BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION
AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN WAR

ABSTRACT

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BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN WAR: THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN POLICY, 1830-1854.

This thesis examines the reasons why public opinion in Britain was able to force the unwilling Aberdeen Government into war with Russia in 1854. It presents the origins of the War as an outgrowth of internal conditions and not as the result of a failure in diplomacy in 1854. The period between 1830 and 1854 is examined in order to answer the questions of who the public was, why it developed a strong anti-Russian bias and why it was able to make the Government bow to its demands for war in 1854.

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The roots of the Crimean War are to be found in the twenty five year period of British history which preceded it. But, a student who approaches this period soon finds that no studies exist which have examined the origins of the War in the light of Britain's internal development. While J. B. Connacher's The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855, places the Crimean War in the context of domestic conditions existing at that time, his study does not examine those factors and influences which explain the temperament of the nation in 1853-54. Consequently, a student must construct his own bibliography of primary and secondary sources dealing with the various aspects of national life in the pre-War period. Struggling through a morass of papers, correspondence, memoirs, periodical literature, newspapers, biographies and political and social histories of Britain after 1830 creates confusion in the short run but, once the variety of materials have been analyzed, a picture emerges of what questions should be asked about the causes of the War.

It is my contention that the Crimean War was an outgrowth of internal conditions and not the result of the failure of diplomacy in 1854. The crucial factor which determined the Crimean War was public opinion. A mass public opinion, comprising the industrial middle and lower classes, emerged during the thirty years which preceded the war. The development of this public opinion created a situation by 1853 where the public had

the potential to be a more powerful political force than the Government itself. Who this public was, why it developed an anti-Russian bias and why it could force the Government to acquiesce to its wishes are the crucial questions which must be answered if an understanding of the causes of the Crimean War is to be achieved.

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest answers to these questions by offering an interpretation which has not been proposed before.

Public opinion identified Russia as its major enemy for three reasons. The first was the public's belief that the Tsar was the arch-enemy of liberalism and therefore a threat to the personal liberties of every Englishman. Secondly, the public suspected that their own leaders were in collusion with Russia in order to preserve the aristocratic domination of the Government. Finally, the public's hostility towards Russia was further exacerbated by its fear that the Tsar had a "mission" to invade and seize control of India.

English radicals and liberals within and outside the Government were largely responsible for creating and maintaining these attitudes on the part of the public. Consequently, the British public was conditioned to believe by 1853 that war with Russia was inevitable if liberalism and vital national interests were to be preserved.

The Eastern Crisis of 1853 possessed the ingredients which made the public's suspicions of Russia and of their own

Government credible. As the Crisis escalated into a war between Russia and Turkey, the public's belief that the time had come to make a final settlement with Russia increased accordingly. Russia's destruction of the Turkish navy at Sinope convinced public opinion that its worst fears of Russia and the Government were justified, and forced the Aberdeen Government into a position where its survival was contingent upon a declaration of war against Russia. In the final analysis, then, the Crimean War was the result of domestic conditions which allowed the public to determine foreign policy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE TROUBLED STATE OF BRITISH POLITICS, 1832-1852

The formation of the Aberdeen Coalition in 1852 reflected in a microcosm all of the problems which had been plaguing British politics since the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832.

By March 1852, it was evident that neither Derby, leader of the Conservatives, nor Russell, leader of the liberal-Whigs, could form a government. Both men had seen their governments go down to defeat at the hands of independent liberals and radicals, Russell in 1851 and Derby a year later. The task of forming a government fell upon the shoulders of Lord Aberdeen, leader of the Peelites and one of the few individuals in Parliament whose government would be acceptable to the Independents who held the balance of power in the House.

The Peelites considered themselves to be liberal-Conservatives and Aberdeen believed that the time had come to form a new party which would be liberal or reformist on domestic policy and conservative or status quo on foreign policy. He recognized the necessity of forming a coalition government which would include liberal-Whigs, but refused to allow it to become a "revival of the old Whig Cabinet with the addition of some Peelites."[1] Rather, he envisaged the establishment of a liberal-

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1. J. B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855, London, 1968, p. 14.

Conservative Government "in the sense of that of Sir Robert Peel."[2] In an address delivered to the House of Lords in 1852, Aberdeen expressed the opinion that the factionalization of the Tory and Whig parties had progressed to such a point that the terms conservative and liberal were no longer a meaningful description of the philosophy of either party:

> My Lords, I declare that...no Government in this country is now possible except a Conservative Government, and...that...no Government is possible except a Liberal Government. The truth is that these terms have no definite meaning...these names...may be convenient to keep up for the sake of party elections, but the country is sick of these definitions, which have no real meaning, and which prevent men from acting together who are able to perform good service to the Crown and to the country. I trust, therefore,...that whatever the measures proposed by the present Government may be, they will be Conservative measures as well as Liberal, for I consider both qualities to be essentially necessary.[3]

Aberdeen's belief that the terms liberal and conservative were no longer valid as party labels was shared by other important politicians. Whigs like Lord Clarendon and Sir Charles Wood recognized that the identification of their party exclusively with aristocratic interests was no longer valid. For his part, Clarendon hoped that there would be "no Whigs or Peelites in the future" and that the Aberdeen Government, in which he was Foreign Secretary, would be a "real fusion of principles."[4]

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2. Ibid.

