Such is the calm but decided and firm attitude of the constitutional Party and so great is the influence exercised by its leaders over the masses that I feel confident that at present there is no danger to be feared of any disturbances or outbursts of popular impatience and the maintenance of order and tranquillity will be preserved unless the provocation to a contest should unwisely originate with the Party of Reaction.

FO 64/542: Andrew Buchanan to Earl Russell, No 295, Berlin, 23 May 1863

Conflict between government and the chambers; confidence of both Bismarck and the liberals; fears that government's reactionary course is bolstering support for democrats and radicals

The Report of the debates of the Chamber of Deputies and the Parliamentary documents which I have had the honor to forward to Your Lordship in my dispatch No. 294 of this date, and in my dispatches on the same subject during the last ten days, will have made Your Lordship fully acquainted with the details of the extraordinary Conflict which has been raised between the Government and The Chamber, and which has led to discussions in which the Kings advisors may be said to have induced His Majesty to take a personal part.[123] There is still some doubt as to the next measure which will

[123]On 11 May 1863, in the course of the debate on the *Kriegsdienstgesetz* (law on military service), the vice-president of the house of deputies interrupted Roon, the minister of war. On 20 May, after the chamber had rejected the ministry's demand for a declaration that the chamber had no disciplinary power over members of the government, Wilhelm I declared his support for the ministry's course. The chamber responded in its address to the king on 22 May, revoking their further collaboration with the government and demanding a change of cabinet.

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be adopted by the Government and as the Chamber has adjourned until Wednesday, the King, I am told, will probably not until then return an answer to a letter received last night from the President[124] by M. de Bismarck requesting His Excellency to take His Majesty's pleasure, and to inform him "if and when" The King would receive the Deputation named to present the address to His Majesty. There appears also to be some difference of opinion among the Ministers as to whether the Chamber should be immediately closed. The Minister of Finance, M. de Bodelschwing considering that the position of the Government would be restored to a certain degree of legality by their accepting a Budget with such Votes as the Chamber may be pleased to grant; but with the intention of providing by Extraordinary credits for the estimates which it might refuse to sanction. Your Lordship may not however be disposed to admit that the Constitution would be less blatantly violated by a Government persisting to incur expenditure to which Parliament had refused its assent, than by governing without a Budget at all.

But whatever may be the date of the Prorogation of the Diet, M. de Bismarck makes no secret of his intention to close the Session shortly, and to dissolve the second chamber in the course of the autumn or early in the winter. Some persons say that the latest possible period for the dissolution will be adopted in order to give the Government more time to carry out their Reactionary Policy undisturbed by the presence of the Diet, and to take such preparatory measures as they may deem expedient for promoting the return of a Second Chamber with opinions in accordance with their own.

That these preparatory measures will be of an abnormal and despotic character is generally believed, and Royal ordinances are said to be already prepared for restricting the liberty of the Press,[125] for prohibiting Public Meetings and for discouraging the election to the Chamber of Deputies of public functionaries who may be unfriendly to the Government. It is alleged that the Government hope to satisfy the Kings conscience that the ordinances may be legally issued under Article 63 of the Constitution of which a translation is annexed,[126] but which Your Lordship will perceive, only authorises the Government in extraordinary and urgent circumstances, should Parliament not be sitting, to issue legislative decrees which shall not be contrary to

[124] Wilhelm Grabow.
[125] Press ordinance of 1 June 1863.
[126] Enclosure: Article 63 of the constitution of 31 January 1850 (translation).

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the Constitution, and which shall be subsequently submitted to the confirmation and approval of the Chambers.

Should the King however be able to satisfy himself that His Ministers will not be acting illegally if they dismiss the Diet in order that they may create a pretext for arrogating to themselves this exceptional authority, the Country cannot be expected to see with indifference the complete nullification of its constitutional rights by almost the same process which was punished in France in 1830 by the expulsion of a Dynasty.[127]

There have been as yet no symptoms of dangerous excitement among the people and though the passions of Public Men are deeply moved, the leaders of the advanced liberal party[128] have apparently the same self satisfied conviction that they will eventually carry out their own views in Parliament, and obtain a bloodless, but a crushing victory over their political adversaries, as M. de Bismarck, who has proved to himself arithmetically, that the members of the present Second Chamber do not represent one fourth part of the people of Prussia, and, having no influence whatever over the body of the Nation, will be eventually swept away never to be heard of again. Therefore, though it is said by some persons that a call to insurrection would be largely responded to by the people of Berlin, and probably also of the great towns, there is evidently at present no intention on the part of public men professing liberal opinions to seek their objects by other than legal and constitutional means; and they all look forward to events occurring ere long that will create financial necessities on the part of the Government, which they will only be able to meet by a reconciliation with the chamber on the terms which it may choose to dictate.

It is deeply to be regretted, however, that the present state of things is daily weakening the respect and attachment of the Nation for their Sovereign, and that the feudal Party and the Government which they support, instead of checking the democratic tendencies of the people, are daily intensifying their hatred of the higher orders, and rendering more difficult if not impossible that fusion and harmony among the different classes of the community, which are at once essential to the development of liberty, and the maintenance of order in a constitutional monarchy.

[127] Buchanan refers to the ordinances of 26 July 1830, and the subsequent French revolution of July, which overthrew the Bourbon dynasty.

[128] *Deutsche Fortschrittspartei* (German Progressive Party), founded by members of the Prussian house of deputies on 6 June 1862.

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FO 64/543: William Lowther to Earl Russell, No 59, Berlin, 15 August 1863

Frankfurt Fürstentag*; tensions between Austria and Prussia over leadership in Germany; opposition of Prussian government newspapers to congress*

The events which may take place next week at Francfort are naturally looked forward to here with the greatest interest, considerably increased by the fact that no correct opinion can as yet be formed of what may be the proposals which the Emperor of Austria is about to make for the Reform of the German Confederation,[129] but whatever proposals may be made there seems to be a general feeling of satisfaction at the step which has been taken by the Emperor, for there is a firm conviction in the publick mind that some measures should long since have been taken for the reform of the Bund and though there is no disposition to put much faith in the liberalism of Austria, it is believed that any plans for the reform of the Bund whether in themselves good or bad must eventually have a good effect in Germany in favour of German Unity.

There is no doubt that it is a great mortification to Prussia to see Austria putting herself at the head of the German movement, but there is at the same time a satisfaction felt by the Liberal party at seeing the difficulties into which Monsieur de Bismarck and his Cabinet have contrived to get themselves, and to free themselves from which a hope is entertained that they may be inclined to take some great step which may be of advantage to Prussia.

It is argued that Prussia cannot be liberal at the Bund and the contrary at home, that Prussia cannot remain behind Austria and therefore that it is evident a change of system must take place in Prussia's home and German Policy.

The Government newspapers are strongly opposed to the Congress of the German Sovereigns which they maintain cannot have any practical result, as Germany may refuse to adopt that which the Sovereigns now decide upon, and it is asked what would be the position of those persons taking part at this congress should it not succeed?

The Sovereigns will meet for discussion and the Nation will be called upon to adopt or reject their resolutions, thus Austria is reversing the order of things it being usual for the Sovereign to sanction the plans of his ministry.

[129]For the Austrian plan for federal reform submitted to the Frankfurt congress of German princes (17 August–1 September 1863) see pp. 75–76. At Bismarck's instigation, the King of Prussia did not attend the *Fürstentag*.

