HANOVER

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HANOVER

FO 34/64: John Duncan Bligh to Viscount Palmerston, No 70, Hanover, 13 June 1851

Condition of Germany after reconstitution of Federal Diet; prospects for German unity and political stability

Having received from Lord Cowley an intimation, which has probably been made to me by Your Lordship's directions, that he had on the 7th Inst presented to the President of the Diet[1] his Credentials as Her Majesty's Envoy to the Germanic Confederation, I shall, even without direct Instructions to that effect from Your Lordship, consider this as the official announcement of the formal acknowledgement by Her Majesty's Government of the resumption by that Body of it's functions as the organ of Confederate Germany.[2]

Thus far have been realized the anticipations, which I have long since formed, and have, from time to time, reported to Your Lordship (especially in my despatches No. 38 of Sept. 6, 1849 and No. 89 of Augt. 28, 1850) that the first step to a reconstruction of Germany must be a return to the Diet, or the formation of something analogous to it, wherein the means of repairing the vent occasioned by the Storm of 1848, and of strengthening the Structure, might be calmly debated.

The jealousies, fears, and discordant interests which have, for so long, kept the different portions of their common Country from working together to bring about this necessary consummation having so far given way before the apprehension of some common external danger which might have found them disunited, as to induce them to combine once more for resuscitating the all but paralysed heart of the German Body Politic, it is to be hoped that the internal difficulties with which they will have to contend will be temperately and wisely considered and guarded against; not merely by giving increased strength and better organisation to the Confederate Forces, as if that were the only means of furthering the prevalent reactionary views of the Ruling Powers, but by manfully acting upon the conviction, that although many things (such as universal suffrage, unrestricted Press and Right of Public meeting) may have been extorted by the People

[1] Friedrich Graf von Thun-Hohenstein.

[2] For the reinstalled Federal Diet see n. 3 in Frankfurt section.

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in 1848 from their Rulers, which are incompatible with any stable (at least with monarchical) Government in any Country, much more in one so little accustomed to such things as Germany, yet that steps in a liberal direction have been made which can never be retraced; and that guarantees for really constitutional and responsible Government must be secured to a People who, having so long been disappointed in their hopes of obtaining them by fair means, at length discovered and used means of extorting them, to an extravagant extent, by force.

For although some few composing the once privileged Classes (who in this Country, at least, have little comparative influence either from their Possessions or from their aptitude for Business) may aspire after a blind Policy of Reaction; the untitled and middle Class, an increasingly powerful one, is tenacious of Political privileges once obtained, and would not relax it's hold of them except for Reforms which many would consider to be salutary. But it must not be lost sight of that even amongst this Class and still more in those below it, there is a large leaven of Socialism and Republicanism which fermenting with the noxious doctrines inculcated by an unfettered Press and unrestrained public meetings, would be ready at any moment to come to a Head if opportunities should offer; such as Reaction pushed so abruptly, or so far as to excite the sound part of the People to resistance, or such as an external movement like that of 1848.

I presume of course to speak positively, of no portion of Germany but this; but I believe I may safely say that although the subversive operations of 1848 have hitherto been less interfered with and counteracted by the Government of this Kingdom than elsewhere; in no State are monarchical and moderate sentiments more prevalent than here.

Now that all idea of German Unity such as was aimed at by the movement of 1848 may, for some time, to come, be considered to have been abandoned, I take the liberty of reminding Your Lordship that in my endeavours to turn to account such means of observation as I might have had, I have invariably expressed my conviction in my Reports to Your Lordship, that the realisation of that Unity, with a central Parliament, was, from the first, hopeless, without a preliminary substitution of the existing for a republican state of things; without in short the fulfilment of Napoleon's sad prediction for Europe, as far as Germany is concerned, for which she is not yet ripe, however much she may be shewing symptoms of succumbing to the Cossack Alternative.[3]

[3]'Before ten years have passed, all Europe will be Cossack or Republican' (Napoleon, St Helena, 3 April 1816). A later version of this quote reads 'in fifty years'.

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Now also that a fairer Page in the history of Germany may be said to have been opened by the reassembling once more in the ancient Diet of Representatives from every German State with a prospect of agreeing upon some common course of action for the peaceful reorganisation of the Fatherland; instead of that Page which was on the point, a few months since, of being blood stained by a rupture between Austria and Prussia; I feel satisfaction in remembering that, on various occasions, especially in my Despatches No 31 of 1849, and No 89 of 1850, I have conveyed to Your Lordship my opinion that without concert between the two Great German Powers no Unity of Germany (even a partial one such as that projected by the Berlin Treaty of May 26, 1849)[4] could be effected, and that, on the contrary, dangers to both might probably ensue.

FO 34/64: John Duncan Bligh to Viscount Palmerston, No 79, Hanover, 11 July 1851

Reactionaries in Germany aiming to overturn liberal and constitutional institutions; pamphlet by Zimmermann on political systems in Great Britain and European states

The reactionary Party in Germany would appear not to restrict their wishes to getting back the exaggerated concessions which the movement Party exacted from the pusillanimity of Governments in 1848 but to be aiming at the almost entire overthrow of all liberal and Constitutional Institutions.

At least public writers are, in all Quarters, exerting themselves in that direction; and in accordance with this system, a Pamphlet has lately been published here from the pen of Mr Zimmermann, who is employed in the King's Library, which has been hailed with great favor by the Court Party, and by the openly expressed approbation even of His Majesty.

It is entitled "Excellence of Constitutional Monarchy for England and the impracticability of Constitutional Monarchy for the States of the European Continent."[5]

The first of these Prepositions is supported by lengthened and for the most part accurate particulars respecting the State of Society in England, and the political Institutions which during a long series

[4]In the Three Kings' Alliance of 26 May 1849 (which led to the Erfurt Union), Prussia, Saxony, and Hanover committed themselves to work towards the establishment of a *kleindeutsch* federal state under the leadership of Prussia.

[5]Gustav Zimmermann, *Die Vortrefflichkeit der constitutionellen Monarchie für England und die Unbrauchbarkeit der constitutionellen Monarchie für die Länder des europäischen Continentes* (Hanover, 1851).

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of years have been engrafted upon it, shewing that the aristocratical element being the foundation as well as superstructure of both prevents the Democracy from getting the upper hand, and from swamping the monarchy. In support of the second a great variety of details and examples are given to shew that the same Conservative Element is either altogether wanting in Continental Countries, or is so little amalgamated with or congenial to the mass of Society as to be utterly powerless as a Balance between the Monarchical and Democratical Influence; and also that those two Influences, having in Constitutional monarchies coordinate powers in Legislation and in the management of the public Revenues, the former must inevitably succumb.

From these arguments which are ably and elaborately laid down the author arrives at the conclusion that no form of Government is suitable for the European Continent except what he calls "true monarchy". This he considers should rest for it's support upon standing Armies, should be schackled [*sic*] in it's agency by no positive restrictions except that each Country might have an elected consultative Assembly, to which the privilege of deliberation might be accorded as regards alterations in the Budget, which otherwise must be regarded as a permanent establishment; and as regards Laws relating to personal freedom.

He ends by stating his conviction that by no other means but some such as these can monarchy on the continent be saved.

As the substance of this Pamphlet appears, as far as I can judge, to be perfectly in accordance with the sentiments of the Conservative Party here, who admire it's reasoning and applaud it's deductions, I have thought it advisable to draw Your Lordship's attention to it by this short analysis for the purpose of keeping you informed of the state of feeling amongst different Classes.

The impression made by it upon me is, I confess, anything but a satisfactory one; because whilst it is impossible to deny the truth of many of Mr. Zimmermann's facts and arguments respecting the absence of fitting elements in the social state of this part of Germany for the establishment of stable Constitutional Monarchy, it is idle to imagine that the Liberties which have been obtained so easily and have been appreciated so much by the mass of the People, will be surrendered without a struggle; or that what he calls "true monarchy" can be re-established amongst a People so highly civilised, and who have once experienced what self Government is – more especially would the support which he reckons upon appear to be an uncertain one in Countries where, by the military organisation, every Citizen almost is, or has been, a Soldier; where education is very generally diffused, and where those, who have to instruct the rising generation have almost universally democratic tendencies.

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The inference then to be drawn from these facts would appear to me to be that if the reactionary Party should push matters to the extremities suggested by M. Zimmermann they might obtain a momentary success, to be followed by a series of struggles terminating in the overthrow of monarchy on the Continent.

FO 34/64: John Duncan Bligh to Viscount Palmerston, No 100, Hanover, 21 August 1851

Strategic and commercial importance of Hanover; Ernst August's conservative views and policy; general passivity of Hanoverian population; maintenance of liberal and democratic institutions after 1848

Although notoriously of little weight in the general European Scale, at the same time it would seem that the peculiarly favorable geographical Position of this Country at the mouths of three of the principal Rivers of Germany,[6] and the Commercial Independence which that Position has enabled it, and which a full appreciation of it's advantages has encouraged it, to maintain, give it an importance in the German Body Politic beyond what it may have intrinsically, as compared with other members of the Confederation. This being so I do not hesitate to trouble Your Lordship now, as I have before occasionally done, with some general remarks upon the political Position of this Country, which I think I can shew to be somewhat remarkable.

In the first place, we see a Sovereign who, as long as he was a Subject, was notorious for his unbending support of ultra Conservatism; who signalised His accession to His Throne by the subversion of a Constitution and by the substitution for it of one which was so in little more than in name;[7] who for ten years of His Reign was for ever speaking slightingly of Constitutional Establishments in His own and in other Lands; who, however, when the Storm of 1848 arose bent before it, with little or no resistance, and yielded everything to popular demands; who, when the time for Reaction of some sort appeared to have arrived, did all He could to encourage it abroad, and even endeavoured to form an Administration in that sense for His own Country; who continued until lately to uphold His Nobility in their endeavours to preserve the last remnant of their ancient Rights; who is still enjoying, where the facts are not known, a reputation for consistency, firmness and decision.

In the next place, a People instinctively loyal and easy to be governed, because attached, by ancient traditions, to the reigning

[6]Elbe, Weser, and Oste.

[7]The constitution of 1833 was repealed on 1 November 1837; it was replaced by the constitutional law of 6 August 1840.

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Family, and because enjoying, to a greater extent than any other German Population, the necessaries and even comforts of life; taking comparatively little interest in public affairs, for, being for the most part rural, at least without the disadvantages of being congregated in large and manufacturing Towns, they are less easily worked upon by Demagogues. Thus; Institutions guaranteeing to them a fair share of Constitutional liberty would have sufficed to them; and assuredly they would not pertinaciously contend for more if such were secured to them.

And yet, whilst, in every other Section of Germany, Reaction has been more or less in vogue; here, not only do all the political Institutions engendered by the Events of 1848 still exist, but they have been gradually developing themselves under the tutelage of two successive Administrations. For that at present in power,[8] by the formation of which the King flattered Himself He had obtained the means of carrying out His political views, have without check or hindrance carried on, and are perfecting the system of their Predecessors, so that it can hardly fail but that in a short time the whole internal organization of the Country will be established upon a Democratic Basis by the Publication, with the Royal Sanction, of the different Laws passed for that purpose by the Chambers.[9]

For, neither a very strong letter lately received by the King from the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg Strelitz[10] urging His Majesty to stay His hand; neither the Representations, in the same sense, addressed both to His Majesty and to His Ministers by M. Manteuffel during his late visit here; nor the declared intention of the Equestrian Order to appeal to the Diet have availed anything.[11]

Baron Munchausen has determined to persevere; whilst the King, whatever His inclinations may be, remembering the unpleasantness

[8]Münchhausen's cabinet took office on 28 October 1850.

[9]Bligh refers to the pending implementation of the *Organisationsgesetze*, a set of laws concerning the organization of the administration, the civil service, the rural communes, the municipal statutes, and the administration of justice, which were passed by the Hanoverian chambers between 1849 and 1851. Despite their earlier publication they only came into force in October 1852.

[10]Grand Duke Georg.

[11]Manteuffel visited Hanover on 15–16 August 1851. The complaints, which in the case of the knights of Osnabrück were referred to the Federal Diet as early as 21 June 1851, were directed against the removal of the equestrian order from the first chamber (as decreed in § 33 of the constitutional law of 5 September 1848), and the loss of their corporate rights in the provincial estates (*Provinziallandschaften*), as decreed in the law of 1 August 1851 (published on 1 September 1851). On 1 October 1851, the Federal Diet instructed the Hanoverian government to refrain from additional encroachments on the provincial constitutions until the issue was resolved.

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and duration of the last Ministerial Crisis,[12] and the insignificance of it's results, would appear to be shy of encountering another; and to have made up His mind to yield to the perseverance of His present Advisers.

In the general Policy of Germany also Hanover would appear to be one of the principal obstacles in the way of the reactionary Policy and repressive measures contemplated by it's Confederates; thus, with an Ultra Conservative Sovereign, and a most quietly disposed Population, being the stronghold, as it were, of German Liberalism and Progress.

FO 34/67: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Malmesbury, No 100, Hanover, 29 October 1852

Hanover's role in Zollverein *Crisis; observations on British and Prussian interests; prospects of liberal commercial system in Germany*

By Your Lordships Despatch No. 7 marked "Confidential" I have had the honor of being put in possession of the views of Her Majesty's Government respecting the Commercial questions which are now in agitation in Germany. It is a satisfaction to me to learn from that Despatch that, in the little which in my intercourse with Hanoverian Authorities I have ventured to hazard as my own opinions upon the subject, I have advanced nothing contrary to those views upon essential points; and also to be informed that our influence whenever it can be properly used should tend to the encouragement of a liberal Commercial system here, as well as elsewhere upon the Continent.

I did not expect of course to be authorized directly, to interfere in any way; but feeling that Hanover was called upon at this crisis of the question, to play a greater part than her intrinsic importance under ordinary circumstances could warrant the expectation of; knowing also the desire of this Government to cultivate to the utmost a good understanding with and to defer to the wishes of Her Majestys Government I felt anxious to know what direction it might be considered advisable, whenever opportunities should occur, to encourage the Hanoverian Government to give to their policy in this matter.

From a consciousness of the importance which her Majestys Government must, upon political, religious, and Commercial grounds, attach to upholding the consequence of the only great European Power

[12]The ministerial crises lasted from June 1850 until the dismissal of the 'March ministry' in October 1850.

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which does at the present moment, or seems likely to, sympathise with England upon such matters, I have taken care to eschew any encouragement of that jealousy of Prussia, which unfortunately here, as well as elsewhere in Germany, has been excited by the antecedents of that Power, especially by her vacillating, domineering, and encroaching Policy during the last few critical years.

Now that I can do so with the authority of Her Majesty's Government I shall seek for fitting opportunities of speaking in this sense; but I must not conceal from Your Lordship that the task of inspiring trust in, and cordiality with, Prussia will be no easy one; for contrary feelings are strong among all Classes here. It is not improbable that pecuniary interests may outweigh other considerations and keep this government in a straight forward course. Those interests being, that while the expenses of the administration have been very materially increased by the new organization, the introduction of which I have duly reported to Your Lordship,[13] they have looked to covering them by the surplus which it is expected their finances would receive from the Præcipuum [*sic*] secured to Hanover by the Treaty of September 1851,[14] and it would not be easy for them to raise the money by taxation.