3. Quoted in Ibid., p. 34.

4. Donald Southgate, The Passing of the Whigs, 1832-1886, London, 1962, p. 262.

Wood criticized the "old Whigs" for continuing to define their party as aristocratic when, in his estimation, all they had to do was to look at party membership to discover that the middle classes had become the predominant group:

> Party in the old sense of Pitt and Fox, of Whig and Tory, does not exist and never will again... What does such a man as my colleague, a new manufacturer, care for such matters? What do half of the new members care for the old Whig Party?[5]

The true Whig was, at heart, an aristocrat who still lived in the eighteenth century. Like the "old Tories" who faced him from the other side of the House, the "old Whigs" could never accept the fact that the party had to change with the times if it was to survive. They never accepted the liberals' belief that reform was a national necessity and had to be forced into submission in 1832 by their party's liberal leader, Lord Grey. Even after 1832 they continued to cling to the Tory concept that it was the landed aristocracy who had "made England what she has been and is; without which no representative government can last;".[6] The split between liberals and reactionaries which began with the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, widened with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and could no longer be bridged once the Aberdeen Government had been formed in 1852.

Beginning in the 1830's, the impetus for all reform was the fear that Britain was on the verge of a revolution similar

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5. Quoted in Conacher, p. 499.

6. Bernard Pool (ed.), The Croker Papers, 1808-1857, New York, 1967, p. 188.

to the one which had occurred in France in 1789. Riots, such as those at Bristol in 1819, combined with the popularity of the radical press to convince aristocrats that Jacobin sentiments had taken firm hold of the lower classes. Newspapers like The Poor Man's Guardian and The Morning Advertiser were standard reading in public houses where working men gathered. Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary and radical journalist, described The Advertiser as the "journal par excellence of the public-house" and insisted that "there was not a public-house where copies of this paper could not be found."[7] The writer, Charles Kingsley, who lived through the turbulence of the 1830's and the "hungry forties," described the period as a time when the wealthy classes feared for their lives:

> Young lads believed that the masses were their natural enemies, and that they might have to fight, any year or any day, for the safety of their property and the honour of their sisters.[8]

Much of the ferment which characterized British society during the early Victorian period arose from the problems created by the need for electoral reform and the high price of bread. Both issues lent themselves to an indictment of the landed aristocracy who were considered corrupt and interested only in preserving their power at the expense of the welfare of all others. Because this attack was levelled by members of the middle classes, it frightened the government into initiating a process of reform to

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7. E. E. Kellett, "The Press", in G. M. Young (ed.), Early Victorian England, London, 1963, Vol. 2, p. 33.

8. Quoted in G. M. Young, "Portrait of an Age", in Young, Vol. 2, p. 436.

correct the outstanding abuses.

The electoral system of pre-reform Britain was both obsolete and corrupt. Many boroughs had lost a sizeable part of their population to the cities but continued to send the same number of representatives to Parliament, while the growing urban areas were under-represented. The landed aristocracy controlled elections and often spent large sums of money bribing electors to vote for a particular candidate.

The obsolescence of Britain's electoral system was attacked by Hume, Cobden, Bright and other radical reformers who maintained that the Industrial Revolution had destroyed the right of the landed aristocracy to control the government. In their estimation the middle classes had become the new aristocracy because they were far wealthier than the lords and proprietors of the soil.[9] To organize the middle classes to demand their fair share in the government, the radicals formed associations of businessmen and artisans in all the large cities and kept up a steady barrage of criticism against the government.

Progressive aristocrats within the Whig party acquiesced to the demands of the middle classes for the right to vote because they believed that enfranchisement would reduce the danger of revolution and allow the influence of the aristocracy in government to continue.[10] In their eyes, the middle classes

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9. Donald Read, Cobden and Bright: A Victorian Political Partnership, London, 1967, pp. 1-69.

10. O. F. Christie, The Transition from Aristocracy, 1832-1867, London, 1927, p. 144.

possessed the qualities which would make them either a firm bulwark against revolution from below or the ideal leaders of the mob. Lord Brougham attested to the popularity of this belief among some members of the aristocracy when he spoke of the virtues of the middle classes to the House of Lords on the eve of reform:

> If there is the mob, there is the people also. I speak now of the middle classes...the most numerous and by far the most wealthy order in the community,...these middle classes...are also the genuine depositors of sober, rational, intelligent, and honest English feeling...they are solid, right judgeing men, and above all, not given to change... Their support must be sought if Government would endure - the support of the people as distinguished from the populace who look up to them as their kind and natural protectors. The middle class, indeed, forms the link which connects the upper and lower orders, and links even Your Lordships with the populace, whom some of you are wont to despise...[11]

The progressives within the Whig Party won the day and the Reform Bill was passed. It revolutionized the nature of politics by destroying the cohesiveness of the Whig Party. The Party was split into Whig and liberal factions with the former clinging to their outmoded concept of what the Party should be, while the latter attempted to coalesce with liberal and radical factions in Parliament in order to win support from the middle classes.[12] In effect, the Party had become an uneasy coalition of Whigs, liberals and whatever support could be mustered at any given moment from the Independents within Parliament.