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The Kreuz Zeitung[130] more particularly points out that the Federal constitution[131] can be improved but if it is entirely changed war may be the result in Germany, which will become the prey of its Enemies, and it warns those who attempt this that they run risk not only of danger to themselves but also of punishment.

FO 64/546: Andrew Buchanan to Earl Russell, No 542, Berlin, 28 November 1863

Continued public discussion of Schleswig-Holstein Question; general support for Augustenburg claims; political divisions in Schleswig-Holstein; international context of crisis

The Right of Accession to the Sovereignty of the Duchies of Sleswig and Holstein continues to be the principal subject of discussion in the Press and in society here, all parties having more or less had reasons for favouring the pretensions of the Prince of Augustenburg.[132]

The Feudalists on these pretensions being first put forward were disposed to identify them with the cause of legitimacy, while they hoped they might also prove a means of bringing about a reconciliation between the King and the Chamber of Deputies; and the liberal party could not fail to respond to a call which has revived one of the most popular questions of 1848, and an idea which has stirred the minds of the people throughout Germany to a degree which is scarcely intelligible to a Foreigner.

Persons therefore connected with the Government and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs talk of the impossibility of Prussia being insensible to the unanimous expression of the public opinion of Germany, and they speak of the danger of resisting a national feeling so universal and so intense, as that which is daily manifesting itself in popular demonstrations throughout the Confederation; at the same Time that they profess that the Government will be faithful to it's international engagements,[133] and will not be carried away by the stream like those of the smaller States. To acknowledge the popular voice therefore, by adopting some half measure, seems to such persons to be the only safe course, which is open to the Govt, and they maintain that an Execution in Holstein would at once calm the present excitement, and while satisfying the feelings of the people of Germany,

[130] See n. 33 in this section.

[131] Act of the German Confederation of 8 June 1815.

[132] For the Schleswig-Holstein Question and Friedrich von Augustenburg's claims see pp. 77–78.

[133] London Protocol of 1852 (see n. 97 in Frankfurt section).

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would prevent any revolutionary movements in the Duchy. To these persons the friends of Denmark reply that a federal execution cannot be carried out without in some degree acknowledging King Christian's Sovereignty in Holstein, and on the other hand, if the execution should be of a nature to call His Majesty's rights in question, it would become a sequestration or an occupation of the Duchy, in which case it cannot be expected that the King should sit quietly, and allow himself to be deprived of a Province of which Europe has solemnly recognized him to be the Sovereign.[134]

As a sequestration would therefore be a hostile act, it is asked whether Prussia is prepared for such an eventuality, and the answer generally given, is that if Statesmen have to meet a choice of evils, they must take the least, and that the danger of war abroad is preferable to the certainty of Revolution at home.

The Government however within the last few days appear to have been recommending moderation to their supporters, who have begun to show less sympathy with the claims of the Prince of Augustenburg, and some strictures have appeared in the Kreutz-Zeitung[135] [*sic*] on the cession of claims by the Duke of Augustenburg to his Son, for which he had already received a pecuniary indemnity from Denmark.[136]

In the meanwhile the impudence of the Danish Government in calling for an oath of fidelity from the public functionaries in the Duchies,[137] in, I believe, an unusually hasty manner, has given many of them an opportunity of making a demonstration against the rights of King Christian, and giving increased weight to the Deputation which has gone to Frankfort.[138] It is difficult however to ascertain exactly what the people of the Duchy look forward to.

There are, I am told, three parties among the disaffected, of which the most numerous is not unfavourable to a continued Union with Denmark, on condition that the Duchies of Sleswig and Holstein should be united under one administrative system, having equal legislative authority in the Monarchy with Denmark. Another considerable party would gladly see the two Duchies formed into an

[134]The precondition of the federal execution (*Bundesexekution*) against Holstein (see n. 99 in Frankfurt section) was that Holstein (unlike Schleswig) was a member state of the German Confederation.

[135]See n. 33 in this section.

[136]Act of 30 December 1852, by which Duke Christian August renounced his and his family's rights to any portion of the dominions of the Danish crown. The financial compensation amounted to 1,500,000 double *Rixdollar* (Danish silver coinage).

[137]On 19 November 1863, the Danish government ordered state officials in Schleswig and Holstein to take the oath of allegiance to the new king within three days.

[138]On 19 November 1863, twenty-four members of the Holstein estates made a declaration in favour of the hereditary rights of Friedrich von Augustenburg, and petitioned the Federal Diet at Frankfurt for the protection of the Confederation.

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independent State under a German Prince, but it is only a violent, and I am assured, not very numerous part which would prefer the erection of Holstein alone into an [*sic*] petty independent principality to the reconstruction of the Monarchy on any basis except that which they claim of the equal authority in the common legislature of each of it's component parts. This party however, which might readily gain adherents, if the Duchy were occupied by Federal troops, followed by National-Verein[139] agitators, may be classed among the Holsteiners, with the pure Eider Danes of the Kingdom,[140] who are so entirely under the influence of passion and party feeling that they would infinitely prefer the severance of Holstein from the Monarchy to any combination for a common Government, in which the German population of Sleswig should be placed under the same provincial administration as Holstein, or that these Duchies should have more influence in the common legislature than they are entitled to in proportion to their population. With reference to the movement in Germany it is not improbable that several late political incidents have encouraged the party in the Confederation, to whose exertions may be principally attributed the general and enthusiastic character of the support which has been given to the pretensions of the Duke of Augustenburg.

Events in Italy and in Greece, & though of an entirely different nature, those which are passing in Poland,[141] in defiance of the reprobation of three of the Great Powers of Europe,[142] have led the leaders of the German National Verein to believe that if they can frighten the Governments of Austria and Prussia into adopting their views for the severance of the Duchies of Sleswig and Holstein from the Danish Monarchy, no other Great Power will feel sufficiently interested in the Question to offer armed resistance, and one of my Colleagues, who has lived for many years in Germany, is so fully convinced of the prevalence of this belief throughout the Confederation, and of its influence in the present march of events, that he believes a decided declaration on the part of the three non-German Powers, who signed the Treaty of London,[143] or of England and France, against

[139] See n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

[140] The 'Eider-Danes' were Denmark's liberal-nationalist party, who wished to see the river Eider (the border between Schleswig and Holstein) as the border of a homogenous Danish state.

[141] Buchanan refers to the unification of Italy in 1861, the deposition of Otto as King of Greece on 23 October 1862, and the Polish uprising against Russian rule in 1863.

[142] France, Great Britain, and Russia.

[143] The non-German signatories (apart from Denmark) were France, Great Britain, Russia, and Sweden. For the London Protocol of 1852, see n. 97 in Frankfurt section.

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any armed interference in support of the pretensions of the Prince of Augustenburg, would do much to arrest the Movement in his favour.

I have observed also that Monsieur de Bismarck when I have spoken to Him of the opinions of Her Majesty's Government, has generally shewn a wish to have them communicated to Him in writing, in order, I presume, that he might use them as a means of acting upon others, and of representing to them the serious responsibility which they incur by exciting Germany to distrust an arrangement, which has received the sanction of the Great Powers of Europe.