Apart from that consideration there can be no doubt of the inclination of the Government to break off from the Treaty of September 1851, should the Zollverein be definitively dissolved; the manifestation of the feelings above alluded to and of those excited by the loss of an independent and advantageous position, without the compensation which many would have found in a closer Union, as to their material interests, of the greater part of Germany, may give them the courage also to break their engagements.

I am still of opinion that if they could find a pretext and justification for taking such a step their doing so might conduce more than anything else to bringing into operation a really liberal commercial system in Germany because in that case Prussia, separated from the Southern states including Hesse Cassel, would, on account of the Geographical circumstances of the two portions of the monarchy[15] be compelled to ally herself with the Steuerverein[16] upon any terms which the latter might impose; and those terms would of course be upon very Free Trade Principles, as I need not tell your Lordship how contrary

[13]See n. 9 in this section.

[14]In Article 11 of the commercial treaty between Hanover and Prussia of 7 September 1851 (see n. 9 in Frankfurt section), Prussia granted Hanover a *praecipium*, a disproportionate share (totalling an extra 75%) of the tariff revenue of the *Zollverein*.

[15]The western Rhine provinces and Westphalia were separated from the rest of the kingdom.

[16]For the *Steuerverein* see n. 16 in Hamburg section.

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any other would be to the Tariff existing in and to the well known interests of the Steuerverein. Without such compulsion it may be doubtful whether the Prussian Government would materially Lower her existing tariffs, which Silesia, and her Rhenish and Westphalian provinces are interested in Upholding.

Such a Union, as I ventured to remark in my despatch No. 93, would I think at no distant period draw within it the other Northern States, and eventually most of the Southern States, after having witnessed, as it is to be expected they would, the advantages which accrue from Commercial principles contrary to those which Austrian influence is endeavouring to impose upon them.

This, however, is only an individual opinion which whilst I consider it my duty, in the Post of observation of German affairs which I occupy, not to withhold from Your Lordship, it is my business not to act upon without authority; and as it is evidently of infinite importance that Prussia, as Your Lordship remarks, should not be forced to accede to all the Demands of the Southern States and thus more or less to adopt, even prospectively, the prohibitive system of Austria; and as Her Majestys Government thinks that not only the temporary separation of Hanover from Prussia but even tardiness among the Northern States in shewing a firm front at this crisis, might tend to lead to that undesirable consummation, all influence which I can properly use for keeping her steady to her present engagements will of course be exercised.

FO 34/69: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 49, Hanover, 29 May 1853

Political fragmentation of Germany creating difficulties for railway construction

Amongst the circumstances of frequent occurrence which manifest the inconveniences resulting from the division of Germany into such a number of Independent States, and the consequent impediments to the development of the material resources in which they have a common interest, are the difficulties which unneighbourly jealousies oppose to the carrying out of Lines of Rail Roads through their respective Territories.

Thus when the Main Line of Rail-Road from Cologne to Berlin was first in agitation, the Government of Brunswick insisted that the point of junction of it with the Road from Hamburgh should be at a small place[17] in the midst of a comparative Desert between this

[17]Lehrte. The Berlin–Lehrte railway was completed in 1871.

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and Brunswick, rather than here, lest this Capital should derive great advantage from becoming too central a Position.

But my principal reason for calling Your Lordship's attention to this matter is the Railroad denominated the "Southern", which is of great importance as destined to unite the Northern Sea with Central Germany, which has for some time been in progress, and about thirty English miles were opened from hence on the 1st Inst.

The Hanoverian Government who from the first laid down, and have adhered to the rule of constructing and keeping in their hands, all Railroads through their Territory, engaged with the concurrence of the Governments interested to construct the Southern Line as far as Cassel, but it was only after lengthened negotiations that they were enabled to settle certain details with the Brunswick Government[18] which enabled them to commence operations upon a small portion of the Ducal Territory which intervened: and very lately the Minister of War General Brandis (who having commanded an auxiliary Corps of Hanoverians when the Elector was in trouble from Revolutionists,[19] it was supposed would be an influential Negotiator) has been to Cassel in vain for the purpose of inducing the Elector to allow the Plans of the Engineers to be carried out which by encroaching upon a corner of the exercising ground for His Troops would save a great Detour for the Railroad, and a very considerable outlay to it's Constructors.

FO 34/74: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 10, Hanover, 23 May 1854

Pro-Russian sentiment among the aristocracy and army officers

I was surprised upon my return hither to find so strong a feeling in favor of Russia, as regards the War,[20] to be prevailing amongst that Class of Society with which I had, principally, to do; and such a total ignorance of the real circumstances which have brought on the War, as prove that, unless wilfully blind to facts and reason, the Russian Manifestoes, Proclamations, Notes and Despatches must have been the study of those with whom I had to converse on the subject; whilst the plain evidence of falsehood and chicanery on the one side, and of truth and straight forwardness on the other, which is afforded by the published Official Documents that emanated from those who have

[18]Treaty between Brunswick and Hanover of 3 November 1852.

[19]The observation corps under the command of Brandis was formed in July 1849 near Göttingen, on the request of the Prince Elector, who feared disturbance as a result of a planned change of ministry. However, it had no reason to intervene in the Electorate.

[20]The Crimean War, 1853–1856.

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been employed in these matters by Her Majesty, had been totally ignored.

I have been in no hurry to report this to your Lordship, being desirous of, previously, ascertaining to what extent this Feeling went as regards the Subjects of the Hanoverian Crown, and I have, now, the satisfaction of being able, safely, to assure your Lordship that it is confined to the Nobility, which, fortunately, as relates to this question of general political interest, but to be lamented by those who may desire to see established in this Country a stable constitutional Form of Government, with a salutary balance between the Crown and the People, is exceedingly unpopular on account of its excessive exclusiveness and pretensions; and on account of its ignorance which prevents its marching with the Intelligence of the Age; and on account of its Prejudices which forbid it to forget its lost Privileges, is a Class without even the Weight which its territorial Possessions ought to give to it.

The reasons for this Feeling I believe to be the following. The bitter remembrance of French Occupation[21] and Tyranny which keeps alive a fear that similar evils will come again from that quarter unless kept in check by Russian Power. The revulsion of Sentiment as regards us, caused by our ancient Policy—Antagonism to France having been exchanged for intimate Alliance with that Power. The apprehension that the success of such an Alliance against Russia would entail the triumph of liberal ideas, if not of Revolution. The vague hope that Russia will be able to quell the innovating Spirit of the Age and thus, indirectly, help the Nobility to recover their lost Privileges. Such are the reasons, if worthy of the term, which excite the aspirations of a Class in this Country in favor of Russia. As however the People in general, undoubtedly, side with us, I merely mention what I have observed, without troubling your Lordship with the arguments with which I endeavour to combat such reasoning, and try to convince those who propound it that the time is fully come for all to join in resisting the Domination of the Cossack.

One other Class, which in fact however belongs in great measure to the Nobility, is inclined to Russia; namely the younger Officers of the Army; which, perhaps, may be accounted for by the prestige which attaches to a Government and Sovereign so essentially military as is that of Russia and its Czar. But I am glad to say that those Officers who served in the German Legion,[22] with very few exceptions (and those contemptible ones) retain a warm attachment for England, and are devoted to her Cause.

[21] Hanoverian territory was occupied by France in the years 1803–1805 and 1807–1813.
[22] For the King's German Legion see n. 31 in Hamburg section.

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The Court is supposed to be favorable to Russia; but great Reserve is maintained there on the subject; and the King, at present, abstains, altogether, from speaking to any Foreign Minister about Politicks.

FO 34/75: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 123, Hanover, 30 December 1854

Negative impact of British parliamentary debates on Foreign Enlistment Bill in Germany

I have observed, with regret, the evil effect which the late discussions in Parliament upon the Foreign Enlistment Bill have had upon the temper of those in this Country who were previously desirous of entering the British Service, but whose national susceptibilities have been roused by the contemptuous terms applied by some of the Speakers to the species of Force which it is in contemplation to raise, and to the quality of German Soldiers as compared with the British; to say nothing of the inconsiderable majority by which the measure was carried.[23]

I have done my best to mitigate the feelings thus created by pointing out that the introduction of Foreign Troops into all Countries, more especially perhaps into England, is unpalatable; except in cases of necessity; that with us hostile political Parties always exist ready to seize any opportunity of injuring Opponents by adopting what may be for the moment a popular view of a Question; and that this has been the case in the present instance. That to strengthen their case the feelings of Foreigners are not sufficiently regarded by opponents of Government especially by certain orators who took a prominent part in the late Debates, who, in their overweening vanity, think that no measure, not emanating from themselves, can be right especially when having relation to military matters. I have assured the complainers of my conviction, that, notwithstanding what has passed in England relative to the plan of forming a new German Legion, if it should be carried out, the Foreigners comprising it, would be treated by my countrymen with the same hospitality and consideration as were those of the old Legion.

I have thought it right to mention the state of feeling upon the subject to prepare Her Majesty's Government for experiencing a want of that enthusiasm for enlisting in our service which existed a short time back; and which I fear will increase that difficulty in getting good

[23]The Enlistment of Foreigners Bill, introduced in Parliament on 12 December 1854, was passed by the House of Lords on 18 December (with a majority of 55 to 43 votes) and on 22 December by the House of Commons (with a majority of 173 to 135 votes). See n. 49 in Saxony section.

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officers and non commissioned officers which induced me to suggest, as a beginning at least, as I did in my Despatch No.113 of the 9th Inst. the incorporation of any Foreigners we might enlist into British Regiments, to which there doubtless may be objections unknown to me.

I should think one of the best modes of getting both men and officers would be that adopted as to volunteering from our militia to the Line of granting Commissions to those who would get a certain number of Recruits.

FO 34/79: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 62, Hanover, 31 March 1855

Public agitation over projected revision of the constitution; plans for a statue of King Ernst August

The hopes of the Government of being able to carry out their reactionary Views have been still farther raised since I adverted to the subject in my Despatch No 60 of the 25th Instant by the Report of the Committee of the Francfort Diet upon the projected revision of the Constitution; which is to the effect, that, this Government will not need the assent of the legislature Bodies, now in existence, to any alteration, provided that the constitution of 1840 be purely and simply substituted for that now in existence, and which replaced the former in 1848.[24]

I believe that, in case the Diet itself should confirm the Report of its Committee on this matter, the Ministers are prepared, when armed with such Authority, to proceed to that extremity, rather than hazard the insurmountable difficulties which they would be sure to have to encounter in a struggle with the existing Chambers; if, which is however very doubtful, in the face of the various changes, which the last Constitution has effected in different branches of the internal Administration of the Country, it should be found possible to adopt that of 1848 without any modification.

They are supposed, moreover, to be endeavouring to overcome the scruples which the King, for conscientious and for other reasons, entertains against the eventual adoption of a proceeding, which would not be in harmony with solemn obligations contracted by him at the time of His Accession.[25]

[24]The report of the *Reaktionsausschuß* of 22 March 1855 stated that the procedure of introducing the constitutional law of 5 September 1848 was not permitted according to the constitution of 6 August 1840.

[25]In the royal patent of 18 November 1851, Georg V promised his steadfast adherence to the constitution.

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Come what may it is evident that some extra-legal measures to effect fundamental changes will be attempted, so that troublesome times may be expected; for, although difficult to rouse, this People gave proofs, when the late King upset the Constitution,[26] which he found in vigour at His Accession, that they will not, without an obstinate struggle, resign political Institutions which they have once enjoyed.

In the midst of this incipient agitation, which threatens an impending Storm, a Plan has been set on foot somewhat inopportunely as it would appear (whatever it might at any time be) for erecting by public subscription a Monument to the Memory of the late King in the shape, probably, of an equestrian statue. Whatever degree of gratitude Hanoverians may or may not feel towards the memory of a Sovereign, who began His Reign by taking from them, after a long and bitter struggle, the Constitution, which He found in existence; substituting for it one of His own which gave to them the semblance only of liberal Institutions; who towards its close replaced that Gift by another Constitution so subversive of most of the existing Institutions that He was continually changing His Ministers for the purpose of altering it; and that the Country is now agitated by the fears or hopes of its being subverted by Foreign aid; whose last act, almost, was to sacrifice the Independence and material prosperity of the Country by uniting it to the Zollverein.[27] But however this may have been, the scheme in question must assuredly obtain more or less success, as, originating with some who wished to curry favor with the Court an appeal in behalf of it has been sent to every Authority civil and military throughout the Country, with directions to canvass their Subordinates for subscriptions; and in fact here and probably elsewhere, a from House to House Visitation has been resorted to for the same purpose.

FO 34/80: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 118, Hanover, 22 September 1855

Broad public apathy towards political matters and the Crimean War; decreasing strength and fortunes of Russia in war

I have little to add to the remarks, which I made on M. Dietzels [*sic*] Pamphlet[28] in my Despatch No 114 of the 15 Instant, further, than to confirm my report of the very little Circulation, which in the regular

[26]See n. 7 in this section.

[27]See n. 9 in Frankfurt section and n. 12 in Prussia section.

[28]Gustav Diezel, *Die Bildung einer nationalen Partei in Deutschland, eine Nothwendigkeit in der jetzigen Krisis Europa's* (Gotha, 1855). See pp. 304–306.

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way of business, it has obtained here; as all those, amongst whom I myself have circulated it, tell me, they have only heard of one other person, who had read it. The fact is, that, except from Newspapers, this apathetic People is little disposed to trouble themselves about seeking for political knowledge or inspirations, and it is through the constant operating of these public Instructors, rather than by such comprehensive publications as that of M. Dietzel, that the impression, as by a constant drip of water, must be made, and a public opinion be brought to a head.

A slow process it is true! but, I fear, no sudden decision leading to action is to be expected from so phlegmatic a race, and gradually and with caution this means must be used, now that the Resolutions of the Diet for restricting the Press have been enforced in the Minor States of the Confederation.[29]

I have been almost myself surprised by the proofs of apathy in a great cause, which I have lately witnessed, for, convinced as I am that nineteen twentieths of the Population, who think at all, are in favour of the Western Powers, not a demonstration of any sort, that I have heard of, has been made here of the satisfaction, which I am convinced is almost universally felt, on account of our late important success in the Crimea.[30] The Russophilist minority, that class, which finds it so difficult to unlearn their preconceived opinions of Russian Power, Resources, and Invulnerability, are equally slow in crediting the extent of those successes; lending a willing ear to M. Fonton's assurances that the evacuation of Sebastopol had been long anticipated, and was of little real consequence; and that the Russian Commander[31] had shewn much moral courage by evacuating it when he did, ignoring the probability that he will sooner or later have to manifest the same "better part of valour"[32] as regards the Crimea itself.