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11. Quoted in Southgate, p. 22.

12. Ibid., pp. 193-94.

The immediate effects of the Reform Bill on the Conservative Party were beneficial because they strengthened the unity of the Party. As a whole, the Tories had opposed the extension of the franchise because they feared that once reform on a substantive basis had begun it would be impossible to control. The basic position of the Party had been expressed by the Tory, Croker, in 1831 when he categorically stated:

> against a system of reform we are pledged and fixed; that any step, however innocuous or even beneficial, which is part of a system must be opposed as such - ...and finally that the question is not reform, but in fact revolution...[13]

Party unity, however, was shattered in 1846 when Sir Robert Peel, Conservative Prime Minister, found it necessary to continue reform in order to blunt the threat of revolution which had continued to escalate despite the enfranchisement of the middle classes. In fact, the possibility of a national upheaval was far greater in the 1840's than in the preceding decade because of a severe and prolonged economic depression.

A series of crop failures in Britain, Ireland and Europe drove the price of bread up to prohibitive levels.[14] Organizations such as the Anti-Corn League and the Chartists arose out of the accumulated problems created by the depression. Once more it was the aristocracy which bore the brunt of criticism for what was wrong in Britain. On this occasion, they were attacked for their support of protectionism even as thousands of

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13. Quoted in Croker Papers, p. 136.

14. C. S. Peel, "Homes and Habits", in Young, Vol. 1, p. 134.

Britons went hungry. Chartist leaders called upon the working classes to arise and destroy those who had wealth.[15] Even men not given to preaching violence as a method of righting wrongs believed that the combination of high prices for basic necessities and low wages was creating a situation in which class warfare was likely. One such man was John Bright, who feared for the stability of Britain should the continuance of high prices on bread force businessmen and factory owners to raise wages:

> Notwithstanding the hope that...has been expressed, that it may not become a strife of classes, I am not sure that it has not already become such, and I doubt whether it can have any other character. I believe this to be a movement of the commercial and industrious classes against the lords and great proprietors of the soil.[16]

While Peel's action proved beneficial to the nation and dampened the revolutionary ardor of extreme radicals, it had a disastrous effect upon the Conservative Party. Peel and his supporters left the Party completely, while protectionism split the remnants of the Party into liberal and reactionary factions, the latter becoming the so-called Old Tories. All in all, the events of 1846 provided the final blow to the two party system which had been the stuff of British politics and created the permanent climate of hostility between many Conservatives and the Peelites which Aberdeen inherited in 1852.

The animosity of the Conservative opposition to Aberdeen

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15. Read, pp. 36-37.

16. Quoted in Ibid., p. 95.

limited the chances for his government's survival from its inception. In the heated atmosphere of early Victorian Parliaments, where the same members sat for years, the memory of past party strife was bound to affect attitudes towards policy. To Old Tories, Aberdeen and the Peelites were traitors and had to be destroyed in order to prevent them from making their defection a success. The resentment felt by other Conservatives towards the Peelites was all the more substantial because it centered on the threat which the creation of the Coalition seemed to pose to the existence of the Conservative Party.

Liberal Conservatives who had stayed within the Party after 1846 looked upon the formation of the Aberdeen Coalition as a valuable opportunity to make the Conservative Party viable once again by liberalizing its philosophy. Their hope in 1852 was that Aberdeen would make them the basis of support for his government.[17] Instead, Aberdeen reached out for liberal support on the other side of the House and, by doing so, seemed to indicate that he desired the destruction of his former party. The bitterness which liberal members of the Conservative Party felt at this turn of events was shared by Lord Hardwicke, who pessimistically charted the manner in which the Conservative Party would disintegrate:

> I think the game is up as regards the Conservative party. It is clear to me that the union of Whigs and Peelites, with the side-door open to the Radicals, leads to these

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17. Conacher, pp. 6-7.

> consequences - that our party will be thinned, so slow and moderate will be the democratic downward tendency, that as a party, we shall be deprived of a link strong enough to hold us together.[18]

The Aberdeen Government found itself in a political no-man's land in 1852 because hostility towards the Peelites on the part of many Whigs was every bit as intense as that which emanated from the Conservatives. Important Whigs like Brougham and Grey had been ignored by Aberdeen when it came to determining the composition of his Cabinet. This would have been a bitter pill for powerful men to swallow under normal political conditions, but because the Peelites, in comparison to the Whigs, were only a tiny minority in Parliament, the Whigs' resentment at being bypassed was that much greater. Lord Brougham expressed the bitterness he and his contemporaries felt towards the Peelites who, by ignoring the Whigs, seemed to be threatening their existence:

> As for the Whigs, a man must be very revengeful indeed, not to be satisfied with their present prostration...a very tiny party has entirely swallowed up the great Whig party.[19]

In effect, by trying to construct a new party on the ruins of the old ones, Aberdeen had created a situation where his Government had no assured basis of support within Parliament. One serious misstep on the part of the Government would unleash the latent hostility of the old Whigs and Tories who despised

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18. Quoted in Croker Papers, pp. 241-42.