FO 64/563: William Lowther to Earl Russell, No 40, Berlin, 12 August 1864

Peace treaties with Denmark; wide distrust of Bismarck despite popularity of the war

The signature of the preliminaries of peace between Germany and Denmark would it might naturally be supposed have called forth some expression of satisfaction to the public.[144] I have looked in vain for any such general Expression in the press in Berlin, it is true the organs of the Government have taken this opportunity of extolling the President of the Ministry and of shewing how good is the understanding at present existing between Austria and Prussia.

Under other circumstances this commencement of the conclusion of peace would have been viewed here in quite a different spirit and this I take to be owing entirely to the fact of its having been brought about under the auspices of M. de Bismarck.

I have the honour to enclose copies and translations of two Articles on this subject – one is taken from the Elberfeld Newspaper the other from the Volks Zeitung.[145] There is no denying that the war was a most popular one in Germany and that the military spirit in Prussia was much roused at seeing the Army again actively employed after so long a repose, and it was most gratifying to the military to find results produced more satisfactory to Prussia than the most sanguine (and I include amongst these Monsieur de Bismarck himself) ever dreamed of, but the distrust of M. de Bismarck is so general and the feeling so strong that His Excellency in engaging in the war was not doing

[144]The preliminary peace of 1 August 1864 ended the Second Schleswig-Holstein War (see n. 103 in Frankfurt section). Denmark ceded the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg to Austria and Prussia.

[145]Enclosures: newspaper cutting from *Elberfelder Zeitung*, no date (original and translation); newspaper cutting from *Volks-Zeitung* entitled 'Falsche Vorstellungen', dated 12 August 1864 (original and translation).

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so for the benefit of the German cause and for the more immediate furtherance of the Prince of Augustenburg's claims,[146] that it has overpoured the more natural one of satisfaction at the signature of the preliminaries of peace on the advantageous terms which have been obtained.

The public still bear in mind the conversations between Sir Andrew Buchanan and His Excellency relative to the removal from Holstein of the Prince of Augustenburg as recorded in Sir Andrew Buchanan's despatch to Your Lordship No. 113 of the 29th of January.[147]

It is well known too that Monsieur de Bismarck was glad to see public attention turned from the internal affairs of Prussia to the question of Sleswig Holstein, but now that that question has gone through another course public attention reverts to the more interesting subject of home policy, and though there is every wish to give Monsieur de Bismarck some credit for the skilful manner in which he has carried on the affairs committed to his management, there is at the same time an apprehension that he should be encouraged in his reactionary tendency by any popularity he may lately have acquired and he will find the Second Chamber when recalled, in just the same temper as when the session was closed.

It is more than probable that when the peace is definitively settled and the question of Sleswig Holstein arranged as regards Denmark, the Chamber will meet, and that the Second Chamber will be immediately dissolved, should this be the case, a chamber more favourable to Monsieur de Bismarck would probably be elected; for the military feeling in the country is at present more powerful and active than it was when the present chamber was elected.

Had the War been carried on in conjunction with the Diet the case would have been far different and M. de Bismarck would have now been master of the situation and people would not be looking at him with the same distrust and asking what is the price to be paid to Austria for her assistance and that some price is to be paid by Prussia no one doubts. The existence of any written engagement between Austria and Prussia by which Prussia should assist Austria if her Italian possessions were attacked,[148] appears now to be doubted,

[146] For Friedrich von Augustenburg's claims see n. 97 in Frankfurt section.

[147] In his conversation with Buchanan of 29 January 1864, Bismarck stated that he believed Britain would be more favourable to the Austro-Prussian occupation of Schleswig if assurances were given for the maintenance of the integrity of the Danish monarchy and if the Prince of Augustenburg were removed from Holstein.

[148] In the summer of 1864, Austria's position in Italy was considered in the ongoing deliberations between Bismarck and Rechberg on the Schleswig-Holstein Question. Their draft convention agreed at Schönbrunn on 24 August 1864 was discarded by the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia.

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and it is rather thought that Count Rechberg is waiting for some more favourable time for making terms perhaps when Prussia has got so entangled in the Sleswig Holstein difficulties with regard to Germany that she will not be able to extricate herself without the assistance of Austria.

Your Lordship will be better able to gauge how far these suppositions may be founded and in bringing them before Your Lordship I merely report the general impression which I find expressed here.

FO 64/566: Lord Francis Napier to Earl Russell, Most Confidential, No 2, Berlin, 18 November 1864

Appointment of Napier as ambassador; conversation with Bismarck on Britain and British constitution; analysis of Bismarck's aims, conduct, and peculiar temperament

Monsieur de Bismark returned to Berlin yesterday evening and called upon me this afternoon. He expressed to me the satisfaction of the King at my nomination as Her Majesty's Ambassador to this Court and was so good as to say that he had particular pleasure in the renewal of our personal relations[149] which had in other times been of a very friendly character. His Excellency then manifested to me his earnest desire that it should not be imagined that he cherished the least feeling of alienation from England or had any aversion to the policy or institutions of our country. Circumstances had so ordered it that on two occasions, during the Crimean war, as a confidential adviser, and more recently as a responsible Minister, he had been placed in a position of antagonism with the wishes of Her Majesty's Government,[150] but these incidents in which his course had been dictated by a sense of duty, were not the result of any constant repugnance to England or of any preference for another country or another alliance. "Indeed," said Monsieur de Bismark "if I could import the constitutions of England into Prussia with all that belongs to them, I should do so tomorrow." The Prussian Minister then went on to speak of his position here with the intemperate courage and reckless pleasantry which often tincture his political discourse.

I told the Prussian Minister in replying to his observations that I could scarcely hope to share his opinions or to approve his measures in all respects, but that the feelings of personal regard which had

[149]From 1860 to 1862, Bismarck and Napier were both accredited to the Russian court at St Petersburg.

[150]Napier refers to Bismarck's role in Prussia's policy of neutrality in 1853–1855 and the Anglo-Prussian differences over the Second Schleswig-Holstein War of 1864.

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prevailed between us in other circumstances remained on my side also unaltered, that I took the sincerest interest in his welfare and that it would always be my desire to do full justice to his qualities and his conduct. I trusted that with mutual good will between the two Governments and with the softening influence of time the irritation which prevailed between the two Countries would soon disappear. I then exhorted the Prussian Minister not to listen to any reports which might reach him of anything that I might say or do at court or in the freedom of social intercourse. I knew my duty to The King to whom I was accredited by my Sovereign, and to himself in whom The King was pleased to place confidence, it would be a pity – I said, – that our correspondence should be distrusted by careless or malicious tales, which might be circulated hereafter as had been the case, as I was informed, before. I begged that if anything of the sort should ever be carried to him, he would tell me of it frankly at once.

Monsieur de Bismark said that he would do so and that he had perfect confidence in my intentions.

I told Monsieur de Bismark that I would not on this occasion enter upon business, but that it would shortly be my duty to speak to him concerning the commercial relations of England and Prussia and the alterations which it might be necessary to introduce in consequence of the conclusion of the Commercial Treaty between this Kingdom and France and the reconstruction of the Zollverein on the basis of that Convention.[151]

It is not the duty of a Foreign Minister to interfere in the internal concerns of the country in which he resides and it would be particularly indiscreet on my part to thrust my sentiments or counsels on Monsieur de Bismark at the very outset of our official intercourse. I do not know how far any person, however familiar and trusted, could influence the resolutions of a man of his peculiar temperament, – of one who with, – as I think –, some great and generous qualities, is so impetuous, indiscreet and – many would say – so unscrupulous in the ardent pursuit of his aims. I claim however, from Your Lordship a little time and a little freedom in this respect. My object is in the first instance to possess the confidence of Monsieur de Bismark and his sympathy. He is perhaps destined to exert great influence here for a length of time. His favour with the King is by all accounts unabated and he may defy by his ascendancy and success abroad all the efforts of his internal antagonists. I wish, if possible, to reason with him quietly. I wish to ascertain whether there is any prospect that he should take a more

[151] For the Franco-Prussian Commercial Treaty and the renewal of the *Zollverein* treaty, see n. 88 in Frankfurt section.