I do what I can to prove to them the expediency of Germany at once joining the Western Powers, and thus manifesting to Russia the hopelessness of her cause, by opening up to them the prospect of Russia's decreasing strength in more than an equal proportion to the constantly extending development of the resources, and power of her enemies; to the almost inevitable contingency of her having to pay

[29]The federal resolution on the press of 6 July 1854 (*Allgemeine Bestimmungen zur Verhinderung des Mißbrauchs der Presse*) was to be implemented in the federal states, and was decreed in Hanover on 15 January 1855. It focused restrictive regulations on the production and distribution of publications, and gave authorities leeway to interpret and act against 'violations of the freedom of the press'.

[30]Bligh refers to the Russian withdrawal from Sevastopol on 8–9 September 1855.

[31]Prince Gorchakov.

[32]"The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life" (William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*, V.iv).

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a high price for terms of accommodation, harder than those, which like the bargainer for the Sibylline Books,[33] she formerly spurned; and that, the longer the Contest lasts, the less able will she be to assist in killing, as they hope, she will, that democratic Serpent, which they fear so much, and which, scotched, at most, in Germany, still retains much hidden vitality.

FO 34/83: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 3, Hanover, 23 February 1856

Count Platen's pro-English foreign policy; Hanover's refusal to support Austrian peace proposal; desire for British reconciliation with Prussia

Mr. Edgcumbe having in his despatch No 2 of Jany. 3 expressed suspicion that Count Platen's favourable disposition towards England had been modified since his accession to office; and in his despatch No 7 of the 9th Inst. recorded the opinions of the Austrian and French Ministers as to the strong Russian Bias of His Excellency, I have been at some pains to ascertain the foundation for those remarks. As regards the first point I have always considered the leading characteristic of Count Platen's foreign Policy to be cordial union with England.

This may be modified by circumstances, but I cannot think that any have occurred during his tenure of office materially to weaken it. That circumstance which has prevented him and this Country in general from taking as prominent a position as a secondary State of the Confederation could assume in backing us up in the Contest in which we are engaged, I consider to have been our close Alliance with France; for Count Platen and his order almost without exception, and even perhaps a majority of the People regard that alliance with apprehension, as tending to increase the Power and influence of that nation, which, judging from antecedents, it is thought Germany has still much to fear. Count Platen's friendly feelings for us may moreover be qualified, at the present moment, by the generally received opinion that England will be the chief obstacle to a pacific result from the Paris Conferences,[34] an opinion which doubtless brings us to a discount amongst those who apprehend that a prolongation of the war would compel them sooner or later to depart from their much cherished neutrality; but I do not imagine that this passing circumstance will

[33]The Sibylline Books were collections of oracular verse. When Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome, was offered nine to buy, he initially refused. The seller then burned six, and demanded he pay the same price for the remaining three.

[34]For the Congress of Paris see n. 28 in Frankfurt section.

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have had any lasting influence upon Count Platen's or anybody's inclination towards us.

As regards the second point I can find a ready explanation, as I have already perceived a somewhat remarkable change in Count Platen's feelings towards the two great German Powers.

A very short time since he seemed inclined to receive all his inspirations from Vienna, whilst now apprehension of an absorbing Austrian influence is predominant, and a desire to act with the Cabinet of Berlin is evident, the solution of this change of feeling, being, as I think, the growing intimacy and cordiality between the Courts of Vienna and Paris, and the views which he cannot help attributing to the latter of future aggrandisement at the expence of Germany and with the very possible countenance of the former.

In confirmation of this opinion I have but to report the explanation which he lately gave me of the refusal of Hanover to accept at once the invitation to give Federal support to Austria's position as regards the negotiations for Peace;[35] for said His Excellency all that Austria wants is, (backed by the weight of the Confederation, whilst regardless of the interests of her Confederates) to be better able to advance her own immediate objects at Paris, and to strengthen the obligations of her new friends there, neither of which things did he consider would be advantageous to Germany or eventually to England either.

As however he added the invitation had been modified so as to obtain the adherence of Prussia, and he did not think it would be becoming for such a State as Hanover to make any further objections, instructions in conformity with that opinion had been sent to Frankfort.[36]

His Excellency then expressed his regret that less indisposition at the present Crisis should not be shewn towards Prussia on the part of England; or at any rate (upon my urging her entire Forfeiture of any claim to be favored) such a spirit of forgiveness as would procure her admission to the Conference, for he could not but feel that the time might come when, by the strengthening of the existing ties between Austria and France, which he apprehended as imminent, and by the not impossible formation of an Alliance between Russia and France, Prussia might become the best if not the only Ally of England.

I think I have stated enough to shew upon what grounds Counts Ingelheim and Reculot base their opinions as to the political

[35] See pp. 44–45.

[36] In the sitting of the united commission of the Federal Diet of 15 February 1856, Prussia accepted a modified version of Austria's motion of 7 February. It was passed by the Diet on 21 February.

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predilections of Count Platen inasmuch as his fears of France are evidently not on the wane, whilst his jealousy of an Austria closely allied with France is increasing and this probably construed by my Colleagues to a growing fancy for Russia. I shall be slow however to believe that the preparations of Russia for aggression having been exposed, her vulnerability having been proved, her Prestige of unbounded resources and invincible Power (by which She has succeeded in frightening Germany from her propriety) having been dissipated; that any German Statesman can entertain for her even as much either of fear or of affection as hitherto has influenced so many in this Country.

FO 34/83: John Duncan Bligh to Earl of Clarendon, No 56, Hanover, 29 May 1856

Ex-ministers in opposition to government barred from attending court; Münchhausen antagonized; public disapproval of king's reactionary policies

The various commissions have made so little progress towards arriving at decisions, and preparing reports upon the matters, which have been submitted to them by the States, that the Chambers, which were to have met again on the 20th Instant, have been further adjourned until the 3rd Proximo.

Considerable sensation has been occasioned in the society of this place, which will, in all probability, be responded to throughout the Country, by a measure taken by the King against certain individuals, who have occupied high positions in the Service of the State.

I have already reported to Your Lordship, that several Ex-Ministers, having obtained seats in the lower Chamber, are in active opposition to the existing Government, which, as the present occupants of office have assumed Power,[37] with the declared object of endeavouring to overthrow the work of their predecessors, cannot be wondered at by those, who understand the theory of constitutional representative Government. But, from what I am about to relate, it will appear to be so far ignored, as that opposition to the Minister is construed into Personal hostility to the Sovereign. The King, in short, has issued an Order to the Head of His Household, to erase from his List of Persons admissable [*sic*] to Court, all the Ex-Ministers, who have acted in opposition to the existing Government.[38] To most of them this measure will be of little consequence, as they seldom went into the First Society;

[37]The Kielmansegg–Borries ministry took office in July 1855.
[38]Georg V to Carl Ernst von Malortie, 15 May 1856.

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but in the case of M. de Münchhausen, whose wife[39] is daughter of Countess Grote (who was so highly favored by the late King) and who is one of the most popular members of the Society, this exclusion from Court, which will probably end in vanishing them altogether from Hanover has been painfully felt, and, by many, somewhat severely commented upon.

It is not, however, with relation to the tittle-tattle of Society, about which I have always abstained as much as possible from troubling Your Lordship, that I have entered upon this matter; but for the purpose of expressing my regret, that measures should be resorted to such as this, so calculated to increase throughout the country the angry feelings, which have been created by the reactionary policy of the present Government, and that the Sovereign himself should be directly mixed up with them.

M. Münchhausen, moreover, is personally the most influential member of the 2nd Chamber, whom it would have been better to conciliate, rather than to have made him a decided enemy.

Besides which, I cannot think that strong opposition, Speeches in the Chamber, and remarks at a Club, or direct disapproval in the Finance-Committee, of the demands made by the King, respecting the Royal Domains, and Civil List,[40] all of which are, and, I believe, truly, laid to the charge of M. de Münchhausen, are a sufficient justification for the exclusion of a Public Man from Society, which in so small a one as this, must, almost inevitably, result from an open manifestation of the Royal Displeasure such as that which I have recorded above.

FO 34/89: George John Robert Gordon to Earl of Malmesbury, No 50, Hanover, 17 November 1858

Accession of prince regent and New Era in Prussia; reactionary policy of Hanoverian government; strength of liberals in Hanover

The accession to the Government of Prussia by the Prince Regent, and the composition of the administration which has been appointed by His Royal Highness[41] are exciting, as elsewhere in Germany, so here, more especially, from the propinquity and close relations of the two countries very grave speculation amongst men of all parties: inspiring Liberals with probably exaggerated hopes, and exciting corresponding alarm in the Court and Government party.

[39]Doraline von Münchhausen.

[40]Owing to the deficit of the royal court, Georg V demanded he be endowed with parts of the royal domains instead of being dependent on the civil list.

[41]See n. 45 in Frankfurt section.

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Your Lordship must be well aware of the strongly reactionary policy which the Hanoverian Government has followed for a series of years past, in pursuing this system. The King and Government have been much supported by the late Prussian administration, whose principles, both in matters of internal administration and in Religion, have been taken as models in Hanover.

There is however a large Liberal body throughout the kingdom whose weight would be felt far more considerably than it is in the Lower Chamber of the Estates General, (where they now scarcely number one third) were it not for the open and unscrupulous exertion of the influence of Government throughout the country in securing by every possible means the election of Government Candidates.

The present Chamber (elected for two years) has still upwards of a year to serve as popular representatives; and this appears, from a conversation I have had with Count Platen, to be a principal ground for hope, on the part of the present administration that they may continue, in the face of a probable change of system in Prussia, to maintain office and to pursue the policy hitherto followed by them.

Count Platen declared his conviction, that the change expected to occur in the Prussian administration would not be nearly so great as was anticipated by the Liberal party, and he illustrated his view by the German proverb "Der Brei wird nie so heiss gegessen als er gekocht wird" (The broth is never eaten so hot as it is cooked). His Excellency deduced from this, that the present over excitement of Liberal Hopes in Germany would soon be calmed down; and he indicated his conception of the safest policy for the German Governments to pursue, by strongly blaming the step lately taken by M. von der Pfordten in having dissolved at such a moment the Bavarian Chamber,[42] which had been elected under the pressure of Government influence, when the Liberal party dared not exert itself, and which will now be rëelected [*sic*] under the full impression of the late events in Prussia, the effect of which will in all probability, be to diminish Government influence in the elections and to increase largely the ranks of the opposition.

From this it is evident, that, in the event of the Hanoverian Government receiving any check in the Estates General now assembled, no dissolution will follow here; but that the Government will endeavour to tide over the period, during which the Liberal party may hope to receive support from Prussia; but which Count Platen affects to believe will be hoped for in vain.

[42]The Bavarian chamber of deputies was dissolved on 30 September 1858 as a result of von der Pfordten's threat to resign after the chamber had elected the opposition candidate as its second president.

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I learn that the King's disposition is very firm, amounting even to obstinacy, and that it is not likely, that His Majesty will be inclined to alter his system because Prussia does so.

It is with great diffidence, that I venture, so soon after my arrival here,[43] to offer any remarks on subjects of such importance, but I think it right to report what reaches me on matters of current history, calculated so materially to influence the country and Government to which I have the honor of being accredited; Your Lordship will, I know, have it in your power to estimate the value of my communication.

FO 34/99: George John Robert Gordon to Earl of Malmesbury, No 89, Hanover, 18 June 1859

Mobilization of Prussian army; military preparations in Hanover; liberal press on Austria's policy in Italy

I see it mentioned in the Prussian and other foreign newspapers that, in consequence of the mobilization of the greater part of the Prussian army, Prussia will invite the other German States to associate themselves with the military and political measures to be taken by Prussia for the common interest.[44] Count Platen has informed me, that no such invitation has been addressed to the Hanoverian Government; but that the Hanoverian contingent is quite ready to march at a day's notice, and that the troops of all the other States of the Confederation are in an equal state of readiness whenever the signal shall be given by Prussia.

To mention what comes under my own observation, I may state that this city presents the appearance of a camp as much as of a town. There are now assembled within its precincts about 8000 men of all arms and branches of the service, and the barrack accommodation being far from sufficient, the greater proportion of these men are billeted on the inhabitants which of course causes much inconvenience; but against which I have not heard as yet any complaints.

Should the Hanoverian troops not be required for service beyond the limits of the kingdom before the end of the month, I believe it to be in contemplation to disband the greater proportion, both on the above account and also because the withdrawal of the labour of so many hands from agriculture just at that season would be very prejudicial to the country, while there would be no difficulty in reassembling them all again at a very short notice. Policy will likewise command

[43]Gordon was accredited to the court of Hanover on 17 June 1858.
[44]See nn. 39 and 42 in Hamburg section.

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such a measure, inasmuch as I am told that in some districts the peasant proprietors are already complaining of the difficulties which the absence of so many labourers will throw them into.

At this eventful moment it is very interesting to observe the attitude assumed by the Liberal portion of the Press. I refer more especially of course to Hanover; but the same feelings appear to be shared by the Liberal Party in other parts of Germany, and to be propounded in the journals professing their opinions. The attitude may I think be shortly characterized as condemnatory of Austrian Policy and the Austrian system of Government in Italy; but at the same time no iota less opposed to the French attack on Austria, nor less firmly determined to support the latter than was the case at the commencement of the struggle now going on.

This modification of the views of the Liberal party, so far as this country is concerned, seems to have arisen, – to judge by the opinions emitted yesterday by their chief representative[45] in the public press here, (the "Zeitung für Nord Deutschland") from the perusal of the "Correspondence on the affairs of Italy" lately laid before Parliament, and Count Buol's defence which it contains of the Austrian system of Government in Her Italian possessions.[46]

If I am not much mistaken, the above will not be the sole particular contained in that correspondence which will in Germany justify, nor the liberal be the only Party there which it will conciliate as to, the policy of Lord Derby's Administration and Your Lordship's conduct of the Foreign Department of Great Britain during the period which has elapsed since the 1st of January last.[47]

FO 34/100: George John Robert Gordon to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 27, Hanover, 14 October 1859

Unpopularity of the king and government; tension between king and ministers

I consider it my duty to inform Your Lordship, that I have the best reason for believing that very great discontent and ill feeling

[45] Rudolf von Bennigsen.

[46] The parliamentary paper *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Italy, January to May 1859* was presented to both Houses of Parliament in June 1859. The article in the *Zeitung für Norddeutschland* (published from 1848 in Hanover; formerly the *Bremer Zeitung*) referred to Loftus's dispatch to Malmesbury of 20 January 1859, which reported Buol's opinion that it 'is a great mistake to think that Italy requires change'.

[47] Gordon refers to Britain's mediation between Austria on the one side and Piedmont-Sardinia and France on the other, and the British course of neutrality in spite of sympathizing with the Italian people.

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exist throughout this Kingdom against the King and His Majesty's Government.