19. Quoted in Southgate, p. 243.

Aberdeen for what he had done to their parties. The necessity of including in the Cabinet political rivals as well as men whose views on policy clashed was yet another factor which operated to the detriment of the Government. Liberals such as Russell who wished to assimilate all the Independents into a revitalized liberal-Whig Party under his leadership, could not be expected to give wholehearted support to a government headed by rivals, while Lord Palmerston and the Peelites were diametrically opposed on questions of foreign policy. Overall, there was the problem of trying to manage a Parliament which verged on anarchy. These two factors, the political diversity of the Cabinet and an unmanageability of Parliament, meant that the existence of the Coalition was ultimately dependent on public opinion.

Short of the Prime Minister himself, the two most powerful men in the Coalition were Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston. The Peelites mistrusted Russell for political reasons while Palmerston was feared and disliked for his ability to win the public's favor by adopting a belligerent foreign policy.

The problem which Aberdeen faced with Russell was what post to give him in the Cabinet. Since there was no post which the liberal leader was willing to accept in the Ministry other than the Premiership itself, Aberdeen created the position of Government Leader in the Lower House and offered it to Russell. Graham, a Peelite and First Lord of the Admiralty, questioned the wisdom of allowing an influential man like Russell to head the Commons where he could do serious mischief:

> In a word, he will soon become the House of Commons Master, to whom all other Ministers must bend; and the Prime Minister himself... will be less the servant of the Crown than of the Independent Leader of the Lower House.[20]

Lord Palmerston was an important political figure in his own right. He had been Foreign Secretary on numerous occasions in the 1830's and 1840's and maintained a lasting animosity towards Russell as a result of being dropped from Russell's Cabinet in 1851. The reason for his removal was the displeasure of the Crown and Government with his bellicose attitude towards the autocratic rulers of Europe.

The Peelites had supported Russell's decision to exclude Palmerston because they considered him a threat to the maintenance of peaceful relations between Britain and the major European powers. Despite their defection from the ranks of the Conservative Party, the Peelites retained a Tory approach to the conduct of foreign affairs. In their eyes, the preservation of order and stability on the Continent took precedence over all other considerations, including the question of whether or not divine right monarchy was a proper form of government.

In addition to their moral aversion to war and a belligerent foreign policy, the Peelites believed that continued peace in Europe was vital to the internal stability of Britain. The Aberdeen Coalition had been formed on the basis that domestic considerations took precedence over all others and the Prime Minister intended to continue the policy of "Peace, retrenchment

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20. Quoted in Conacher, p. 18.

and reform" which most Governments had followed since Lord Grey's Reform Cabinet in 1832. Consequently, they believed that a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries was vital to the welfare of Great Britain.[21]

Palmerston, on the other hand, was an avowed liberal in matters of foreign policy and let it be known, to the chagrin of the Crown and the anger of the rulers of Prussia, Austria and Russia, that all nations would be better off if they were constitutional monarchies.[22] While he incurred the wrath of government leaders for his outspoken views, he won the hearts of many of his countrymen, who believed that Englishmen were superior and had a duty to establish their institutions wherever there was an opportunity for doing so. As Southgate, in his The Passing of the Whigs, has so aptly said:

> Few men did more to translate into a nineteenth century idiom the already old conviction that British institutions were an example for the rest of the world to follow...and that,... an emergent and progressive society will naturally frame its political system in the British image.[23]

For this reason, in order to keep Palmerston away from the Foreign Office, Aberdeen made him Home Secretary. Fear remained, however, that in the event of a serious crisis in foreign affairs Aberdeen would not be able to control Palmerston

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21. Conacher, passim.

22. D. Southgate, 'The Most English Minister...,' New York, 1966, pp. 233-36.

23. Southgate, The Passing of the Whigs, p. 273.

without risking the destruction of his Government.[24]

Ironically enough, many of the factors which accounted for the weakness of the Government also gave it an appearance of great strength. Palmerston's broad national appeal was a great advantage for the Cabinet in times of international peace because it secured a popular basis of support. Russell's high reputation among many liberals within Parliament and his position as Government Leader in the Lower House proved valuable in securing the necessary majority for the domestic policies of the government. The key to making these men work to the benefit of the Coalition lay in Aberdeen's ability to maintain concord among them and to prevent any crisis from getting out of hand.[25]

Until the EasternCrisis of 1853, the Prime Minister was notably successful in reconciling opposing views and smoothing the ruffled feathers of political opponents and personal enemies. The success of the Government's legislative program in 1853 marked the high point of the Coalition's popularity and ability to manage Parliament. Indeed, as late as 1854, most cabinet members "could not see how any government could be formed as strong as the existing one, the maintenance of which became virtually their chief article of faith."[26]

But the strength of the Coalition was illusory, not only because it required a consensus which could not always be

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24. Ibid.