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conciliatory attitude towards his own country men, a more serious view of his responsibilities as the Chief Minister of a State which has still a recognized Parliamentary Constitution[152] and which contains aspirations for freedom which will never be oppressed again in the bonds of a bureaucratic despotism – however mitigated by intelligence and virtue. If such a change be possible the present conjuncture would appear very favourable for effecting it. Nothing has certainly reached me as yet to justify a hope that reconciliation between the Minister and the Chamber will take place; but if any humble efforts on my part employed with discretion and conspiring with more powerful motives could conduce to such a result I presume that Her Majesty's Government would regard them with approval.

FO 64/566: Lord Francis Napier to Earl Russell, Confidential, No 28, Berlin, 17 December 1864

Remarks on implications of Schleswig-Holstein sovereignty dispute for British government; desire of Austria and majority of German states for Augustenburg succession; dangers of annexation of duchies by Prussia

It belongs to Her Majesty's Government to determine how far the interests of Great Britain are affected by the settlement of the future sovereignty of Sleswig Holstein and I can well understand that Her Majesty's Government feel no inclination by authority or counsel to interfere in the solution of this question.

I venture, however, to submit to Your Lordship's attention the following remarks on the bearing which the disposal of the Duchies may have on other matters which have a vital interest for England at the risk of suggesting reflections which are already familiar to Her Majesty's Government.

I risk little in asserting that the destiny of Sleswig Holstein is reduced to simple alternative, Augustenburg or Prussia.

The division of the Duchies according to the lawful succession rights of rival pretenders is impossible. The claims of the Duke of Oldenburg are suspected in their source, unpopular in the Country, feebly supported in the Diet, opposed by Austria and not heartily favored by Prussia. Augustenburg and Prussia are the only serious rivals in the field.[153]

The recognition of the Prince of Augustenburg appears consistent with most of the principles which we respect and not obnoxious to any

[152] Constitution of 31 January 1850.

[153] The union of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein was guaranteed by the Treaty of Ripen of 1460. For the claims of Friedrich von Augustenburg and the Grand Duke of Oldenburg, Peter II, see nn. 97 and 104 in Frankfurt section.

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serious objection. I set the questions of personal morality and Danish rights of course aside.

The Prince has at least as much succession right in the Duchies as any other candidate. That is admitted on all sides. The best judges think he has most right.

The Prince certainly possesses the greatest share of popular favor.

There is no decided repugnance to him on the part of any foreign Power, except on the part of Russia and that is a more personal question with the Emperor. The Russian Government and the Russian nation are absolutely indifferent on the subject, or if they feel at all they feel a certain repugnance to taking any part in the affair.

The majority of the Germanic Governments led by Austria are decidedly favorable to Augustenburg.

Prussia has avowedly no objection in principle to the Prince, and merely abstains from supporting him in order to gain some selfish advantage, to please the Emperor of Russia, and to run the chance of securing the Duchies for herself should the turn of events favor that project.

It seems to me that a settlement in favor of the Prince would give a reasonable satisfaction to all parties concerned and wound no interest or right worth mentioning.

On the other hand should this question be drawn out and should Prussia establish her authority in the Duchies either by mere usurpation or with the apparent assent of a harassed people disgusted with the uncertainties, hazards and burdens of their position, it appears to me that there are several inconveniences attached to such an issue.

The annexation of the Duchies by Prussia would be a serious breach of public morality if we regard all that has passed. A conspicuous example of "triumphant wrong"[154] cannot be offered with impunity. It would indeed not be the first example of wrong in the history of Prussia and I am as much as any one ready to recognize that Prussia has used her usurpations with benevolence and has tempered the injustice of acquisition by as much wise management and by as many practical benefits as any Government has ever bestowed. The injustice of Prussia has been a civilising and useful injustice. But Sleswig Holstein is not Silesia or Posen. Prussia could not efface the

[154]Probably quoting Viscount Palmerston (House of Commons, 27 February 1863), who, referring to Russian rule in Poland, stated that 'It is a great misfortune for anybody to succeed to an inheritance of triumphant wrong.'

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stigma of usurpation there by Good Government. There would still remain the naked spectacle of a selfish appropriation.

If such an act could be consummated without present concessions of territory to France, which seems probably [*sic*], it would justify the past measures of France and would encourage and justify similar attempts in future.[155] The annexation of the Elbe Duchies to Prussia might be cited in support of aggression in Belgium or aggression in Italy.

The annexation if accomplished must be accomplished with the assent of Austria or without the assent of Austria. If accomplished with the assent of Austria that assent must be purchased, and the price would be the guarantee of Venetia to the Austrian Crown[156] by Prussia, which would perhaps be the greatest misfortune and injustice of which Europe could at present be the scene.

If accomplished without the assent of Austria there would be the danger of a rupture in the Germanic body, perhaps of war, certainly of a long and malignant alienation fatal to the welfare and safety of Germany in which Her Majesty's Government, in common with all the Powers except France, is deeply concerned.

In either case the animosity against Prussia already roused in the secondary States of Germany in a greater degree than is desirable, would be vastly increased.

Even in regard to the interests of the Prussian people and those of public freedom everywhere, the annexation is undesirable. Such a success of the Ultra Conservative Party here would increase the despotic tendencies of the Government and Court and discredit liberal institutions and aspirations for a length of time.

Having thus rapidly submitted to Your Lordship the reasons which seem to me to recommend the recognition of the Prince of Augustenburg as the future Sovereign of the Elbe Duchies, it only remains for me to report that during the past week no progress has been made towards a settlement of the question by negotiation between Austria and Prussia.

Mr. de Bismarck last night repeated to me the same reflections which have been reported to Your Lordship on previous occasions. I find however that his tone becomes less and less favorable to The Prince of Augustenburg.

[155]Napier is most probably alluding to Napoleon III's policies of territorial expansion in Europe. France had gained Nice and Savoy from Piedmont-Sardinia in 1860, and was suspected of territorial ambitions in Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Rhineland.

[156]After the Austro-Italian War of 1859, Venetia remained within the Austrian Empire.

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FO 64/575: Lord Francis Napier to Earl Russell, Confidential, No 133, Berlin, 9 May 1865

Conflict in Prussian parliament over military reorganization plans; condemnation of Prussian government for alienating liberals; indispensability of Bismarck to the king; compromise impossible owing to political divisions; dismissal of rumours of coup d'état

In my despatch No 41 of the 11. February I reported to Your Lordship that the measure for the reorganisation of the Prussian army which had been on various occasions rejected by the Prussian House of Representatives had been again submitted to that body without any modifications which could open the prospect of a better result at this conjuncture.[157]

The Government measure was, as usual, subjected to examination in a Commission of the House before which the Minister of War was repeatedly called. In the discussions which there ensued a certain desire for accommodation transpired on either side, mixed with the jealousies and animosities attached to this prolonged and unhappy controversy. No distinct or tangible overture of compromise could, however, be elicited from the Minister of War, the liberal members of the Commission were on the other hand deeply committed to an uncompromising opposition to the views of The King, the inclinations towards reconciliation which political necessity and a common weariness of strife appeared to reveal evaporated without result, and the commission terminated it's labors by a simple recommendation to reject the Government proposals.