This feeling has, I am told, long been secretly rising, but has been brought to a head by the persecutions which have lately been instituted against such persons as have signed the Eisenach or any of the other Programmes for centralizing and reforming the German Federal Power:[48] and, as I learn, the discontent caused by these and other similar proceedings on the part of the King – such as the endeavour reported by Mr Johnston in his despatch No 3 of the 3rd ultimo, to influence the municipal elections of this City[49] – is now so strong that any favorable conjuncture would be seized to excite a Revolution, and the earliest opportunity will at all events be taken for forcing the King to abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince.[50] In one word the King is not merely unpopular but His Majesty is, I fear, positively hated by a large majority of his people.

As connected with the above much to be lamented state of affairs and as an additional subject for regret, I am not without fears that Count Platen may refuse much longer to hold the Post of Foreign Minister which he now so creditably fills. The King, as I learn, constantly gives instructions to the Hanoverian Representatives abroad or otherwise directs the Foreign relations of the country, without any previous consultation with Count Platen, and has thus more than once occasioned considerable difficulties. When His Majesty does listen to Count Platen – and this His Excellency insists upon when necessary – He very often acts quite contrary to the advice He has heard. So that, if such conduct should continue, it is not to be expected that a clever, independent and honorable man like Count Platen should long submit to it.

But further, I apprehend that the same may be said of all the other Ministers except Herr von Borries, and Herr von Bar, Minister of Justice. The latter was a little more than a year ago very unexpectedly placed in his present position, by Herr von Borries's influence, in the room of the then Minister, M. von der Decken, with whom he differed, and, if the information I receive be correct, Herr von Borries is working for the dismissal of the rest of his present Colleagues, to be replaced by creatures of his own like Herr von Bar.

[48]Given the lack of a legal basis for the prohibition of the *Nationalverein*, the Hanoverian government resorted to measures such as house searches, cancellations of public contracts, and reprimands. On 30 October 1859, Borries ordered the surveillance of the *Nationalverein* and its members in Hanover. For the Eisenach Declaration see n. 44 in Hamburg section.

[49]In his dispatch, Johnston reported that a circular letter had been sent by the grand chamber to the electors in favour of the government candidate.

[50]Ernst August.

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Herr von Borries is cordially detested throughout the country by all classes of the community, and it is supposed, that, at the next meeting of the States General he may be outvoted. This might perhaps be considered the best thing that could happen, were it not for the King's disposition and His Majesty's impatience of opposition, which in such a case might lead him into some serious error.

There is however some hope, that, as the danger increases and becomes more imminent, The King will perceive the necessity of adopting a different system from the one His Majesty now so obstinately pursues, and, if Counts Platen and Kilmansegge and General von Brandis will, for the sake of their King and Country be patient and not resign their Posts, they must be expected in the long run to succeed in proving to The King the great risks of His Majesty's present course.

It is only lately, that I have become aware of the great extent to which the King's unpopularity and the fears of those who take the deepest interest in His Majesty and the welfare of their Country now reach. The information which I have felt called upon to lay before Your Lordship thus confidentially is chiefly derived from one of the best sources in the Capital, and I have been careful to retail it to Your Lordship exactly as it has reached me; but it is likewise confirmed by what has come to my own knowledge when travelling or visiting in the country. I beg however to request Your Lordship to consider what I have written rather as an indication of what may possibly prove the serious difficulties in which this country may be involved, unless some change takes place in the dangerous and mistaken system now pursued by the King and His advisers, than as a positive report of their actual existence at this moment.

There can be no doubt, however, that the state of affairs in Hanover is critical and presents subject for great anxiety and alarm.

FO 34/103: George Glynn Petre to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 6, Hanover, 20 January 1860

Hanoverian opposition to Prussian proposals for federal military reform; divisions between king and Platen over federal policy

The Proposition made by the Prussian Commissioner[51] at a Sitting of the Military Commission of the Diet at Frankfort on the 4th instant, to divide the Forces of the Confederation in time of War into two separate Armies, of which Austria and Prussia should be invested

[51] Ernst Dannhauer.

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respectively with the Supreme Commands, coupled as it was with a Declaration that under no circumstances could a Prussian army serve under the orders of a Federal Commander in Chief, has been received by His Hanoverian Majesty, as I have reason to know, with unqualified disfavour, and should it be brought before the Diet it will be opposed at all events by the Hanoverian Plenipotentiary.[52] Count Platen informs me that of the four Kingdoms[53] Wurtemberg alone has signified her approval of the plan, and that Austria has hitherto given no indication of her opinion.

In connection with this topic Count Platen spoke to me today at some length and with little reserve upon the German policy of the King, a policy which His Excellency avows himself as far from approving, but to which His Majesty is egged on by the Minister of the Interior, M. de Borries. The King, he said, was impressed with the idea that the maintenance of the Federal Constitution[54] as it now stood was essential to the preservation of German unity, and that it was the only safeguard of the independence of the minor Sovereigns of Germany, although at the same time quite compatible with national Progress. Acting upon this conviction His Majesty opposed every measure of federal Reform, whether emanating from Prussia, or from the States forming the Wurzburg league, whose individual interests were more or less identical with those of Hanover; thus, for instance, among the projects of reform which were submitted to the Diet by the Wurzburg States was one to establish throughout Germany a common system of Public Law,[55] and M. de Borries had strongly urged His Majesty to oppose so desirable a measure as calculated to destroy the individuality of the separate States. Count Platen assured me that he took every opportunity of warning His Majesty of the danger of this obstructive policy and of its futility in arresting the inevitable tendencies of the German People. In no part of Germany, he said, was the Unitarian feeling stronger or more widely spread than in the Kingdom of Hanover; it derived its vitality and force not from any abstract preference for Prussian domination but from a conviction that (the influence of Germany in the Counsels of Europe) (under her present constitution) was utterly incommensurate with the extent of

[52]Gottlieb Ernst August von Heimbruch.

[53]Bavaria, Hanover, Saxony, and Württemberg.

[54]Act of the Confederation of 1815 and the Vienna Final Act of 1820.

[55]The results of the first Würzburg Conference on federal reforms (23–27 November 1859) were proposed to the Federal Diet on 17 December 1859 (*Frankfurter Erklärung*). The motion included the publication of the proceedings of the Federal Diet, the standardization of measurements, the revision of the federal military law, and the introduction of common civil and public laws.

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her Territory, the amount of her Population and with her vast military resources.

With respect to the recent proposition and declaration of Prussia at Frankfort, Count Platen observed that although she had already made a similar declaration to her Confederates during the War in Italy,[56] it was the first time that Prussia had avowed in so formal a manner to the Diet her intention to repudiate the obligations imposed upon her by the Federal Constitution, and he looked upon this as a menacing symptom of future disruption. Instead, however, of meeting the Prussian project with a simple negative, he had suggested to the King, and His Majesty appeared to receive the idea favorably, to make a counter proposition, to the effect of dividing the Forces of the Confederation in time of War into three separate Armies instead of two, to be classed as follows; an Army of the Upper Rhine, of which Austria would have the chief Command – an Army of the Middle Rhine, under a Commander chosen by the smaller States – and an Army of the Lower Rhine under the leadership of Prussia. On my remarking to Count Platen that this division would still hand over the Hanoverian Army to Prussia, he said that in order to lessen the risk to their future independence which the four Kingdoms would incur by a temporary incorporation of their military forces with the Armies of their two powerful neighbours, he suggested that the 9th and the 10th Corps (Saxony and Hanover) should be incorporated with the Army of the Upper Rhine, whilst the 7th and 8th (Bavaria and Wurtemberg) would form part of the Army of the Lower Rhine.

I am quite unable to say whether this scheme of Count Platen's will ever be seriously entertained, or whether such a discolation [*sic*] of the Federal Corps d'Armées would be really feasible, but at all events he appears to be convinced that anything is better than the present policy of passive resistance to reform.

FO 34/104: Henry Francis Howard to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 74, Hanover, 19 May 1860

Fears of potential French expansion; Platen's desire for conciliatory policy towards Prussia despite king's opposition

All the information which Count Platen receives confirms him in the belief that the Emperor of the French is bent upon acquiring what are termed the Natural Frontiers of France on the Rhine. Such is likewise

[56] Prussian motion at the Federal Diet of 4 July 1859.

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the impression not only of all the Hanoverians; but also of all the Germans with whom I have had an opportunity of conversing.

The prostration of Austria, the disunion existing amongst the States of Germany, the diversions occasioned by the disturbed state of Italy, and by the growing complications in oriental affairs, the understanding which is believed to exist in respect to those affairs between France and Russia, and in virtue of which the latter Power would allow France liberty of action in the West, provided She were permitted to aggrandize Herself in the East, the further supposed understanding between France and Denmark, and the aversion of Great Britain to enter into a new Continental War, are all adduced as favoring the designs of the French Emperor upon Germany.

For the present the course of proceeding seems to be to endeavor to prepare the Public mind in Germany and in Europe for the accomplishment of those designs by the publication of Newspaper Articles and Pamphlets advocating them, by the launching of Reports, afterwards contradicted, of pending negotiations, and to produce by all these means a state of uncertainty in the German Provinces bordering upon France very detrimental to the interests, and galling to the patience of their inhabitants.

Under these circumstances Count Platen, who has sympathies for Austria, but recognizes her weakness, and considers that Hanover ought to place Herself on a good footing with Prussia and be prepared to act with her, deplores the aversion shown by the King towards that Power, and which, I may observe, leads Him to oppose Her in a manner which does not always meet the views of his own subjects; for the great majority of Hanoverians, although desirous of maintaining their independence, do not feel the estrangement they formerly did for Prussia, and consider that a good understanding with her is not only their best security against the foreign dangers which menace them; but would likewise deprive Prussia of any pretext she might otherwise seek of aggrandizing Herself at their expense.

Count Platen also thinks that the German Sovereigns ought not to refuse to make some sacrifices with the view of creating a more efficient Central Power in Germany, particularly in time of War; but finds the King indisposed to agree to any change in the Federal Constitution.[57]

In general Count Platen takes a gloomy view of the present state of European affairs, and whilst confident that Germany will rise up to repel French aggression fears that She will not be as well prepared a [*sic*] She ought and might be to resist the shock.

With a view to remove the bad impression produced by the recent imprudent remark of M. de Borries, the Minister of the Interior, in

[57]Act of the Confederation of 1815 and the Vienna Final Act of 1820.

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the Second Chamber relative to the possibility of German Princes being driven into alliances with Foreign Powers so as to prevent their own mediatisation,[58] Count Platen had proposed to the King the transmission of a Circular to the Hanoverian Representatives at the German Courts enclosing the text of M. de Borries' Speech, from which it would be perceived that his meaning had not been rightly apprehended, and setting forth that the Hanoverian Government felt convinced that Prussia had no wish to trench upon the independence of the German States in the manner advocated by the so called National League,[59] and that they were equally persuaded that none of the States of Germany would seek alliances with Foreign Powers for the settlement of German Affairs, and observing that the whole past conduct of Hanover was a guarantee against Her adopting such a course.

His Majesty however considered that the explanations already given by M. de Borries in the Second Chamber rendered the step proposed by Count Platen unnecessary.[60] Count Platen feels strongly the disagreeable position in which he is placed, being so seldom able to carry out his own views and disapproving as he does of the policy of his colleague, the Minister of the Interior, and if he remains in office it is only, as he has frequently assured me, in order to prevent the evil consequences which might result from his abandonment of his Post.

FO 34/104: Henry Francis Howard to Lord John Russell, Confidential, No 86, Hanover, 2 June 1860

Unpopularity of Hanoverian government; Borries's oppressive internal policies; divisions within government and king's autocratic tendencies

From the majorities which the Government command in the Chambers, it might be inferred that they possess the confidence of the Country. Such is not, however, the case. In the first place, these majorities were obtained by a most unscrupulous use of the Government influence and patronage in the Elections, and in the second, the system of internal administration as carried on by

[58]Howard refers to the speech of 2 May 1860, in which Borries opposed attempts to found a central power in Germany under Prussia and stated that, for defence, the German princes could not only confederate but could also seek alliances with foreign powers.

[59]For the *Nationalverein* see n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

[60]On 8 May, Borries declared that his remarks of 2 May had been misinterpreted, and that he had only hinted at possible developments if, in consequence of 'the inappropriate measures of the *Nationalverein*, everything should go to pieces'.

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M. de Borries and M. Vermuth,[61] the Director of Police and the improvident management of the Finances of the Kingdom by Count Kielmansegge have produced very general dissatisfaction amongst all Classes and all Parties, Conservative as well as Liberal, in the Country. M. de Borries's internal administration seems to be based on a petty system of police and interference with the liberty of the Subject particularly distasteful to the Germans, and the less called for because the Hanoverians are a quiet and loyal People very easy to govern. His energies have lately been directed towards the persecution of all persons associating themselves to the National League[62] for the establishment of the Supremacy of Prussia in Germany at the expence of the Independence of the several States; but that League meets with little Sympathy in this Country, and if it should at any future period acquire more importance, this will be owing to the ill advised measures of M. de Borries, indeed M. de Bennigsen, its President, is stated to have jocularly observed that M. de Borries ought to be made an honorary Member of it for the services rendered by him to its cause.

M. de Borries, I learn, gives out that, on account of the unpopularity which attaches to his name, he means to give in his resignation after the close of the Session of the Chambers, but it is not thought that it would be accepted by the King, even if tendered.

The manner in which Count Kielmansegge frequently disposes of the Public money without the previous sanction of the Legislature, and the circumstance of his continuing, contrary to the opinions expressed in the Chambers, to hold the Department of Finance together with the Post of Minister of the Royal Household with the management of the Royal Domains, by which much confusion is produced and jobbery is facilitated, are likewise subjects of complaint.

But if such is the feeling as to the administration by individual Ministers of their departments, the general principle on which the Government is organized is not less a cause of dissatisfaction. A Cabinet can hardly be said to exist. It rarely happens that the Ministers meet in Council, nor is there any President of the Ministry; the Ministers act separately and without general concert. The King seldom sees them and hardly ever gives those whose opinions he knows to differ from his own an opportunity of conversing with him. He requires that all their Reports should be made to him in writing. These Reports come into the hands of M. Lex, the King's Private Secretary, and the Ministers have no security that they are properly read to His Majesty. The answers are returned through M. Lex who, it is asserted, seeks to ingratiate himself in the Kings favor

[61] Carl Georg Wermuth.
[62] See n. 48 in this section.

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by encouraging His Majesty's absolutist tendencies. It is remarked that only those persons who pursue this course have any influence with His Majesty; but then their influence seldom extends to those questions on which they may happen to differ from Him. Even M. de Borries is not omnipotent with the King, for it was only the other day that His Majesty submitted a Report, which had been sent in by that Minister, proposing certain measures in respect to Foreign Insurance Companies, to his Hairdresser M. Lübrecht, who is the Agent of one of those Companies and is high in His Majesty's favor, and took a resolution in the matter in conformity with M. Lübrecht's advice and interests, without further reference to His Minister.[63]

This inclination of His Majesty to interfere directly and personally in State Affairs is another cause of regret to His Majesty's well wishers.