25. Conacher, p. 120.

26. Quoted in Southgate, The Passing of the Whigs, p. 260.

achieved, but also because no one could predict with any degree of accuracy how Parliament would react to a particular issue.

The destruction of the two party system reinforced the anarchical trends in Parliament. Parliamentary discipline had declined alarmingly by 1852 and the power of the individual Member had substantially increased. Greville noted in 1854 that Parliament, "was running riot with a waywardness and a caprice of which it would be impossible to find an example."[27] The early Victorian Period was the "Age of the Private Member"[28] and all governments were leery of arousing any Member's antipathy.

The individual MP had a freedom of action which no modern Parliament or Party would tolerate. He could question any action of the Government and demand special Parliamentary Commissions to enquire into those issues which public opinion felt strongly about. In a situation where the votes of individual MP's could be vital to the survival of the Government, the action of political leaders was subject to intense scrutiny on the part of Parliament. Furthermore, the Government had to endure the abuse of the lowliest back bencher who tended to exploit his power at times when Government policy was most open to public criticism.[29] Individual members of Parliament, however, did not criticize the Government only because they hoped to advance

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27. Henry Reeve (ed.), Greville's Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria, 1852-1860, New York, 1887, Vol. 3, p. 156.

28. Young in Young, p. 487.

29. John B. Mackintosh, The British Cabinet, London, 1968, pp. 75-99.

their careers at its expense. MP's operated at least as much on the basis of principle as they did on feelings of personal animosity, and genuine differences of opinion existed between them and the Government on matters of policy.

The decline of party discipline left the individual Member "paralysed, bewildered and disorganized."[30] He was often both liberal and conservative in his approach to issues. Palmerston, for example, was a liberal in matters of foreign policy but conservative when it came to the question of protecting landed interests.[31] The Peelites, on the other hand, were liberal in their approach to outstanding domestic problems while remaining conservative in their approach to foreign policy.[32] The resulting confusion not only made it impossible to predict with accuracy how the House would vote on a particular issue, but it also prevented the leaders of parties and factions from organizing effective support for or opposition to Government policy. Lord Derby, Conservative leader in the House of Lords in 1847, elaborated on the serious effects which the breakdown of the parties had had on the constitution of Parliament and the process of governing:

> Not only is there no subject at this moment prominently occupying the public mind, but there seems to be a general confusion of

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30. "The Declining Efficiency of Parliament", Quarterly Review, Vol. 99, 1856, p. 555.

31. J. Ridley, Lord Palmerston, London, 1970, p. 419.

32. C. S. Parker (ed.), Sir Robert Peel, London, 1970, Vol. 3, pp. 535-44.

> persons, parties and principles. Thus we find Russell at the head of a Whig Government, and supported by Radical followers,... courting the Alliance and support of the Church, and braving the hostility of the Dissenters.... I find myself in the position of watching, rather than opposing, a Government which I cannot trust, yet aware that on some points on which they are most likely to be attacked, by those with whom I am sitting, I am unable to go to the lengths of my supporters;[33]

The chaos in the British Parliamentary system as it operated in the early 1850's, created the conditions which allowed public opinion to have a decisive impact on Government policy. Public opinion had the power to make all politicians bow to its wishes and no leader was willing to act on a major issue without first attempting to divine what the public's reaction would be. Thus, the "public" had been "erected into omnipotence" because Parliament required an authority to which it was responsible for its actions. The traditional political authority of Party leader or Prime Minister had disappeared with the destruction of the two party system and public opinion replaced them as the power with which all men in political life had to reckon.

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33. Quoted in Croker Papers, p. 209.

34. Ibid., p. 258.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN POLICY

The confusion that existed in British politics during the first half of the nineteenth century was a result of economic and social change. Industrialization had taken root in Britain and the new economic and social order it was creating conflicted with traditional institutions and class structures. Aristocrats dominated the Government, but their power was increasingly dependent upon the support of new classes who had not been assimilated into the political system. The Industrial Revolution fostered the growth of mass public opinion which represented the views of the industrial middle and lower classes.

The industrial middle classes ran the gamut from wealthy businessmen and financiers through the owners of smaller businesses, schoolmasters and clergymen of the established Church to the small shopkeepers and skilled tradesmen of the lower middle class.[1] The middle classes, or "the people",[2] as Lord Brougham called them, were not democrats and feared the extension of political power to the masses.[3] Rather, these groups espoused the liberal ideals of John Stuart Mill and believed that

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1. G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, London, 1962, pp. 119-24.

2. Southgate, p. 22.

3. Read, p. 107.

Government should be kept in the hands of property owners because it was these people who supposedly possessed the stability and intelligence to rule for the benefit of all. Consequently, the middle classes wished to undermine the political supremacy of the aristocracy and establish themselves in power.