After many delays and many barren incidental discussions on military affairs in the Chamber the recommendation of the Commission[158] was brought up for decisive discussion on 5th Instant. The rejection of the Bill for the reorganisation of the army was moved by the reporter of the Commission, Mr. Gneist, in an able speech which lasted four hours with sustained interest. Mr. Gneist was opposed by General von Roon. The debate was marked by a vehement personal altercation between the opposition orator and the Minister of War in which the latter obtained some advantage by the intemperance or carelessness of his adversary, but the Bill was thrown out by a majority of 258 to 33.

The last Opportunity of reconciliation between the Government and the House of Representatives has thus passed away, the new army system rejected again by the national representation will be maintained by Royal authority and the funds necessary for the

[157]The bill on military service (*Dienstpflichtgesetz*) of 2 February 1865 was the fifth draft submitted to the Prussian house of deputies since February 1860.

[158]Report of the commission of 6 April 1865.

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support of the military and naval establishments will be levied and appropriated by Royal order altogether contrary to the spirit and in part contrary to the letter of the Constitution.

In the presence of this deplorable result it is impossible not to condemn the conduct of the Prussian Ministry. They brought forward a law which had been repeatedly marked with the strongest reprobation by the Chamber and the Country and they propose to maintain obnoxious, perhaps oppressive establishments, by the permanent application of funds voted temporarily, and by the irregular appropriation of a surplus on the ordinary revenue over which the Chamber ought to exert it's control.

In qualifying the course of the Government with severity I must however state in extenuation of their conduct that they did make at least one attempt to bring over the King to more moderate views. As reported to Your Lordship in my despatch No 42 marked "Most Confidential" of the 11th of February they submitted to His Majesty a project[159] which would have set aside the previous measure of military reorganisation and settled the military establishment on the basis of a fixed force of about 187,000 men, one per cent on [*sic*] the population, in lieu of 220,000 which the present abusive or unlicensed system is believed to afford. After some hesitation the King rejected this proposal, and stood with ill-advised pertinacity on his original scheme. A chance of compromise was thus lost. The Government at least certainly forfeited the honor of a conciliatory overture, for the project was never produced in public and was scarcely heard of.

Your Lordship will no doubt award little credit to Mr. de Bismarck for a proposal made in secret and abandoned with facility. He might, you may say, have insisted on it and made his retention of office conditional on the royal assent. I cannot affirm that he ever thought of doing so. Mr. de Bismarck could not now I think, with honor desert the King even if he were disinterested enough to sacrifice power. He has nourished the arbitrary inclinations of the Sovereign by his own domineering disposition and reckless disregard of legislative restraints. He has identified himself with the aggressions of prerogative. He has made himself indispensable to the Sovereign. He could not now abandon the King either to the folly of more ultra reactionists, or to the liberals whom The King now views with apprehension and disgust. I do not blame Mr. de Bismarck for not resigning now if we regard the peculiar position and character of the King. I blame him for those previous errors of judgment, for those excesses of language, for those

[159]Direct report (*Immediatsbericht*) to the king of 23 January 1865.

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indulgences of an erratic and overbearing temperament which have deprived him now of the means of doing right. The conduct of Mr. de Bismarck at an earlier period has made it difficult for him to control the King and impossible for him, I fear, to conciliate the Opposition. The King will not follow him, the Opposition will not forgive him, nor do I think that if he should resign it would do any good. If the King took an administration among the more violent adherents of arbitrary power he would be drawn more decidedly into wrong: The moderate liberals have no influence in the Chamber. The Party of Progress[160] could not move a day in harmony with the Sovereign.

The desire of Mr. de Bismarck and of several of his colleagues for reconciliation was sincere, but it remained inoperative. The desire of the moderate liberals and even of many of the radicals to terminate the dispute has also been sincere but it has not been manifested in a very practical form. The ultra liberal majority have also been guilty of excesses, they are also bound by previous declarations and engagements, they are animated by natural but obstinate resentments, they are afraid of their position with their constituents and look with apprehension to the next elections. If Mr. de Bismarck has cherished the arbitrary instincts of the King the Deputies have cherished the sanguine expectations of the people, they have promised much more than they can perform, and they cannot recede.

Nevertheless an attempt at compromise has been made in an independent quarter of the Chamber for which it was hoped that the support of the liberal majority might be obtained. Mr. de Bonin in connection with the small fraction called the old liberal party[161] proposed an amendment on the Government scheme which would have fixed the total force of the army and navy at 192,000 men, and while preserving in principle the period of three years service would have opened a way to the introduction of two years service practically in a large portion of the army. The Minister of war held out some hope that if a majority of the Chamber decided to entertain this project the Government would take it into consideration. The majority of the Chamber did not respond to this overture which was perhaps not very sincere or at least not very hearty, the amendment did not find more than eight supporters and fell ignominiously to the ground.

In fact the majority of the Chamber will not entertain a compromise on the military question from the present Cabinet and they will not entertain one apart. Even if the personal question could be got over, if Mr. de Bismarck and Mr. von Roon could be forgiven, the liberal

[160] *Fortschrittspartei* (see n. 128 in this section).
[161] *Altliberale.*

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majority would only meet the views of the King half way in regard to the army on the condition of obtaining satisfactory guarantees respecting their right to exert an effective control over the Budget, either over the appropriation of the whole revenue every year or at least absolutely over the appropriation of all surpluses. Nor if we regard the past can we be surprised that they should do so tho' I think if we consider the age of the present Sovereign, his education, his character, his traditions, and his practical undisputed power, it might be wiser of the Chamber to treat the question of the army separately, to devote itself to useful legislation and to defer the struggle for complete representative franchises and powers to another period.

The failure of the abovementioned attempts during the present session to produce a reconciliation between the Government of the King and the House of Representatives will, no doubt, revive former rumors of a coup d'état, of the abolition of Parliamentary forms, and of similar projects of a despotic character. I do not think that there is any ground for apprehensions of this sort. The King is a man of a narrow but of an honest mind. His theory of the Government is that he is an absolute Sovereign, limited by certain chartered concessions made by his predecessor to the country. His view of those concessions is very restricted but it is conscientious. The King, strange as it may seem, believes that all he has done is consistent with the true interpretation of the constitution. He will examine himself and his acts strictly by the light of his knowledge and conscience which do not cast a very strong light. The King has a decided cast of Protestant piety in his character. He is a God fearing man. He will not violate his oath in the sense in which he took it. The King will not abolish the Parliament, nor will he raise new taxes without it's consent. He will call it and consult it and send it away as long as he lives. Nor would Mr. de Bismarck advise a coup d'état and the abolition of representative powers. He does not fear God like The King. I cannot assert that his conscience is very delicate or that he would stick at an act of usurpation if the interest of Prussia was at stake; but Mr. de Bismarck with all his faults of temper has an intelligent generous aspiring mind, he has no absolute aversion to Parliaments, I am certain that he would sympathise as heartily with the House of Commons as an English Country Tory member would do, it is not Parliaments absolutely but the Prussian Parliament that he dislikes. Mr. de Bismarck knows the power of liberal ideas and understands the influence that they are destined to exercise in the transformation of Germany. He will not entirely break with principles so potent in the present and the future. He may endeavor to change the character of the Prussian Chamber indirectly but he will not attempt to abrogate it. The most that we may expect to see, in my humble judgment, in this way would be an arbitrary change in the electoral

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law[162] which would introduce the direct instead of the indirect use of universal suffrage, or something in that nature. Mr. de Bismarck is apt to talk and speculate on such a measure. I trust that it will not be attempted. I am confident that as yet nothing of the kind has been resolved on.