In general, although there is no reason to apprehend any disturbance of public order and tranquillity, it cannot be denied that discontent prevails in the Country, and it is evident that if a crisis should take place in Germany, it will be necessary for the King not only to dismiss some of His Ministers; but likewise to alter the system and organization of His Government. The face of things would soon change were the existing Constitution[64] of the Country to be honestly carried out, and were a Ministry to be formed on such a footing as would cover His Majesty's responsibility, an object which would appear particularly desirable considering the unfortunate physical infirmity[65] which goes so far to incapacitate Him for the exercise of His Regal Functions. Let it be hoped that a change of system may not be deferred until a period when moderate concessions will no longer be accepted.

It has come to my knowledge that within the few last days more than one well-wisher to the King has seized an opportunity of making Him acquainted with the dissatified [*sic*] state of feeling in the Country, and of urging upon Him a change in His system of internal Government, as well as a modification of His Foreign policy.

Unfortunately His Majesty, whose intentions are so good, and whose assurances of His love for His subjects are, I am convinced, so sincere, has so high an idea of the superiority of His own wisdom, believing himself to be acting to a certain extent under higher inspiration, that He is but little disposed to give ear to counsels opposed to His own opinions.

[63]The king had decided to authorize the *Magdeburger Feuer-Versicherungs-Gesellschaft* in Hanover.

[64]Constitutional law of 6 August 1840; see nn. 7 and 75 in this section.

[65]Georg V was blind.

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FO 34/121: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 326, Hanover, 14 September 1861

Establishment of a German fleet; Nationalverein *agitation*

I understand that the Prussian Government proposed some time ago to the Governments of Hamburg and Bremen to furnish a portion of their Federal Military Contingents in the event of their undertaking to build and man a certain number of Gun Boats which, in conjunction with Prussian Gun Boats, should be employed, under the orders of Prussia, in the protection of the mouths of the Elbe & Weser and German Coasts of the North Sea.[66]

This proposal has, I am told, been declined by the Government of Hamburg who were unwilling so far to sacrifice their independence as to give up their separate military establishment and place it in the hands of Prussia which would thus become a Contributor to the 10th Corps d'Armee of the German Confederation. It is, however, believed that both Hamburg and Bremen will eventually agree to build some Gun Boats.

In the meantime an extensive movement, principally set on foot by the National Verein, is taking place, more particularly in the north of Germany, for raising subscriptions for the creation of a German Fleet under the Command of Prussia;[67] and, very probably for the purpose of furthering this movement, His Royal Highness Prince Adalbert of Prussia has within the last few days visited both Hamburg and Bremen with a Prussian Flotilla and has met with a very favourable reception.

The agitation to which I have alluded appears likewise to have attracted the attention of the King of Hanover to whom, as emanating from the National Verein and having for its object the promoting of the supremacy of Prussia, it is no doubt very distasteful, for, if I am correctly informed, it was for the purpose of taking into consideration the means of counteracting it, as well as the course to be adopted by Hanover in respect to coast Defences, that His Majesty recently summoned His Ministers, excepting Count Platen, who was on leave of absence but was on the point of returning to Hanover, to a Council to be held at Nordeney [*sic*].

I believe no decision was taken in respect to the subjects under discussion, but I think it not improbable that the Hanoverian Government will, when the Chambers meet in January, ask for a

[66]Prussian note to the senates of Bremen and Hamburg, 17 July 1861. At the time of the dispatch, no decision had been reached by the Hamburg senate.

[67]The subscriptions (*Flottengelder*) were placed at the disposal of the Prussian naval ministry on condition that the money be used to purchase steam gunboats. For the *Nationalverein* see n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

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credit for the construction of Gun Boats and will afterwards offer to place these Vessels at the disposal of the German Diet.

Everybody who remembers the ridiculous failure of the attempts which were made in 1848 to get up a German Fleet,[68] must look with no small degree of incredulity upon the chances of success which the present movement may have, but it certainly appears to be more serious and to be somewhat better directed than the former one.

It is not to be wondered at that the Germans should contemplate with feelings of apprehension the defenceless state of their Coasts against so formidable a Naval Power as France, but their present efforts are not at all commensurate with the magnitude of their task, for whilst all the Governments of Germany ought to be uniting for the purpose of constructing Iron clad Defences and steel plated Ships for the protection of their harbours, the building of a few Gun Boats by public subscription will not go far towards securing Germany against Naval Aggression.

FO 34/125: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 33, Hanover, 12 February 1862

Reactions to Bernstorff's proposal for Prussian-centred smaller union in Germany

Count Platen, in speaking to me today on the subject of the Identic Note presented on the 2nd instant to Count Bernstorff by the Hanoverian Minister at Berlin,[69] as well as by the Representatives of Austria[70] and other German States, protesting against His Excellency's Doctrine in respect to the compatibility with Article 11 of the Federal Act of June 8th 1815[71] of the establishment of a Federal State within the confederation, observed that it was not the object of the Governments, which had joined in that note, to raise up a coalition against Prussia, and that they would be satisfied if the result of the step they had taken were to induce the Prussian Government to abandon a plan which would be destructive of the independence of the secondary States, would break up the existing Confederation, and entail the exclusion of Austria from Germany.

[68]The first German fleet, established in June 1848, consisted of thirty-eight ships. It was dissolved by the Federal Diet on 2 April 1852.

[69]Wilhelm Freiherr von Reitzenstein. For the identical notes of 2 February 1864 see n. 76 in Württemberg section.

[70]Graf Alajos Károlyi von Nagykároly.

[71]Article 11 permitted the federal states to form alliances so long as they were not directed against the security of the Confederation or its individual members.

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His Excellency expressed great regret that Count Bernstorff would have entered upon a course of German Policy which had rendered it indispensable for the other German Governments to come forward in defence of their rights, for it's object was evidently not the consolidation of the Confederation but the absorption of the secondary States in Prussia.

For my own part I cannot help thinking that Count Bernstorff has made a false move in reverting to the plan of the creation of a Federal State under Prussia which had failed at a period, when it had better chances of success,[72] because its realisation, by the pacific means by which he professes to wish to accomplish it, is impracticable in the face of the opposition of the States whose independence would be sacrificed by it, and because, although with the addition of a Federal Parliament which his Excellency does not contemplate, it might meet the views of the Prussian Radicals, it cannot find favor with the numerous Party, particularly in the South of Germany, which, whilst desirous of establishing a strong Central Power for the whole of Germany with a Parliament, is not willing to accept the Supremacy of Prussia or to consent to the exclusion of Austria from Germany. In a word, this Party does not recognize the Prussian Plan of "a closer Confederation", as it is termed, under Prussia, and of "a wider Confederation" connecting Austria with the former by an alliance or Federal ties more or less stringent, as realising its ideas of German Unity.

Coercive means could not be employed by Prussia for carrying out Count Bernstorff's plan without bringing on a civil war in Germany and probably Foreign intervention. There remain Revolutionary means, but their employment, besides being repugnant to the honorable character of the King of Prussia, could not be resorted to without recoiling upon Prussia herself, and having a disorganizing effect upon her political and social Institutions.

Under these circumstances I conceive that Count Bernstorff would have acted more in consonance with the interests which he has it at heart to promote, if he had abstained from bringing forward a plan which was sure to array against Prussia the majority of the German Governments without satisfying the Partizans of German Unity, and had deferred until a more favorable opportunity unmasking the Prussian pretensions.

An opportunity of furthering those pretentious will no doubt present itself when, on some great European crisis or war breaking out, Prussia will naturally be called upon to play a great part in Germany.

There is also another political consideration of a general nature which appears to me to militate against Count Bernstorff's plan, by

[72] Howard refers to the Erfurt Union of 1849–1850 (see n. 20 in Saxony section).

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whatever means it might be effected, and which is the improbability that France would ever consent, without material compensation to Herself at the expense of the integrity of Germany, to such an extension of power and influence as Prussia would acquire by its realisation.

FO 34/126: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 45, Hanover, 8 March 1862

Hesse-Cassel Question and its connection with Hanoverian constitutional controversies

The Prussian and Austrian Ministers[73] communicated this morning to Count Platen their projected joint proposal to the Diet to call upon the Elector of Hesse Cassel to restore the constitution of 1831, regard being had to the Rights of the mediatized Princes and Equestrian Order of the Empire, and with the reserve that the provisions of that Constitution not in harmony with the Federal Laws should be repealed.[74]

In making this communication they requested the support of the Hanoverian Government for their proposal, and although Count Platen stated his inability to give them an immediate reply, I have good hopes, from what His Excellency said to me on the subject, that when given it will be a favorable one.

The question is so far a delicate one for the Hanoverian Government, because the present Hanoverian Constitution of 1855 has the same origin as the constitution of Hesse Cassel of 1860 that is to say the intervention of the Diet through which the previous Constitution of 1848 was set aside,[75] and therefore they might fear that by acceding to the proposed Resolution they might be considered as admitting the invalidity of their own Constitution of 1855, but on the other hand, as I have taken the liberty of unofficially representing to Count Platen, they would, I conceive, be attracting a very invidious attention upon themselves and exposing themselves to more disagreeable consequences were they to refuse to associate themselves to a step upon which an agreement has so fortunately been come to between Austria and Prussia, and which has for it's object to set a

[73]Gustav Prinz zu Ysenburg und Büdingen and Friedrich Hugo Graf von Ingelheim.

[74]The Austro-Prussian motion was submitted to the Federal Diet on 8 March 1862. For the constitutional question of Hesse-Cassel see n. 79 in Frankfurt section and n. 118 in Prussia section.

[75]The Hessian constitution of 30 May 1860 was enacted in accordance with the federal resolution of 14 March 1860. In accordance with the federal resolution of 19 April 1855, the provisions of Hanover's constitutional law of 6 August 1840 were largely restored by the royal ordinance of 1 August 1855.

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question at rest which has for so many years been a constant source of irritation in Germany.

Count Platen, I should observe, fears that the Democratic Party will not allow matters to pass off so smoothly, but will endeavour to frustrate a settlement on the proposed basis. This Party, Your Lordship will remember, urges, together with the restoration of the constitution of Hesse Cassel of 1831, the convocation of the new Chamber according to the Electoral Law of 1849 framed on the principle of Universal Suffrage, a demand which the Prussian Government have waived.

FO 34/136: George Glynn Petre to Earl Russell, No 24, Hanover, 23 May 1863

Deadlock in Zollverein *over Franco-Prussian Commercial Treaty and Austrian policy; Hanover's influence in* Zollverein*; Platen's desire to maintain current arrangements*

I asked Count Platen yesterday whether His Excellency's information confirmed the correctness of a statement which was made some days ago[76] in the Belgian Chamber by M. Rogier, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the effect that the Zollverein States had evinced an inclination to accede to the Commercial Treaty concluded between France and Prussia.[77] His Excellency replied that no such information had reached him, and that he considered the acceptance of the Treaty, without modification, to be not merely improbable but impossible. There were symptoms however, he added, of the adoption of a conciliatory policy at Berlin which might eventually lead to a compromise upon this important Question and prevent a disruption of the Zollverein.

I gather the actual state of the case to be this.

The present object of the Southern States of Germany is, as Your Lordship knows, to induce Prussia to allow the Austrian proposals to be discussed in the Zollverein Conference now sitting at Munich.[78] The Prussian Government have hitherto refused to discuss in the Conference the subject of the future Commercial relations between Austria and the Zollverein, until the Treaty with France has been

[76]18 May 1863.

[77]For the Franco-Prussian Commercial Treaty of 2 August 1862 see n. 88 in Frankfurt section.

[78]The fifteenth *General-Konferenz* of the *Zollverein* sat from 24 March to 17 July 1863. The Austrian proposal dated back to 10 July 1862, when Rechberg, in a circular note, suggested a commercial treaty between Austria and the *Zollverein* on the basis of complete freedom of trade and traffic.

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ratified by the other States of the League and the continuance of the Zollverein placed beyond question. On the other hand, the Southern States, supported to a certain extent by Hanover and Electoral Hesse, refuse to ratify the Treaty until such modifications have been introduced into it as, without actually admitting Austria as a member of the Zollverein, shall enable the latter to give effect to the prospective clause inserted in the Treaty of 1853,[79] pointing to the establishment of closer commercial relations between Austria and the Zollverein.

Matters therefore, as they stand at present are at a deadlock.

Count Platen thinks however that the Prussian Government will eventually consent to the Austrian proposals being discussed at the Conference, and that, when it has been clearly shewn to what extent the claims of Austria and Southern Germany are incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty, it will then be time for Hanover and Hesse to step in as mediators, or rather as arbitrators, and impose the terms of a compromise.

A reference to the map of Germany will shew that Hanover and Electoral Hesse, acting as they are in concert, may be said without exaggeration to have a casting vote upon the Commercial question, and if they use the influence which their geographical position confers upon them, with tact and patriotism, they may avert what would be undoubtedly looked upon as a calamity in Germany, the disruption of the Zollverein. As the territories of the Kingdom of Hanover and of the Electorate of Hesse form an unbroken barrier between the Eastern and Western Provinces of Prussia, it is obvious that if the two former States refuse definitively to become parties to the French Treaty, the advantages conferred by that Treaty upon Prussia and her Allies will be rendered in part illusory. On the other hand their acceptance of the Treaty would render Prussia altogether independent of the opposition of the South of Germany.

According to Count Platen the standpoint to which the Hanoverian and Hessian Government are resolved to adhere is, above all, the maintenance of the Zollverein as it is now constituted. The pretensions of Prussia and of the opponents of the Treaty, if obstinately persisted in are irreconcilable with each other and with the preservation of the League, but His Excellency is of opinion that neither Party has said its last word, and that therefore the moment for arbitration has not arrived. Southern Germany His Excellency says, must modify its demands, and Prussia must consent to certain alterations in the

[79]Article 25 of the Austro-Prussian commercial treaty of 19 February 1853 (see n. 5 in Bavaria section) provided for the resumption of negotiations for a greater German customs union in 1860.

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Treaty which will admit of closer commercial union with Austria than it allows of at present. Count Platen does not think that France would refuse to agree to modifications which would manifestly enhance the value of the Treaty by extending the area of commercial intercourse between France and Germany.

How far these views and expectations are justified, it is not in my power to say, but, judging by ordinary lights, it appears to me hardly possible under the circumstances that both the Treaty and the Zollverein can be maintained intact.

FO 34/137: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 140, Hanover, 22 August 1863

Favourable reception of Austrian reform proposal at Frankfurt Fürstentag*; views of political groups in Hanover towards federal reform*

The Austrian Plan of Federal Reform[80] has proved more liberal than had been anticipated and has upon the whole, as far as an opinion can thus early be formed, been favourably received in this part of Germany and viewed in the light of an improvement upon the existing constitution of the Confederation.[81]

At the same time it is not expected that the step taken by the Emperor of Austria can lead to any immediate practical results, as it is not believed that the opposition of Prussia, which aims at supremacy in Germany, to such a plan as that proposed by His Imperial Majesty, can be overcome. The fact, however, of the German Sovereigns having by their meeting at Frankfort committed themselves to Federal Reform will in itself be an important result, and cannot fail eventually to advance the accomplishment of that object by removing one of the primary obstacles to it.