The lower classes - the "insatiable wild beasts"[4] - as Croker styled them - included the propertyless workers who were for the most part unskilled and uneducated.[5] The self-appointed spokesmen for the lower classes were radicals who used the press and Parliament to organize the masses to demand a share in the government of the country. Parliamentary radicals such as Roebuck, Place and Parkes, were committed to reform as a means of attacking the aristocracy and advancing the cause of the people, rather than promoting the particular interests of any group.[6] They hoped to form a popular party which would represent the middle and lower classes in order to "bring pressure to bear upon the aristocracy, their great enemy".[7] Radicals like Hetherington, the editor of the Poor Man's Guardian believed that force might prove necessary to give the lower classes a voice in the Government. During the short existence of this newspaper between 1831-1845, Hetherington attacked the aristocracy

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4. The Poor Man's Guardian, Vol. 1, 31 March 1832, p. 329.

5. J. B. Schneewind, Backgrounds of English Victorian Literature, New York, 1970, p. 103.

6. G. Finlayson, England in the Eighteen Thirties, London, 1969, p. 102.

7. Quoted in Ibid., p. 86.

relentlessly and maintained:

> the day will be ours yet when we may teach these Whigs, what "insatiable wild beasts" we are - We warrant we shall - though we are the many and they the few - ...they have no intention of extending the benefits of reform to you...[8]

While their dissimilar interests and status prevented the middle and lower classes from working together as a unified whole, their common hostility towards aristocratic Government at home and abroad made them an object of fear to the aristocracy. The public favored a liberal foreign policy, or one in which Britain would intervene on the side of liberal movements on the continent. The belief on the part of the public that England had a duty to spread liberal ideals was continually reinforced by Utilitarians, Non-Conformists and the press, all of whom attempted to convince the public that aristocratic Government was a barrier to progress and stifled man's attempts to better himself.

Utilitarians in Parliament, the so-called Manchester Radicals, insisted that "the battle of our day is against the aristocracy".[9] Cobden and other spokesmen for this group idealized the middle classes as the source of the nation's wealth and the arbiters of its destiny. By making unfavorable comparisons between the aristocrats and the progressive and "enlightened" middle classes, Cobden encouraged the belief on the part of the

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8. The Poor Man's Guardian, Vol. 1, 31 March 1832, p. 329.

9. G. Finlayson, p. 83.

middle classes that they were superior to the aristocracy. He warned the aristocracy:

> If you are indifferent to enlightened means of finding employment to your own peasantry; if you are found obstructing that advance which is calculated to knit nations together in the bonds of peace by means of commercial intercourse; if you are found fighting against the discoveries which have almost given breath and life to material nature, and setting up yourselves as obstacles of that which destiny has decreed shall go on, why, then, you will be the gentry of England no longer.[10]

Religious Non-Conformity reinforced the sense of self-confidence and mission prevalent among members of the industrial classes. Non-Conformity had originated as a reform movement within the Anglican Church in the late eighteenth century. Its founder, John Wesley, had become increasingly dissatisfied with what he considered to be the sterility of the Anglican liturgy and he sought to revive religion by evangelizing it. Wesley's purpose was to "bring ardour and purpose into a Church whose teaching had become formal and cold."[11] Reform, however, resulted in revolution and Wesley and his supporters left the Church. By 1850, various shades of Methodism formed the second largest body of Protestants in Britain.[12] Other dissenting sects, such as the Unitarians and Baptists, also developed, as well as a host of smaller groups whose existence was short-lived.

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10. Quoted in Read, p. 60.

11. J. L. Hammond and B. Hammond, The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854, London, 1930, p. 237.

12. Kitson Clark, p. 185.

While Dissenters could be found within the ranks of the upper middle classes, the stronghold of Non-Conformity lay within the lower middle class and the working class.[13] The more deeply Non-Conformity penetrated society, the more radical and evangelical it became. The Baptists and Primitive Methodists, for example, stressed emotion in their services and promoted the ideal that all men were equal in the eyes of God.[14] While liberal Dissenters agreed with more radical Non-Conformists that the Anglican Church ought to be disestablished, they did not go to the lengths of Evangelicals, such as Hetherington, who insisted that the establishment of individual equality necessitated the destruction of all "kings, priests, and lords":

> I charge upon the existence of kings, and priests, and lords, those useless classes, the common poverty of the labouring classes of mankind. I charge upon them the common warfare and slaughter of mankind. I charge upon their wicked usurpations, their false pretensions, and their general and tyrannical dishonesty, all the social evils that afflict mankind...With the voice of a man, with the spirit of a good man and a citizen struggling to be free, I cry out to all Europe, and...to my own countrymen, Down with Kings, Priests, and Lords...![15]

Together, Utilitarianism and Non-Conformity created a sanctimonious individual who was convinced of his own superiority and his ability to improve the world. The middle classes, especially, believed that the institutions of constitutional

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13. E. Halevy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1913, p. 423.