FO 64/576: Lord Francis Napier to Earl Russell, Confidential, No 207, Berlin, 29 July 1865

Growing disputes between Prussia and Austria over Schleswig-Holstein; need for understanding between them for European peace; Prince of Augustenburg's conduct

It would appear from the confidential despatches addressed to Your Lordship by the present Messenger from Vienna that the relations between the Austrian and Prussian Cabinets have been more critical than I was disposed to believe. The impressions recently submitted by me to Your Lordship are, however, substantially corroborated by Lord Bloomfield in this respect that the main subject in dispute has been the attitude and conduct of the Prince of Augustenburg not the question of political terms or conditions under discussion between the two Cabinets.[163]

In this very circumstance I am, however, inclined to discover grounds for confidence that there is no serious danger of a rupture. It may be contended that Austria would act with reason and policy (though I do not affirm it) in resisting even by an appeal to arms the territorial aggrandizement of Prussia which would be involved in the annexation of the Elbe Duchies, but that Austria should run the hazard of a war with Prussia merely in supporting the mock Sovereignty of the Prince of Augustenburg in the Duchies would be a course so preposterous that we may confidently expect that it will not be followed. Should the Prince of Augustenburg continue to defy the conjoint sovereignty[164] of the King of Prussia by affecting or accepting the position of a reigning sovereign, the Austrian Government will

[162]See n. 3 in this section.

[163]Friedrich von Augustenburg refused to leave Holstein voluntarily after having declared his accession as Duke Friedrich VIII of Schleswig-Holstein on 16 November 1863 and having formed a parallel government on 25 November. On 10 July 1865, the Austrian emperor declined Prussian demands for the expulsion of the prince from Schleswig. For the Austro-Prussian dispute see n. 115 in Austria section.

[164]According to the Treaty of Vienna of 30 October 1864 between Austria, Prussia, and Denmark, which codified the preliminary peace of 1 August 1864 (see n. 144 in this section), the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg were placed under joint Austrian and Prussian administration (condominium). Friedrich von Augustenburg disputed King's Christian IX's right of renunciation of the duchies.

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probably advise him in his own interest to alter his demeanour and if the Prince should neglect such counsels Austria would probably abandon him to the coercion of the Prussian Authorities.

It is far from our wish to defend the conduct of the Prussian Government in these transactions. I have submitted to Her Majesty's Government my humble opinion that Prussia might with great advantage recognise the Sovereignty of the Prince of Augustenburg in the Duchies under the conditions which the Austrian Government and the Prince himself are prepared to grant. Such a settlement might not be materially the most advantageous to Prussia and to the Duchies but it would be a settlement consistent with preceding declarations, with equity, with hereditary rights, consistent with the wishes of the people, with the wishes of Austria, with the wishes of the majority of the Confederation and it would not be repugnant to the sentiments of the majority of Prussians. I deplore as much as any one that the King of Prussia has not thought fit to close this dangerous discussion on a basis so acceptable and reasonable. I condemn as much as anyone the extravagance of the language ascribed to Monsieur de Bismarck which even in his lips is fitted to create uneasiness and in the lips of any other man would justify the most serious apprehensions of an impending catastrophe.

I view with regret and reprobation the acts of military Violence of which the Duchies have lately been the scene.[165] Nevertheless an impartial and considerate observer will, I think, admit that the Prussian Government are not exclusively responsible for the pass to which these affairs have come. It is well known that the Prussian Sovereign and the Prussian Cabinet take a serious View of their conjoint rights in the Duchies, rights originating in conquest and ratified by the Treaty of Vienna of last year. The Austrians make light of these rights from which they do not expect to derive any benefit, but the King of Prussia has always regarded his position as joint Sovereign as a real and valuable position. In the face of the rights and notorious sentiments of the King of Prussia, a choleric and susceptible Sovereign, the Prince of Augustenberg has nevertheless taken up his residence in the Austro-Prussian territory, has received public honor and homage like a reigning Prince, and has allowed himself to be associated with organizations and agitation extremely obnoxious to the principles and feelings of the Prussian Government. In acting thus the Prince has discovered a great want of tact and political prudence, he has gone very far to frustrate his prospects of eventual success, and

[165]Napier most probably refers to the violent arrest of the journalist Martin May in Altona by the Prussian military forces on 25 July 1865, which caused considerable excitement in the duchies.

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he has given just cause of offense to the Power on whose favor he most depends.

In my humble judgement it is very desirable in the interests of a good understanding between the two German Powers that the Prince of Augustenburg should be induced to alter his course, and if the Prussian Government be bent upon it that he should voluntarily absent himself from the scene where his presence is a provocation to disorder on the part of the people and to arbitrary violence on the part of the Prussian Government.

Her Majesty's Government are probably not deeply interested in the eventual selection of the Prince of Augustenburg as the Sovereign of Schleswig Holstein but they are interested in the Maintenance of peace in Germany, and even if Your Lordship did desire the success of the Prince his cause would be more advanced by a timely submission to the will of the Prussian Sovereign than by a premature assumption of dignity and authority of which he can be stripped at any moment by a file of Prussian soldiers.

FO 64/577: Lord Francis Napier to Earl Russell, Confidential, No 234, Berlin, 21 October 1865

Bismarck's negotiations with France; unlikelihood that Prussia would exchange German territory with France

In my despatch to Your Lordship marked No 230, most confidential, of the 14th Instant, I had the honor to submit to Your Lordship my opinion that the communications between Count de Bismarck and the French Cabinet would not be attended with any important results and that the Minister would not be authorised by the King of Prussia in making any sacrifice of German territory or interests to the Emperor of the French.[166]

Since I had the honor of addressing Your Lordship I have had occasion to speak on this subject to three of my Colleagues the most experienced in these affairs and the best acquainted with the character of the King and of the President of the Council.

My three Colleagues concur in this conclusion that the King of Prussia will never, on any consideration, abandon the least portion of German soil to France, and two of my Colleagues affirm that Count de Bismarck, however personally inclined, could not even lay such a proposal before his Sovereign.

[166]From 3 to 31 October, Bismarck stayed at Biarritz, where he had audiences with Napoleon III to discuss the French position in the case of an Austro-Prussian war. Bismarck had previously met Eugène Rouher and Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys at Paris.

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In regard to Belgium my Colleagues speak with less confidence but they do not apprehend at the present conjuncture any correspondence or any traffic between Berlin and Paris with a view to the demise of the King of the Belgians unhappily regarded as a possible contingency.[167]

The persons whom I have consulted in fact contemplate the proceedings of Monsieur de Bismarck with more tranquillity than I did myself and this indifference does not spring from any partiality for the character or policy of the Minister.