In Hanover, the specific Hanoverian Party are dissatisfied with the composition of the Directory as proposed by Austria, for instead of Hanover having the permanent seat in it to which they consider her quite as much entitled as Bavaria, on account of her position as a maritime Power, she will even be exposed to seeing her vote for a member of the executive Body suspended for a term of years. It is believed here that this dissatisfaction cannot but be shared by His Hanoverian Majesty.

[80] For the Austrian reform proposal submitted to the Frankfurt congress of German princes see pp. 75–76.

[81] Act of the Confederation of 1815 and the Vienna Final Act of 1820.

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The Great German (Gross Deutsch) Party in Hanover are I am told generally favourable to the plan, but they also consider that the proposed composition of the Directory injuriously affects the Rights of Hanover and that a modification of the plan by which she should obtain a vote in it is necessary. It is suggested that this might be accomplished by raising the number of the Directors to Seven.

The Progressist or "National Verein"[82] Party maintain in principle their views in favour of an executive with a single Head and of a Federal Popular Assembly chosen by direct Elections and meeting annually, and object that the Austrian plan retains much of the cumbrous machinery of the existing Federal Constitution. Nevertheless they admit that the Austrian project is a great improvement upon that constitution, and despairing of the immediate realisation of their own wishes, they are ready to accept it as an instalment of Reform. Indeed in an Article which appeared on the 20th instant in their organ in this Capital (the Zeitung für Nord Deutschland[83]) they recommend its acceptance by the German People, saying at the same time that the latter should not cease to agitate for the substitution of a Popular Representation with annual meetings in the place of the assembly of Delegates.

There are many persons in Germany who doubt whether under a system of greater centralisation, the prosperity of Germany will increase in a greater or even a similar proportion as it has done under the existing Federal constitution, but the same persons are of opinion that the wish for a greater degree of unity is so strong and so widely spread amongst the German People, that it is indispensable, whatever may be the consequences, that measures should be taken towards satisfying it; and that the Secondary German Sovereigns should make up their minds to some sacrifices, in order to retaining [*sic*] their more essential Rights. As regards the secondary north German Princes, including the King of Hanover, an observation which has been made to me is that by opposing Federal Reform they might for a certain period retain the plenitude of their Rights, but that they would expose themselves to the alternative, ere long perhaps, of being swallowed up by Revolution or by Prussia.

My own opinion, abstractedly speaking, is, that were Prussia and Austria agreed, the present Federal Constitution with modifications much less extended than those now aimed at, would be found to work well, and that it will be difficult to hit upon any new plan in which the antagonism of those two Powers will not find a vent and weaken the action of Germany.

[82]For the *Nationalverein* see n. 71 in Frankfurt section.
[83]See n. 46 in this section.

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I should observe that no intelligence has been received here from Count Platen since he left Hanover for Frankfort.

FO 34/138: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 235, Hanover, 28 November 1863

Schleswig-Holstein fever across Germany; support for Prince of Augustenburg; Danish policy aggravating the crisis; advises British mediation

The Sleswig Holstein fever in Germany is at its height and may perhaps not be subdued until the calamaties [*sic*] of the war which it tends to enkindle shall have sobered down the public mind.

There is hardly a Town of any note in this Country where meetings of the Municipal Bodies or popular Assemblies have not been held at which Addresses to the King or Petitions to the Government have been adopted urging the employment of force in order to wrest the Duchies of Sleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg from Denmark, and the recognition of Prince Christian of Augustenburg as their Sovereign.[84]

The "Gross Deutscher Verein"[85] (Great German Association) which calls itself conservative, but which appears to be as capable of doing mischief as it has proved itself incapable of effecting good, has passed Resolutions in the above mentioned sense worthy of the National Verein,[86] in opposition to which it was instituted.

No Pretender has been as successful as the Prince of Augustenburg in obtaining recognitions, his claims having been acknowledged without the slightest examination by German Governments, Conservative and Democratic Societies, the motives which united these different elements in common action being the spoliation, under the plea of the protection of an oppressed Nationality, of a neighbouring Sovereign,[87] who ought to be the best Ally of Germany, of a large portion of his Dominions, including a Duchy[88] which never belonged to Germany and in a good half of which the German language is not even spoken.

It is hardly to be believed that this aim would be so openly avowed, or be sought to be so vigorously carried out, did not the impression

[84]Howard refers to Friedrich von Augustenburg, Duke Christian August's son. For the succession question in the duchies see n. 97 in Frankfurt section.

[85]Howard most probably refers to the *Deutsche Reformverein*, an association of supporters of a greater Germany including Austria, which was established at the *Großdeutsche Versammlung* in Frankfurt on 28–29 October 1862.

[86]See n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

[87]Christian IX of Denmark.

[88]Schleswig.

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so generally prevail in Germany that Denmark has nothing more to expect, at the outstart [*sic*] at least, than moral support from the Great Non German Powers who signed the Treaty of May 8th 1852.[89]

The dangerous agitation which has arisen might, in my humble opinion certainly have been checked, had the course pursued by the German Powers who signed that Treaty or acceded to it[90] been bolder and more straightforward, whereas it has been encouraged by the faithlessness of some of them who, like Saxony, Wurtemberg and Oldenburg, appear to be disposed to ignore altogether the engagements they have contracted under it, and by the pusillanimity of others who, whilst admitting their obligations, interpret them in a somewhat dubious manner and hesitate to give their acknowledgement of them that publicity which would render it great value at the present moment.

In making these observations, I beg to state that it is not my object to exculpate the Danish Government. On the contrary I do not consider that on their side they have fulfilled the engagements they contracted by the arrangements of 1851 and 1852.[91] It was with this conviction and foreseeing the outbreak of public feeling which was likely to occur in Germany on the death of King Frederick the 7th, whose life had long been considered a bad one, I constantly in my correspondence urged the necessity of the Danish Government making ample concessions. But surely, as Your Lordship has so unremittingly and ably argued, the questions in dispute are not of such a nature that they could not be settled by negociation and compromise, instead of being left to the arbitrament [*sic*] of the sword.

Although I believe that certain parties in Germany have long been waiting for the event which has now occurred in order to attempt the disruption of Sleswig and the German Duchies[92] from Denmark, yet I cannot deny that the Common Constitution for Denmark and Sleswig which was lately voted by the Rigsraad and has been sanctioned by King Christian,[93] and which, if I am correctly informed, has even been

[89]For the London Protocol of 8 May 1852 see n. 97 in Frankfurt section.

[90]In addition to the German signatories of Austria and Prussia, the treaty was acceded to by Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Oldenburg, Saxony, Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, Saxe-Weimar, Baden, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

[91]Howard refers to Denmark's understanding with Austria and Prussia prior to the London Protocol, and the Danish declaration not to incorporate Schleswig into Denmark and to guarantee the equal rights of the Duchies of Holstein and Schleswig within the Danish monarchy. See n. 89 in Hamburg section.

[92]Holstein and Lauenburg.

[93]The joint constitution for Denmark and Schleswig was passed by the Danish diet on 13 November and signed by Christian IX on 18 November 1863. This implied the constitutional separation of Holstein and Schleswig.

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pronounced by M. Bluhme, who was Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1852, as tantamount to an incorporation of Sleswig, has considerably encreased the difficulties of a pacific solution, as it has greatly irritated even those more reasonable Germans who were desirous of seeing the integrity of the Danish Monarchy preserved. Until this stumbling block therefore is removed, there appears but little prospect of an amicable settlement.

Previous to the sanction of this common Constitution there existed, I am informed, a disposition on the part of the German Diet to enter into Your Lordship's proposal of a Mediation,[94] provided a preliminary agreement could be arrived at concerning its basis, but, to judge at least by Count Platen's language, this disposition has disappeared and has been replaced by a determination to carry out, in the first instance, an occupation of the German Duchies, whether under that name or under the less objectionable one in principle of an Execution.[95]

I trust however, though I hardly believe, that His Excellency may be mistaken in this view, and that counsels of moderation may still be listened to by both Parties.

FO 34/141: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, Confidential, No 36, Hanover, 15 January 1864

Anti-British sentiments in Hanoverian theatre over British policy in Schleswig-Holstein Crisis

At the representation which took place at the Theatre Royal here on the 10th instant, the day on which the great popular Meeting on the Sleswig Holstein Question was held,[96] of an opera called the "Templar and the Jewess",[97] taken from Sir Walter Scott's novel "Ivanhoe", the actor who played the part of Ivanhoe, M. Niemann, altered the Text of one of the Songs from "Thou, Proud England rejoice" to "Thou Proud England be ashamed of Thyself." He did not, it is true, finish the whole of the phrase, but, nevertheless his meaning was sufficiently explained to draw down from a part of the Audience

[94]In his dispatch of 18 November 1863 to Sir Alexander Malet, the British envoy to the German Confederation, Russell offered British mediation with regard to the relations of Schleswig to the Kingdom of Denmark and the German Confederation, and the position of Holstein in the Danish constitution.

[95]See n. 99 in Frankfurt section.

[96]The popular meeting (*Landesversammlung*), which took place in the city of Hanover under the presidency of Rudolf von Bennigsen, passed a resolution and an address to the King of Hanover in favour of Friedrich von Augustenburg as Duke of Schleswig and Holstein.

[97]Heinrich Marschner, *Der Templer und die Jüdin: Große romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen nach Walter Scott's Roman Ivanhoe* (first performance Leipzig, 1829).

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loud and repeated applause, and to merit the subsequent praise of the Press.

I had every reason to believe that this alteration was made with a view to a political demonstration against England, and this view has since been fully confirmed to me on the best authority. I was nevertheless unwilling to attribute to the affair more importance than it deserved. I therefore confined myself to bringing, in the semi official Letter of which I have the honor to enclose a Copy, the circumstances of the case, such as they had been reported to me, for I was not present at the Representation, to the knowledge of Count Platen, and to calling His Excellency's attention to the extreme impropriety of such conduct on the part of a Court Singer in a Theatre Royal under the Administration of a High Officer in the Household of His Majesty The King of Hanover, with a view to his receiving the reprimand he so justly deserved.

I should observe that on account of the publicity which the incident has received and the sensation which it has produced, I have seen no reason to regret my having taken that step. Indeed my colleagues, the Foreign Ministers, were likewise of opinion that I could not pass over so unseemly a demonstration in silence.

Yesterday morning I received from Count Platen the Letter of the 12th instant of which I also beg to enclose a Copy, stating that he had learnt the incident with much regret and that he had hastened to call to it the attention of the Intendant Général of the Royal Theatre[98] who, he was persuaded, would take the proper steps.

I had learnt in the meantime that the Intendant Général had immediately given M. Niemann a reprimand besides inflicting a fine upon him for his contravention of the Theatre Laws, and had moreover reported his conduct to His Majesty The King who had highly disapproved of it.

As was very appositely remarked to me by a Person in office, had His Majesty been in his box at the time, as an English Prince[99] He must have quitted the Theatre.

M. Niemann, I understand, excuses himself by saying it was a slip of the tongue, but I am credibly informed that the demonstration was planned by himself and others beforehand.

I mention this circumstance to show how Germans, in their Sleswig-Holstein frenzy, can forget all feelings of public decency.[100]

[98]Julius Graf von Platen-Hallermund.

[99]Georg V of Hanover, a first cousin of Queen Victoria, was 2nd Duke of Cumberland and Teviotdale.

[100]Enclosures: copies of two letters in French: Henry Howard to Count Platen, dated Hanover, 11 January 1864; Platen-Hallermund to Howard, dated Hanover, 12 January 1864.

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FO 34/143: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 158, Hanover, 23 April 1864

Count Platen's position compromised by publication of Howard's correspondence; restrictions placed on diplomats in Hanover

Count Platen has hitherto been in the habit of receiving daily at his own House those of the Heads of Missions who wished to converse with him, between the hours of 10 and 12 in the morning, unless prevented from doing so by a Cabinet Council or other impediment. Besides that, he was to be found almost daily at the Foreign Office between the hours of 1 and 2 o'clock, and was even willing, in pressing cases, to see a Foreign Minister at other hours of the day. In fact it was impossible to have a more accessible or obliging Minister of Foreign Affairs to deal with.

I regret to say that, in consequence of the embarrassments which the publication of some of my Correspondence in the Papers presented to Parliament on the Schleswig-Holstein question has caused him,[101] His Excellency has now, as it were ab irato,[102] addressed a Circular Note to the Heads of Missions accredited to this Court stating that, in consequence of his numerous occupations, he can only henceforward have the pleasure of receiving them at his own house on Thursday's from 10 to 12 o'clock, but that if they should have any pressing Official Communications to make to him, he will be ready to receive them every day from 1 to 2 o'clock at the Foreign Office.

My Colleagues, the Foreign Ministers here, are much annoyed at having their opportunities of communicating with the Minister for Foreign Affairs thus circumscribed in consequence of the practice observed by Her Majesty's Government of publishing the Reports of their Diplomatic Agents abroad.

I am fully aware that our Parliamentary requirements necessitate such publications, and that on no previous occasion have Her Majesty's Government been so hard pressed for the production of Papers as on the present with respect to the Schleswig-Holstein Question. But I trust that I may be excused the liberty which I take in observing that the extent to which the practice of these publications has been carried out of late years has very great inconveniences for Her Majesty's Service.

[101] Howard refers to the publication of the five volumes of *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of the Duchies of Holstein, Lauenburg, and Schleswig*, covering the period from 18 March 1861 to 26 March 1864, and in particular to the publication of his dispatches of 18, 23, and 28 November 1863 respectively, which were printed in the second instalment of the parliamentary papers.

[102] 'From an angry man'.

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The sole reliable sources of information, in German Courts at least, are the Minister for Foreign Affairs, (for his Ministerial Colleagues seldom if ever enter into political conversations with the Agent of a Foreign Government) and the resident Representatives of Foreign Powers. If therefore a Minister for Foreign Affairs, or the Foreign Ministers, the Colleagues of a British Diplomatic Agent consider themselves to be compromised by the publication of his Reports, they immediately break off all confidential communication with him and observe the greatest reserve towards him, the consequences of which are that his sources of information are dried up and his public utility is greatly impaired. But even if a British Minister should not have compromised his Foreign Colleagues by avoiding to quote their names or in other manners, the moment that he ceases to be on terms of confidential communication with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, they withhold their own communications, because having them only as his sources of information, he is more likely to quote and compromise them, and he is thus left high and dry.

I am willing to admit that in the present instance, the chief reason why Count Platen's position has been as seriously compromised by the publication of my Reports as has certainly been the case, is because he has withheld from the knowledge of the public the assurances which he had given me in respect to the adherence of Hanover to the Treaty of London 1852 and to the manner in which She would fulfil the obligations contracted by Her accession to it,[103] and because that publication has now revealed the full extent of those assurances.