14. Kitson Clark, p. 183.
Schneewind, p. 87.

15. The Poor Man's Guardian, Vol. 1, 16 July 1831, pp. 13-14.

Government and Protestantism were the bases upon which the ideal society was constructed. In their eyes, the English had a duty to establish these institutions whenever they had an opportunity to do so and the British Empire was looked upon as a laboratory in which the English genius for colonization could be tested. Thomas Babbington Macaulay voiced this belief in 1833 when he spoke of the challenge which India presented to Britain:

> To have found a great people sunk in the lowest depths of slavery and superstition, to have so ruled them as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens, would indeed be a title to glory all our own. That empire is the imperishable empire of our art, our morals, our literature and our laws.[16]

The public believed that although their superiority was acknowledged throughout the world, it was not recognized by the Government at home. Radicals and liberals reinforced this view by using the press to exacerbate the grievances which the middle and lower classes had against the aristocracy. Roebuck and other radicals insisted that the press should be used to "teach the people to understand their rights, to stand up for what they ought to demand and to put down the aristocratical domination under which they had too long laboured."[17]

The press had developed rapidly after 1815 but the continuation of "taxes on knowledge" made newspapers and periodicals expensive. Consequently, journals were largely dependent upon a middle class audience for their survival and sought to please

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16. P. Spear, India: A Modern History, Ann Arbor, 1961, p. 257.

17. Quoted in Finlayson, p. 86.

their readers by telling them what they wanted to hear. Radical newspapers such as The Morning Advertiser, The Morning Globe, The Morning Herald and The Daily News exploited issues of domestic or foreign policy to prove that a gigantic battle between the forces of despotism and liberalism was in progress.[18] The Westminster Review and The Eclectic Magazine appealed to a liberal middle class audience by supporting an interventionist foreign policy.[19] Even Conservative publications such as Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and The Times acquired middle class subscribers. Blackwood's appealed to the middle classes because its editorial policy supported the idea that Britain should hold a pre-eminent position as an imperial power, while The Times attempted to court both the middle and upper classes by expressing their opinions.[20]

The existence of a religious press was also important in shaping public opinion. Religious journals contributed significantly to the religiosity which colored the attitudes of many Victorians. Many articles were designed to create and maintain a high standard of morality on the part of readers. Sermons directed at middle class families were a standard item in the religious press. "A young man brought up in a careful home might have heard, whether delivered or read aloud, a thousand

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18. J. H. Gleason, The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain, Cambridge, Mass., 1950, passim.

19. Ibid., p. 150.

20. Ibid., p. 132.
Kitson Clark, p. 284.

sermons...."[21] Magazines like the Methodist Monthly Repository combined religion with politics. Charles Fox, editor of this periodical, used the magazine to attack the aristocracy which he maintained was preventing the superior middle classes from rising in society. In his eyes, "The History of the Middle Classes was the History of the Advance of Freedom and Civilization."[22]

In general, the government feared the power of the press and many leaders believed that newspapers deliberately created problems which did not exist and exploited others which could be smoothly resolved if the Government were spared the glare of "irresponsible" publicity. Politicians tended to feel helpless before the press because of its influence upon public opinion. As Croker noted,

> The Reform Bill has made seats, and therefore the profession of public life, so precarious that no man can venture to brave the press,... public opinion...has now become a tyrant, and the newspapers her ministers; that is, they assume that they represent public opinion, and of course the people, in a more direct and authoritative manner, than even the House of Commons. In all the great and small questions of the day,...the press and its correspondents are now the arbiters....[23]

Croker's fear that the press had a greater impact upon public opinion than did the Government was true. As E. E. Kellett has noted, "Nothing strikes the student of the thirty years after

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21. Young in Young, p. 425.

22. F. E. Mineka, The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1832, Chapel Hill, 1944, p. 48.

23. Quoted in Croker Papers, p. 258.

the Reform Bill more forcibly than the naive belief in the omnipotence of the printed word, a belief shared equally by the Press and the public."[24] This situation was to have serious repercussions on issues of foreign policy and especially on the question of Russia. It was the radical and liberal press which, after 1830, was instrumental in creating the anti-Russian bias that characterized public opinion. Radicals and liberals were able to accomplish this because Russia's actions in Europe and Asia successfully lent themselves to an indictment of Russia by the public as the arch-enemy of liberalism. Furthermore the refusal of the British Government to intervene on the side of those countries who were "victimized" by Russia seemingly proved that aristocratic leaders were conspiring with the Tsar to crush liberalism wherever it existed.

There were two distinct periods when the public's hostility towards Russia and their own leaders reached serious proportions. The first happened between 1830 and 1833 when Russia suppressed the Polish revolution and acquired a dominant influence in the affairs of Turkey. The second occurred between 1848 and 1851 when Russia's intervention in Hungary and the visit to Britain of Kossuth, the Magyar patriot, coincided with a major debate over foreign affairs. These latter developments solidified the public's hatred of Russia and opened a gulf between industrial classes and the government which Aberdeen inherited.