The King is at bottom a patriotic German Sovereign and a soldier of the war of liberation[168] with a latent inclination to Austria rather than to France however much these qualities may seem occasionally obscured by the desire of ascendancy and aggrandizement.

As for Count de Bismarck if He were to be judged solely by what he says he would inspire an impression of reckless ambition scarcely qualified by any calculation of danger or comparison of advantages. It would, however, be erroneous to estimate the Prussian Minister by his talk. He allies with intemperate speculations and utterances a sound political judgement and a warm attachment to his country. It would be unjust to suppose that M. de Bismarck would lightly relinquish the Rhine Provinces of Prussia for the sake of Schleswig-Holstein. The Rhine Provinces are in some respects an embarrassment to Prussia on account of their separation from the older portion of the Monarchy, the religion[169] and the political sentiments of the Population, but they are infinitely more valuable to Prussia by their wealth, population, splendour, historical interest and military position than the Elbe Duchies would be which are also entirely separated from the heart of the Kingdom. I can believe that Count de Bismarck would contemplate a slight rectification of the Prussian Frontier in exchange for French connivance in Schleswig Holstein but nothing like a considerable cession of territory. In the fertile imagination of M. de Bismarck schemes of territorial redistribution have no doubt often been revolved but I am satisfied that if he has contemplated the partition of Rhenish Prussia between France and some German State it has been in exchange for the consolidation of the whole of Northern Germany under the Prussian Crown not for the acquisition of outlying dominions which he believes he can secure on much cheaper terms.

My own impression is that Monsieur de Bismarck will not do more in France than promise to respect the wishes of the people of Holstein in any definitive settlement of the Duchies and perhaps throw out some

[167]King Leopold's poor health and the question of non-German compensation to France for Prussian hegemony in Germany gave rise to speculations of Napoleon III's ambitions for Belgium.

[168]In 1814, Wilhelm participated in the Prussian campaign against France.

[169]The population in the Rhine provinces was predominantly Catholic.

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hope of restoring a portion of continental Schleswig to Denmark, as he has often done before, though, I suspect, without the Sanction of the King. How far such pledges will be redeemed in future would depend on the political necessities and combinations of the time.

FO 64/593: Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Clarendon, Confidential, No 178, Berlin, 5 May 1866

Austro-Prussian conflict over Schleswig-Holstein and federal reform; Bismarck's ambitions for Prussian supremacy and willingness to cooperate with liberals to achieve his aims; possibility of Prussia leaving the Confederation if proposal for a German parliament is rejected

I have the honor to forward to Your Lordship herewith an article from the "Staats Anzeiger" the official Prussian Gazette stating that no reply had been yet given to the Austrian despatch of the 26th Ultimo proposing a certain basis of arrangement between Austria and Prussia for the definitive solution of the Sleswig Holstein question.[170]

In this article it is hinted that the Austrian proposals will be met with counter proposals on the part of Prussia, but it is clearly stated that Prussia will not consent to refer this question to the Diet, or to accept any decision which that body may take respecting it.

It appears to me evident that Count Bismarck is not anxious to bring this question in the foreground, or to make of it the pretext of an open breach with Austria. He is rather desirous of merging the question of the Duchies in the larger one of Federal Reform, which comprises in his view the future supremacy or Hegemonie of Prussia in northern Germany.

The object of Count Bismarck's ambition, and for which he is now striving, is to establish the supremacy of Prussia in Germany, or at least in that portion of Germany stretching from the Main to the Baltic – and consequently the mere possession of the Elbe Duchies would in no way meet his ends or compensate to Prussia the sacrifices which a war would entail.

Count Bismarck will therefore probably seek to prolong the negotiations on the Sleswig Holstein question, until the Diet shall have voted on the Prussian proposal for a German Parliament,[171] and

[170] In his dispatch to Károlyi of 26 April 1866, communicated to the Prussian government on 28 April, Mensdorff proposed to award the Austro-Prussian rights over the duchies (see n. 164 in this section) to a claimant to be chosen by the Federal Diet. In return, Austria would advocate that Prussia retain special rights to Holstein (including a naval port at Kiel). In the event of Prussian non-compliance, Austria announced that it would leave the issue to the resolution of the Federal Diet (enclosures absent in FO 64/593).

[171] See n. 114 in Frankfurt section.

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on this vote will depend the whole question at issue between Prussia and Austria in conjunction with the Minor states of Germany.

In reply to an enquiry from me this Evening Count Bismarck stated that Prussia held to her proposal for the convocation of a German Parliament at a fixed term without entering into any previous discussion as to the measures of Federal Reform, which were to be submitted to the discussion of that Parliament.

In the event of an adverse Vote, without mentioning what course Prussia would positively take, Count Bismarck observed that either She might retire altogether from the Confederation as being an institution no longer fulfilling the conditions for which it was created or Prussia might call a German Parliament at Berlin together with those Allies who would join her. In the latter case said His Excellency Prussia would be obliged to go much further than we at present contemplate. She must adopt a liberal course under a liberal Ministry. His Excellency said that some short time ago, he had frankly stated this to the King, who was rather taken aback by such an idea put forth by him.

I enquired of His Excellency whether under such circumstances he would be prepared to lead a Ministry composed of such Elements. His Excellency replied, with much frankness, "Oh yes, why not? but" he continued "that would make no difficulty, for I told the King that he might make me His Chamberlain or give me any place he liked."

As Your Lordship may well suppose I was little prepared for such a frank avowal on the part of Count Bismarck. But it confirms a report which had lately reached me that if difficulties crossed his path in the Attainment of the object he has in view, viz, the Supremacy of Prussia in Germany Count Bismarck would not hesitate either to form a liberal Ministry under his own leadership, or to counsel the King to call the liberal Party to his councils.

In referring to this point which is one of some importance among the eventualities likely to arise, I may state that Count Bismarck has very lately endeavoured to gain over some of the leaders of the liberal Party, and I am told that he has even made offers to them for their support, but these attempts have hitherto failed, for none but renegades would agree to place themselves under his banner, and neither the leaders of the liberal Party nor the Party itself will ever give him their confidence.

But to return to the question as to the course which Count Bismarck may take if the Diet should refuse to convoke the German Parliament at a fixed term, without a previous understanding as to the proposals to be submitted for their discussion.

It is generally supposed that in bringing forward the Federal Reform question in the form he did, Count Bismarck aimed either at securing by means of the German Parliament such a position for Prussia as

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would virtually have conceded to her the Supremacy of Northern Germany, or failing that, of giving Prussia substantial grounds for bringing about a conflict in Germany, in which Prussia would assume rather the defensive than the offensive Power.

Thus I am inclined to believe that should Prussia withdraw from the Confederation and form a Sonderbund of Northern States, she would retain military possession of the Federal Fortresses from which she would have to be dislodged by force of arms. On grounds of strategic necessity she would probably occupy the whole of Northern Germany, and having thus acquired the object of her ambition, she would passively await on the defensive any attack from Austria and the Minor States.

Events are hurrying forward: armaments on a large scale are being made on every side. Much combustible matter is collecting which a spark may ignite and unforeseen incidents may bring about the very catastrophe which Count Bismarck is seeming to invoke as his palladium[172] and which Europe is awaiting with dismay.

But in all this confusion no valid grounds have yet presented themselves on which Count Bismarck could reasonably found a casus Belli, if he has any respect for the public opinion of Europe, and he informed me only this Evening that Prussia had no intention of attacking Austria or being the Aggressor.