I consequently equally admit that there were many of my Despatches which Her Majesty's Government, consistently with their own position and the very objects of the publication, could not avoid publishing, but I may perhaps be permitted, without giving offence, to observe that there were others and parts of others, which, I should have preferred not to have been published, because although not marked "confidential" they nevertheless contained reports of conversations of a confidential nature, and were therefore not adapted for publication.

Whilst upholding every word I have written, for I have always been painfully consciencious in my Reports, I cannot help regretting that Count Platen should have been compromised to the extent he has been, because I cannot but feel that the confidence with which His Excellency treated me exceeded that usually accorded to a Foreign Representative, having been, partially at least, induced by

[103]Hanover acceded to the London Protocol of 8 May 1852 (see n. 97 in Frankfurt section) on 11 December 1852.

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his friendship with me which commenced at other Courts many years previous to my becoming the Head of this Mission.[104]

As matters now stand I shall have to crave Your Lordships indulgence, if henceforward I am unable to transmit to Your Lordship anything like the same amount of political information as hitherto.

I understand that serious attacks are likely to be made in the Second Chamber against Count Platen and the Government, in consequence of the revelations contained in the Blue Book concerning the policy observed by Hanover in the Schleswig-Holstein Question, and that His Excellency's tenure of Office is considered to be menaced. If these attacks are not pushed to extremities, it will probably be from a fear that if the present Government were overthrown they might be succeeded by a less liberal one.

The Chambers resume their Session on the 28th Instant.

In the mean time the Democratic Papers not only here, but in other parts of Germany, continue to publish the most abusive articles against Count Platen.

FO 34/144: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 176, Hanover, 13 May 1864

Anti-British feeling in Germany; British mediation in Second Schleswig-Holstein War

[. . .] The German Press, more particularly the Democratic portion of it, continues to emit the most rabid and scurrilous articles directed against Her Majesty's Government, both Houses of Parliament and the British People generally, on account of their sympathies for Denmark.

It is not to be denied that there exists now in Germany a widely spread hatred against Great Britain on that account. But this feeling is unfortunately not mingled with any Respect for Her, much less with any salutary fear of Her.

The Press is constantly preaching to willing ears that Great Britain never risks a war except for her Commercial interests, that the latter would not be affected by the dismemberment of the Danish Monarchy, whilst they would suffer from a war with Germany, and therefore that Germany ought not to allow Herself to be deterred by what are termed the empty threats on the part of Her Majesty's Government, from carrying out the final severance of the Duchies from Denmark and their annexation to Germany.

[104]In 1846–1847, Howard and Platen were both posted to Berlin.

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I can only compare the feeling now prevailing in Germany against England to the animosity not yet extinct, which was entertained in Russia after the Crimean war against Austria, who had not taken part in it, and which was so much more intense and lasting than the irritation which followed that war in Russia against France and England, who were Belligerent Powers.

The Germans are greatly elated by their military successes[105] over a Nation so immeasurably inferior to them in every respect but bravery, that there appears but little prospect of their agreeing to anything like reasonable terms, unless a will still stronger than their own is opposed to them.

The Conference urged by Her Majesty's Government furnished a valuable mode of bringing about a pacification – Hence the numerous Engines which were put in motion in Germany in order to obstruct and delay its meeting, and the Protests which are pouring in from all parts against the validity of any decisions it may take which shall not satisfy in full the demands of the German People.[106]

A suspension of hostilities is the first and beneficial result of the meeting of the Conference – Pretty general dissatisfaction is expressed in Germany with its terms which are represented as being too favorable to Denmark and which are taken as the grounds of fresh abuse of England.

In this state of things, my humble and conscientious opinion is that the assumption of a determined attitude by Great Britain is indispensable in order to prevent the renewal of the War and to bring about an Equitable Peace.

The adoption of such a decided attitude by Great Britain would I consider be in her own interest, as she would thereby recover, with but little risk, an influence which could not but be eminently useful towards the preservation of the general Peace of the World, so essential to her own prosperity. It would likewise be in the interest of Germany, because it would check that Spirit of aggression which is gaining ground with Her, and which will no doubt ultimately bring down

[105]The decisive victory of German troops in the Second Schleswig-Holstein War, which began with the Austro-Prussian invasion of Schleswig on 1 February 1864, was secured at the Battle of Dybbøl on 18 April 1864. By the end of April, Austrian troops had occupied the Jutland peninsula as far as the Limfjord.

[106]The London Conference sat from 25 April to 25 June 1864, and was attended by the representatives of Austria, Denmark, France, the German Confederation, Great Britain, Prussia, Sweden, and Russia. On 9 May 1864, a suspension of hostilities with effect from 12 May was agreed. The question of the division of Schleswig between Denmark and the German states was left unresolved.

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upon Her the interference of a less disinterested Foreign Power than Great Britain.

FO 34/144: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 186, Hanover, 28 May 1864

Renewal of the Zollverein*; Hanoverian attempts to retain privileges; possibility of Austrian-centred customs union*

Your Lordship will be aware that an arrangement has been concluded by the Saxon Government with the Prussian Government, in the form I understand of a Protocol, for the continuance of Saxony with Prussia in the Zollverein on the basis of the Treaty of Commerce with France, for a term of twelve years from the date of the expiration of the present Zollverein Treaties on the 1st of January 1866, and that similar arrangements have been either entered into, with Prussia, or are about to be so by the Governments of the Thurinigian States, of Baden, of Brunswick and of Oldenburg, with a reserve by the last named Government in respect to the Præcipium,[107] a part of which is likely to be conceded to them by Prussia. The accession of Hesse Cassel to the newly to be constituted Zollverein appears to be only a question of time, as the whole of the Electoral Government are favourable to it, and it will be difficult for the Elector long to resist it.[108]

Thus Hanover is being hemmed in on all sides, but from the language which Count Platen has held to some of my Colleagues, it would appear that the Hanoverian Government are unwilling to abandon their expectant attitude. The chief objects which they have in view are to procure the continuance of the "Præcipium" or "bonus" to Hanover, and to avoid being drawn into a North German Zollverein.

They believe that they can best promote the maintenance of the whole Zollverein and secure the Præcipium to themselves, by waiting until advances shall be made to them.

My own opinion and that of most of the well informed Persons with whom I have conversed on the subject, is that by following this course of policy the Hanoverian Government are defeating their own

[107]Oldenburg joined the commercial treaty between Hanover and Prussia of 7 September 1851 on 1 March 1852, and was thus entitled to the same favourable share of tariff revenue of the *Zollverein* as Hanover (see n. 14 in this section).

[108]The treaty between Saxony and Prussia was concluded on 11 May 1864. Baden, Brunswick, Hesse-Cassel, and the Thuringian states renewed the *Zollverein* treaty on 28 June 1864; Oldenburg and Hanover followed on 11 July. For the Franco-Prussian Commercial Treaty of 2 August 1862 see n. 88 in Frankfurt section.

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aims, in as much as if they were now to declare their accession to the arrangement concluded between Saxony and Prussia, they would in all probability obtain a great part of their Præcipium, whilst if they delay it, they will be no doubt ultimately obliged to accept much more unfavourable terms. It may also be assumed that the accession of Hanover to the new Zollverein would accelerate that of Hesse Cassell [*sic*], and would probably have an influence on the conduct of the Governments of Hesse Darmstadt and Nassau who lean to the Commercial Policy of Bavaria and Wurtemberg, but who are in this respect at variance with the general feeling existing in their respective Countries. It is evident that the more Countries that join the new Zollverein with Prussia, the less fear there is of the latter Power exercising an influence dangerous to the political independence of the smaller States commercially associated with it.

The Hanoverian Government have I understand received a preliminary invitation to take part in the Commercial Conference which the Bavarian Government propose convoking as soon as the negotiations which they have set on foot with Austria shall have terminated and which is to be composed of the States that generally act more or less in concert with them.[109]

The ultimate object of this Conference, which is to be held at Munich, can hardly be any other than the formation of a Separate Zollverein in close connection with Austria.

The Hanoverian Government have not it appears yet taken a decision as to accepting the Bavarian invitation. Formerly their principle was not to exclude themselves altogether from any Conference but at the same time not to take any binding engagements. Latterly however, although they sent back their Commissioner to Berlin, they did not permit him to take part in the Proceedings of the Conference.[110] His position, however, became so untenable on account of its anomaly, that he has now returned to Hanover.

It remains to be seen whether they will renew this experiment, or whether they will take a more decided course, by either participating in the Munich Conference or holding aloof from it altogether. Their decision will probably be much influenced by the Programme for the Meeting which has not, I am informed been yet communicated to them by the Bavarian Government, and by the direction which public feeling in Hanover may take in the meantime.

[109]For the Munich *Zoll-Sonderbundskonferenz* see n. 75 in Bavaria section.

[110]The Hanoverian commissioner Carl Ludwig von Bar declared at the opening session of the Berlin *Zollkonferenz* on 2 May 1864 that Hanover would only join the negotiations for the renewal of the *Zollverein* treaty if all member states were present.

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FO 34/149: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, Secret and Confidential, No 8, Hanover, 14 January 1865

Denial of rumours of Hanoverian government colluding with France; Platen's desire for understanding between Austria and Prussia; French policy of causing dissensions in Germany

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Lordships Despatch No 3 "Confidential" of the 11th Instant, inclosing a Copy of Earl Cowley's very interesting Confidential Despatch No 32 of the 6th Instant on the subject of the Relation between the French Government and the smaller German Courts.

I am happy to be able to make the positive assertion that the Hanoverian Government are not of the number of those German Governments who have addressed reproaches to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs for abandoning them to the tender mercies of Austria and Prussia.[111]

The King of Hanover and His Ministers, with Count Platen at their head, are far too patriotic and German in their feelings ever to apply for French assistance or intervention, to whatever straits they might be driven by the conduct of their powerful Prussian Neighbour. The same feelings are entertained by all Parties and Classes of Persons in this Country, and Count Borries, the former Minister of the Interior, owes a great part of the unpopularity, from which he still suffers, to an inference which was drawn by the Public, (without I think sufficient grounds) from some remarks of his four years ago when speaking of the Relation between Hanover and Prussia, that he admitted the possibility of circumstances arising under which Hanover might be obliged to seek a French Alliance, an inference, however, which he publicly repudiated.[112]

But, as it happens, since the satisfactory settlement of the Rendsburg Conflict,[113] there has been no cause of disagreement between Hanover and Prussia, His Hanoverian Majesty and Count Platen quite concurring with the view taken by the Prussian Government in respect

[111]Cowley reported in his dispatch to Russell from Paris that he had inferred from his conversation with the French foreign minister that Bavaria and Saxony were among the states that had addressed themselves to France. However, no official communications had been made by either of these states.

[112]See n. 58 in this section.

[113]On 21 July 1864, Prussian troops occupied the Holstein town of Rendsburg and forced the federal army to withdraw. The Hanoverian and Saxon troops returned on 27 November and were received by the Prussians with military honours.

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to the question of the withdrawal of the Federal Troops from Holstein and Lauenburg.[114]

Moreover, as I have already had the honour of reporting, Count Platen, differing from the views attributed to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Bavaria and Saxony, Messrs von der Pfordten and de Beust, holds the opinion that the best guarantee for the safety of the Secondary German States is to be found in the maintenance of the good understanding between Austria and Prussia, because, under it, Austria who has no ambitious designs in Germany, is enabled to exercise a controlling influence over Prussia, who is notoriously less disinterested.

It is not long ago that Count Platen, in a casual conversation which I had with him, expressed his strong condemnation of the agitation which Messrs von der Pfordten and de Beust were endeavouring to get up against the Austro-Prussian Alliance, and said that if the Report, which had been spread in the Newspapers, were correct, that they had brought their complaints against the two Great German Powers before the French Government, words could not be found strong enough to stigmatize so unpatriotic a course. His Excellency did not appear to disbelieve the Report having some foundation, but had no information of his own on the subject.

I have no doubt that matters have come to pass in the manner supposed by Earl Cowley, without probably going further; viz. that the observations reported to M. Drouyn de Lhuys have been the result of Remarks made in the first place by French Agents, for I have observed that my French Colleague here Count Reiset, was inclined to make the most of the Rendsburg dispute, and I know from his own statements to me that he has more than once brought up, in conversation with Count Platen, the question of the encroachments of Austria and Prussia upon the smaller German Powers, but that he has not met with an assenting response from His Excellency. It was only a few days ago that Count Reiset told me that, in a conversation on this subject, Count Platen had defended himself from being Prussian in his Policy, but had at the same time stated that the Geographical position of Hanover required the exercise of great prudence in the conduct of Her Relations with Prussia, had explained the coincidence of his views with those of the Prussian Government on the cessation of the Federal Execution in the Duchies, and had disclaimed any jealousy on his part of the Alliance between Austria and Prussia.

[114]On 5 December 1864, Hanover supported Prussia's policy when she voted with the majority of the Federal Diet for the termination of the federal execution against Holstein and Lauenburg (see n. 99 in Frankfurt and n. 87 in Hamburg section) and to call back the federal troops from the duchies.

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The impression which Count Reisets statement made upon me at the time was that he would have been very glad could he have drawn from Count Platen any expressions of dissatisfaction with the two Great German Powers, which could have been construed into an indirect appeal to France, but that he had signally failed.

The Policy of the French Government has always been to foment dissentions amongst the German Powers, with a view to profit by these dissentions, and to set themselves up as the Protectors of the smaller States, but there is no German State in which such a dangerous Protectorship would be more energetically repudiated or where a greater distrust is felt of France than in this Country. At the same time the Hanoverian Government, whilst sharing this distrust, are wisely desirous of placing their Relations with France upon the most courteous footing so as to deprive Her of any cause of complaint, or excuse for mixing up in their affairs.

FO 34/149: Henry Francis Howard to Earl Russell, No 51, Hanover, 6 May 1865

Increased strength and assertiveness of liberal party in the chamber of deputies; debates over the press law; reflections on development of Hanoverian constitution

The Majority of the present Chamber of Deputies, composed chiefly of Persons holding advanced liberal opinions, seem no longer disposed to maintain the passive attitude which they observed during the last Session on questions of high internal policy. Feeling confidence in the liberal views and good intentions of most of the Members of the Cabinet, the Leaders of the Majority had hitherto abstained from bringing forward questions likely to embarrass the Ministry, but, whilst recognizing the improved system and conciliatory spirit introduced into the administration of the Country by the present Government, they now assert that the Ministers have deceived the expectations that had been entertained of them, and find fault with them for having done nothing to reform what they term the reactionary Legislation of the year 1855.[115] They also complain of the Law containing alterations in the Electoral Law[116] proposed by the Government and adopted with

[115]Apart from the changes to the Hanoverian constitution and organic laws (see n. 123 in this section), the measures of 1855 included the laws (*Notgesetze*) of 7 October that abolished the right of ordinary courts to review the constitutionality of legislation and ordinances, and the law of 22 December 1855 that restricted the jurisdiction of judicial courts.

[116]The law for the alteration of the electoral law of 6 November 1840 was passed by the first chamber on 5 June and by the second chamber on 13 June 1864. It changed electoral procedures and provided for a slight extension of the electorate.

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trifling modifications by both Chambers during the last Session not having yet received the Royal assent and been promulgated, a fact however which is well known to be independent of the will of the Ministers, the King, who is unfortunately to [*sic*] much disposed to look upon any change as a danger to the State, not having refused, and probably not intending ultimately to withhold His sanction to the Law, but having declared that He has not yet had sufficient time to examine it.

The Leaders of the Opposition, seeing that the Ministers are not in a position to propose a Reform of the Constitution and wishing to exercise a pressure upon the Crown, have now taken the initiative into their own hands. At the same time fearing no doubt to see the liberal Members of the Cabinet dismissed and the former reactionary Ministers brought back to power, were they to push matters to extremities, they observe a certain degree of moderation in the manner in which they make their attacks.

The first more important onslaught was made in the Sitting of the Second Chamber on the 29th Ultimo when, notwithstanding the opposition of the Government, a Resolution calling upon the Government to repeal the Ordinance of the 15th of June 1855 concerning the Press, founded upon the Decree of the German Diet of the 6th of July 1854,[117] was adopted by an overwhelming Majority; after a proposal of a more moderate character requesting the Government to submit to the States, in their next Session, a Project of Law regulating the condition of the Press, had been previously rejected.

Several of the orators denied the validity of the Resolution of the Diet of 1854, contending that that Assembly had no right to interfere with the internal Legislation of the individual States, whilst almost all blamed the Hanoverian Government of that period for having given so stringent an application to that Resolution and more particularly for having availed themselves of the optional authority contained in it to place the power of withdrawing a Newspaper License in the hands of the Administrative instead of the Judicial Authorities.

During the course of the Debate, condemnatory allusion was made to the measures lately taken by the Authorities to prevent the sale of the satirical work upon the Emperor of the French entitled "Les propos de Labienus",[118] and some very offensive expressions were employed by one of the speakers[119] in respect to His Imperial Majesty personally.

[117]See n. 29 in this section.

[118]Auguste Rogeard, *Les propos de Labienus: la critique historique sous Auguste* (New York, 1865). The book was not explicitly forbidden in Hanover, although the police authorities advised booksellers to observe the existing laws.

[119]Adolf Ellissen.

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They were, however, repelled by the Ministerial Leader in the House, M. Windthorst.

M. Windthorst, in opposing the motion contended that a return to the Legislation on the Press of 1848[120] was most unadvisable, but the Arguments which he brought forward against the motion did not prevent its adoption. The case would probably have been different had he been authorized to declare that the Government would hereafter propose a new Law for the Press. Personally, I believe, the Ministers are persuaded of the difficulty of maintaining the present Law, founded upon the Federal Legislation and going even, as it is contended, beyond its strict requirements, after the latter has been repealed by several of the German States which had in the first instance adopted it, and would wish to see the Press withdrawn from the control of the Administrative Authorities and rendered amenable to the Tribunals alone, but they doubt being able to overcome His Majesty's feelings against such a change. I should, however, observe that the Press practically enjoys great liberty in this Country, of which the fullest use is made, the Administration seldom using their powers, or doing so with great moderation, and no withdrawal of a License having taken place for many years.

The motion came under discussion in the first Chamber on the 4th Instant and was unanimously rejected, on the grounds of the validity of the Federal Legislation and of the inadequacy of the Law of 1848 to replace the existing Enactments.

The next move by the opposition was made in the Second Chamber in the Sitting of the 2nd Instant when, on the occasion of the discussion of a motion for an interpretation of the existing Law[121] concerning the conflicts between the Judicial and Administrative Authorities, M. de Benningsen [*sic*] (the President of the National Verein)[122] moved that the States should convey the earnest wish that the Government should not only take this question into consideration, but should, at least in the next ordinary Session, present detailed proposals for the restoration in their essential points of the Provisions of the Constitution of the 5th of September 1848, which were altered without the cooperation of the States, and of the organic Laws[123] founded upon them in order that not only should the Rights and interests of the Country be secured as

[120]Press law of 27 April 1848, which put the press under general jurisdiction and did not provide for censorship.

[121]§ 170 of the constitutional law of 6 August 1840.

[122]For the *Nationalverein* see n. 71 in Frankfurt section.

[123]The standing orders of the Hanoverian *Landtag* of 7 February 1850, the law on municipal administration (*Städteordnung*) of 1 May 1851, the law on public servants (*Staatsdienergesetz*) of 8 May 1852, and the electoral laws of 26 October 1848 and 9 May 1853. For the ordinance of 1 August 1855 see n. 75 in this section.

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formerly, but that the political disputes produced by the Proceedings of the Government in 1855 and injurious to the Peace and development of the Country should be completely removed.

The motion was opposed on the part of the Government by M. Windthorst who dwelt more particularly upon the validity of the present Constitution, regarding which M. de Benningsen [*sic*] stated that doubts were entertained in the Country, and upon the impracticability of that of 1848. It was nevertheless adopted by a Majority of 44 to 36 votes. Its rejection, however, by the first Chamber appears certain.

I should observe that the Constitution of this Country has undergone various changes. The Constitution of 1833, the validity of which the late King Ernest Augustus refused to recognize on His accession to the Throne, was modified in a restrictive sense by that of 1840.[124] The latter again was remodelled in a Democratic sense in the Year 1848. Various attempts were subsequently made by successive liberal Administrations, of one of which M. Windthorst the present Minister of Justice was a Member, to come to an understanding with the Legislature on the subject of a modification of the enactments of 1848, but they failed and a change of Government took place.[125] The question of their legality having been finally brought before the German Diet by certain Corporations who considered their Rights to be infringed by them, the Diet pronounced several of their stipulations to be incompatible with the Federal Legislation and the Monarchical Principle, and called upon the Hanoverian Government to alter them. The Government accordingly, in promulgating in 1855 the Resolution of the Diet, proceeded by way of Royal Ordinance to reform the Constitution in the sense indicated by it.[126] Hence arose the Constitution of 1855, which is a composite of those of 1840 and 1848. Whatever may have been the legality of its origin, and whatever may be its defects, it was accepted by the Legislature and the Country, and has now been in operation for the last ten years.

The more general impression appears to be that it would be better to remedy these defects by special Laws than to throw the Country into a new Constitutional Crisis and to proceed by way of wholesale Legislation.

[124]See n. 7 in this section.

[125]The ultra-conservative ministry to which Howard alludes took office on 29 July 1855. The cabinet of which Windhorst was a member resigned on 21 November 1853.

[126]The rights of the equestrian order, curtailed in 1848 and 1851 (see n. 11 in this section), were restored by the ordinance of 16 May 1855 on the basis of the federal resolution of 12 April 1855. For the constitutional changes of 1855 see n. 75 in this section.

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At all events, under the existing Constitution, the Chambers enjoy and exercise the most minute control over the Public Purse, and are invested with full Legislative Powers.

FO 34/155: Charles Lennox Wyke to Earl of Clarendon, No 41, Hanover, 5 May 1866

Reaction to Prussian proposals for a federal parliament; rise of republicanism in Germany; preparations for war

The refusal of the Prussian Government[127] to lay before the Diet the plan of Reform which they propose to submit to the German Parliament has naturally made the Minor States unwilling that such an assembly should be called together.

This in the opinion of many people was foreseen by Mr de Bismark, who it is supposed never really intended that such a Parliament should be called into existence, but merely made use of the project to embarrass Austria and at the same time gain over the Liberal Party.

Whether he actually was so reckless as to play such a game nobody can of course tell, but in the mean time he has raised hopes and expectations which will not be so easily set aside, when they have merely served the purpose of the hour.

The same causes which have produced Feneiansm [*sic*] in Ireland[128] are at work here, from a number of Germans annually returning home, imbued with the Republicanism of the New World, where they have made their fortunes and acquired ideas which they wish to carry out in their own country.

This fact appears to be lost sight of or ignored by the Governing Classes in Germany, who are solely Engrossed by the comparatively unimportant question of whether the Duchies are to be annexed to Prussia or given to the Duke of Augustenburg.[129] This dispute has however at length carried them one step further in looking at things as they really are, and it is now seen that Prussian Supremacy in the North of Germany, and not surely the possession of the Duchies is the real object of Mr. de Bismark's policy.

[127]Circular note of 27 April 1866 to the Prussian representatives at the German courts. For the Prussian proposal for a national parliament see n. 114 in Frankfurt section.

[128]The Fenians, who aimed to establish an independent Irish Republic, committed a number of 'outrages' in Britain, Ireland, Canada, and the USA in the 1860s. In Britain they were frequently presented as an imported American phenomenon, stirred by Irish migrants returning from the United States with new political ideas and military experience.

[129]See nn. 97 and 119 in Frankfurt section.

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His plan of calling together a German Parliament was at first received with Derision by the Democracy of Germany as coming from him, but as he proceeded step by step, with apparently the object of realizing it, this feeling changed, and the Liberals are now willing to accept his service in their cause, provided he gives them practical proof of his Willingness to perform it.

If War actually breaks out the future destiny of Hanover is said to depend in a great measure upon whether France will eventually espouse the cause of Prussia or of Austria. In the former case it is thought that the political existence of this country may be saved, in the latter however it is feared that its independance [*sic*] would be sacrificed to the ambition of Prussia for the sake of obtaining from that Power an amicable readjustment or rectification of its frontier with France.

In making these observations I have endeavoured to put Your Lordship in possession of the opinions of the best informed and most sensible men I have become acquainted with since I have been here, and in doing so, I may add that my opinion entirely coincides with them.

By a Telegram just arrived from Berlin we have learnt that the Prussian army has been placed on a War footing and is held ready to march at a moments notice.[130]

FO 34/155: Charles Lennox Wyke to Earl of Clarendon, No 78, Hanover, 15 June 1866

Pro-Austrian feeling in Hanover; Bismarck's lack of concessions to liberal party; low assessment of Prussian prospects in war against Austria

In the present critical state of affairs here public opinion is much divided on passing events.

As a general rule everybody is indignant at the proceedings of the Prussian Government, and great sympathy is felt for the Austrians.

This has been proved by the reception of General Gablentz on his passage through this town the other night,[131] when hundreds of the most respectable citizens assembled at the Railway Station to cheer and do him honour.

The same thing occurs I hear wherever the Austrian Brigade, now on its way through Hanoverian territory from Holstein, stops at any

[130] Royal order of 4 May 1866.
[131] 12 June 1866.

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of the stations; the soldiers are cheered, and People crowd round to give them Beer and cigars.

This may be described as the National feeling, but on the other hand, large bodies of the lower orders and smaller tradesmen here consider that the triumph of the Austrian cause would bring about a reaction and prevent that political progress and Reform which they hope to obtain by the victory of the Prussians, and the assembly of a German Parliament.

If Count Bismarck had played his cards better in gaining the undivided support of the Liberal Party by timely concessions at home, there is no doubt that his plan of a German Parliament[132] would have been received with enthusiasm; he would then have carried the vast majority of the German People with him, and he might have realized his day-dream of making Prussia the great and leading Power in Germany, which the education and intelligence of its population entitle it to be.

Without the foundation of Liberty and sound Constitutional Government in that Country however this is impossible, for with his antecedents he cannot gain the confidence of the Liberal Party in Prussia and without it he is playing a game in which the chances are all against him as at home he has a House divided against itself and abroad an enemy vastly superior in military strength and resources to any that Prussia can command.

The late decision of the Diet at Frankfort[133] has brought things to a crisis, for war is now considered to be inevitable and the probable occupation of this Country by Prussian troops will most likely be the ground on which it will be declared by Austria.

FO 34/157: Charles Lennox Wyke to Lord Stanley, No 58, Hanover, 12 October 1866

Effects of Prussian annexation of Hanover; obstacles to German unity; predictions of Bismarck's future difficulties

The Manifesto recently issued by thirty eight Members of the late Hanoverian Second Chamber, a translation of which appeared in the Times of the 9th Instant which I inclose, represents the opinions of a very small Party in the Country, for the great body of People look

[132] See n. 114 in Frankfurt section.

[133] Wyke most probably refers to the federal resolution of 14 June 1866 for the mobilization of the seven non-Prussian contingents of the federal army.

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upon annexation to Prussia as the greatest misfortune that could have befallen them.[134]

Their taxes will thereby be nearly doubled, and the whole male Population up to the age of forty subjected to a Military Conscription from which there is no escape.

A strong national feeling exists here, and they look upon the loss of their independence as both cruel and unjust, for it has been brought about by no fault of their own and by force alone.

This is felt more strongly in the Capital of course than anywhere else, as the absence of the Court, and all those it attracted here, will be severely felt by the trading community which takes every opportunity of expressing their loyalty and devotion to the poor Queen[135] who lingers on in the Country loath to tear Herself away from the scene of many happy recollections.

The Manifesto throws the whole blame for what has occurred on The King of Hanover, which is unjust, as the question of internal reforms had nothing to do with the policy His Majesty pursued on this occasion. In going with Austria and the other States belonging to the German Bund at the beginning of the War, He and They were only doing their duty in obeying the Laws that governed that Body, and the fact of Prussia's having been successful in her rebellion against the Central Authority can in no way alter the real merits of the case.

Although Prussia has crushed Austria and the Diet, yet United Germany is nearly as far off as ever, for menacing dangers await any attempt to attract the Southern States to the Northern Confederacy[136] as it is hardly probable that the Emperor of the French would carry his forbearance so far as to allow such a gigantic Military Power to consolidate itself without making an effort to retain that armed preponderance which He has hitherto exercised on the Continent of Europe.

Far seeing German Politicians are also aware of a still more menacing danger which must arise sooner or later, when after the intoxication of military glory shall have subsided M. de Bismarck finds himself face to face with the great Liberal and Democratic Party in Germany, who will claim from Him much more than he is ever likely to grant. Then will ensue the struggle which may end in his

[134]Hanover was formally annexed by Prussia on 3 October 1866. The public declaration of the former deputies was passed on 30 September and first published in Hanoverian newspapers on 3 October 1866. Enclosure: manifesto of thirty-eight members of the late Hanoverian second chamber, dated Hanover, 1 October 1866 (cutting from *The Times*, 9 October 1866).

[135]Marie.

[136]The North German Confederation of twenty-two German states was initially founded as a military alliance on 18 August 1866.

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defeat, and lead to such a United Germany as the Democrats declare to be the only one feasible, where each Country shall retain its distinct Nationality and separate Rights, but as part of and subservient to that great Confederation which they have so long hoped for as the German Republic, formed on the model of the United States of America.

Whether this day dream will be realized remains to be seen, but one thing is certain, that when the struggle for power does take place, then that which in the late war was M. de Bismarck's strength, viz: the "Landwehr"[137] will become his weakness, as embodying the energy and intellect of the great body of the People, whose instincts and aspirations all tend towards obtaining such an amount of political liberty as an educated and thinking People like the Germans are fit for, and would know to respect and uphold.

[137] 'Militia'.

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