I am consequently led to believe that the course which Count Bismarck intends to pursue is the one I have now indicated, and that in the event of the Diet negativing the proposal for the convocation of a German Parliament at a fixed term, Prussia will retire from the Confederation fully prepared to abide all the consequences of this Violation of Federal Laws.

FO 64/599: Lord Augustus Loftus to Lord Stanley, No 110, Berlin, 4 August 1866

Preliminaries of Austro-Prussian peace treaty; disappointment that Saxony will not be annexed to Prussia; predicted Prussian annexation of north German states; popular support for a united German empire; future political difficulties for Bismarck and likely conflict with France

Your Lordship will probably have received through the Prussian Ambassador[173] in London an official copy of the preliminaries of peace refined at Nicolsburg between Austria and Prussia.[174] The general

[172] 'Safeguard', originally from Greek and Roman mythology.

[173] Albrecht Graf von Bernstorff.

[174] The main points of the preliminary peace of Nikolsburg (Mikulov) of 26 July 1866 between Austria and Prussia were: the maintenance of the integrity of the Austrian Empire

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substance of these preliminaries has been given by the Press, altho' their precise text has not yet been published.

The public, grateful for the restoration of peace, appears generally to approve the conditions agreed upon, altho' by some they are considered to be within the limits of what Prussia had a right to demand, whilst by others more especially the liberal party, not only in Prussia but in Germany, they are viewed with disappointment and disfavour as creating a division of Germany into two camps of opposition to the national aspiration for an united Germany.

There is also much disappointment that Saxony is not to be annexed to Prussia, this kingdom being held to be of vital importance to Prussia in a political, industrial and strategic point of view. The annexation is even urged in the interest of Saxony herself, for it is asserted that she would have enjoyed far greater advantages by becoming a component part of Prussia, than by remaining in a position of quasi vassilage.

It is generally understood that according to the terms and spirit of the preliminaries Austria will not have the faculty of entering the southern Confederation, but she may contract separate treaties with it's several states, and from her geographical situation there is no doubt that she will continue to exercise a great influence over them.

It is generally believed that it is the intention of the Prussian Government to annex to Prussia all the states of the dispossessed sovereigns North of the Main.[175] This will give her an increase of above 4 millions of population. Thus in one month will have been carried out with a rapidity and a success unparalleled in history changes which even Count Bismark in his most elated moments never anticipated, and which have taken both him and the Prussian nation by surprise. Indeed so great, so unexpected has been the success of the Prussian arms that it is not unlikely to form an embarrassment and even a danger to the political system which Count Bismark is aiming to establish.

His object and that of the feudal and military party by whom he is supported is to create a great and powerful Prussia, extending from the Baltic to the Maine, having full command of the maritime ports on the Northern Coast, and the very important maritime and strategic

(with the exception of Lombardy-Venetia) and the Kingdom of Saxony; Austria's recognition of the dissolution of the German Confederation; Austria's consent to the formation of a North German Confederation by Prussia and a union of the states south of the River Main; and Austria's agreement to transfer all rights over Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia, and to pay an indemnity of 40,000,000 thalers.

[175]Besides Saxony, Prussia assumed power in the occupied states of Hanover, Holstein, Electoral Hesse, Nassau, and the Free City of Frankfurt.

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position of the Elbe Duchies. On the other hand the desire of the liberal party in Prussia, as well as in Germany is to create an united Germany under a strong Power (that Power being Prussia) bound together by a national Parliament established on the basis of the Imperial constitution of 1848 [*sic*].[176] They now look to the fulfilment of their long cherished dream of a German Empire, uniting the whole German Race under one command. But to attain this end (and they judge the propitious moment has arrived) Prussia must be fused into Germany, whereas the object of Count Bismark is that all Northern Germany shall be fused into Prussia.

It is to this point that public agitation will now direct itself, not only in Prussia but throughout Germany. The military weakness and political disorganisation displayed by the Southern states in the late struggle offers a convincing proof that there can be no material force nor energy of action where there is a want of unity; and the sad experience acquired by the civil war is a warning to the south German population that the recurrence of a similar misfortune can alone be obviated by the establishment of an united Germany under one supreme Power with a national representation forming the link of union between the several Powers.

In my humble opinion a great stride has been made to the attainment of their object, and the rapid course of events will force Prussia, if not at present at no distant period, willingly or unwillingly to rally the nation round her standard and to place herself at the head of Germany.

Count Bismark is perhaps wise at this moment to restrict his ambition to the acquirement of Northern Germany. Prussia could not now wish a collision with France, and without a collision with France no German unity will be established, neither could she at this moment make sufficient compensation to gain the assent of France, for this would be evidently necessary in order to counterpoise the creation of so large a Military Power at her frontier.

But independently of these considerations there is another motive which must weight powerfully with Count Bismark.

If at this moment the Imperial Crown were to be offered to the King of Prussia with the Imperial Constitution of 1848 [*sic*], and with a national assembly elected under the electoral law voted by that Body, the whole internal system of Government in Prussia would be submerged. The feudal party with it's corrupted notion of Constitutional Government would be swept to the winds, and a revolution would be effected in Prussia of as great if not greater import than the miraculous successes which have attended Her arms.

[176]Imperial Constitution of 28 March 1849, passed by the Frankfurt National Assembly.

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For these reasons therefore it is evident that Count Bismark will resist to the utmost any pressure from without which may seek to drive him beyond the limits of Nicolsburg, and that he will be contented with the creation of a great and powerful Prussia in northern Germany, without aiming at the Imperial Crown of Germany for his Sovereign.

I have the honor to inclose to Your Lordship in original with a translation in French, an official article from the Staats Anzeiger in which the public are cautioned not to indulge in the popular cry for a united Germany under Prussia, which it is stated may seriously impede the negotiations now pending.[177] With respect to the realisation of his present views, I may observe, that Count Bismark has now passed thro' with wonderful success one phasis of his ambitious undertaking, namely that of "demolition." The second phasis that of "reconstruction" or "creation" is about to commence. In carrying out the latter work Count Bismark will encounter great difficulties, difficulties however which his energy and his will may overcome. The internal constitutional struggle will recommence with renewed Vigor. The majority of the Lower Chamber will not endorse his policy altho' they may vote the expenses of the army. The national Parliament elected by universal suffrage (should it ever meet) will be no docile body to manage; the exigencies of a monarch theoretically constitutional but practically absolute; the reactionary tendencies of a triumphant military party; the fanaticism of a feudal sect whose political opinions are associated with a past age; and the active pressure of the progressive Constitutional party, undaunted by defeat, and supported by the great bulk of the wealthy, industrial, and middle classes will severely test the statesmanship and skill of Count Bismark. These are difficulties of no mean order which he will now have to surmount; it is through these shoals and quicksands that he will have to steer the vessel of the state and fortunate will he be if in avoiding Scylla he is not driven on Charybdis.

Bold in conception; energetic in action; unrestrained by principles and unmoved by conscientious scruples, governing by fear where he cannot win by love; this intrepid dexterous, and powerful Minister has now in his hands the most important part which has perhaps ever fallen to the lot of a statesman.

On the success of his policy will depend not only the future greatness, the prosperity and the happiness of his own country but possibly also the maintenance of the security and peace of Europe.

[177] Enclosures: extract from *Königlich Preußischer Staats-Anzeiger* of 28 July 1866 (original and French translation).

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