The impact of the Polish Revolution of 1830 on public

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24. E. E. Kellett, p. 4.

opinion was enormous and lasting. Russia's action outraged the nation's moral sensibilities. Public meetings were held throughout England to denounce the Tsar and to present the Poles as "brave men and delicate women and children sent on foot into Siberia, to labor in the mines and endure perpetual bondage... by a Government unequalled in atrocious tyranny since the days of Nero."[25] The Tsar was denounced as a "monster in human form,"[26] his people referred to as "barbarian hordes,...drilled and flogged into battle,"[27] and the clergy of the Orthodox Church castigated as "venal, immoral and corrupt."[28] Englishmen were told that the Poles were fighting for them as well. The editor of the Manchester Times declared that Poland was "one of our outposts. It was our fight, directed as much against the borroughmongers at home"[29] as against Russian tyranny abroad. The Westminster Review maintained that the success of the Poles would save Western Europe from barbarism and enable the English people to force their government into fulfilling its promises of reform:

> The people of England were really the parties made war upon, from the first juncture of English ministers with the Holy Allies in 1792 to the termination in 1815. It is we who were the downtrodden: and it is we who intend to be up. Give us Poland, our sufferings began with Poland, and with Poland they

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25. Quoted in J. Gleason, pp. 125-26.

26. Quoted in Ibid., p. 120.

27. The Athenaeum, April 29, 1854, p. 515.

28. "Turkey and Russia", Quarterly Review, Vol. 94, p. 281.

29. Gleason, p. 126.

> shall end. The beggar in the streets, - the man who is to be hanged for rick-burning - is son and heir to the spoilation of Poland.... If the Russians are driven over the Niemen, we shall have the Ballot: if they cross the Dnieper, we shall be rid of the Corn Laws: and if the Poles can get Scolensko, we too in our taxes shall get back to the ground of 1686....Poland has her liberation to win, and so have we. - We have both fallen among thieves; and we cannot do better than carry on the contest in concert.[30]

Three short years later, Russia was successful in gaining a dominant influence in the affairs of Turkey. Taking advantage of the Sultan's need for outside military aid in order to put down an internal threat to his authority, Russia negotiated the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessie with Turkey. Russian troops and ships appeared on the Bosphorus and it seemed that Turkish independence had come to an end. Russia's ability to control weaker states seemingly threatened the independence of all of Europe and the British public feared that an invasion of England by Russia was imminent.[31] Apprehensive about the state of public opinion, Cobden wrote a pamphlet which he hoped would bring the public to its senses. In his introduction to Russia, Turkey and England, Cobden refers to the tense situation which the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessie had created in Britain:

> Russia, rather than France, is now the chimera that haunts us in our apprehension for the safety of Europe: whilst Turkey for the first time appears to claim our sympathy and protection...with but few additional provocatives administered to it by a judicious Minister

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30. Quoted in Gleason, p. 131.

31. Read, p. 13.

> through the public prints, a conflict with that Christian Power in defense of a Mahommedan people...might be made palatable, nay popular with the British nation.[32]

The Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath resulted in a growing demand on the part of the public for a punitive war against Russia. John Bright noted in 1851 that most radicals were anxious for war and he found that "the issue was hotly debated by businessmen in Manchester."[33] Kossuth's visit to England in 1851 was the occasion for an enormous outpouring of popular Russophobia. Public meetings were held throughout the country to honor Kossuth as a true liberal and to condemn Russia as "one of the most perfidious and wicked tyrannies that ever scourged the earth."[34] Clergymen addressing a public meeting held in Manchester in 1851 "sermonized" on the similarities which existed between the Hungarian rebels and Englishmen:

> But can any Englishman be insensible or indifferent to the cause for which Kossuth was a sufferer? - the cause of constitutional right, of rational freedom, of human progress against the insidious machinations of...a dark power of evil, whose present ascendancy cast a disastrous gloom over all the better prospects of Europe, and even of humanity?[35]

The same ministers censured the Government's inaction as immoral and un-English:

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32. Quoted in Read, pp. 122-23.

33. Ibid., p. 120.

34. The Manchester Guardian, 19 July 1851, p. 9.

35. Ibid., p.9.

> The powerful state that stands by, says nothing, does nothing: while a weak state is invaded, outraged, crushed, all but annihilated, and then, when questioned as to its silence, and inaction, is content simply to say, - "I am not my brother's keeper," - that state...has learned its morality in a very bad school. It has not protested against wrong: and it deserves to perish by that wrong.[36]

Responsible leaders were horrified at the virulence with which radicals and the public attacked Russia's actions in Hungary. They blamed the situation on newspapers and on Palmerston whom they suspected of exploiting the negative attitudes of the public in order to win support for himself and his liberal foreign policy.

Much of the antipathy which men like Aberdeen felt towards Palmerston arose from the latter's willingness to use newspapers to inflame public opinion. In 1851, at the height of the nation's outrage over Hungary, Palmerston suggested to his friend, Borthwick, editor of the Morning Post, the kind of editorial which would further exacerbate hatred of Russia and Austria:

> You might make such observations as may suggest themselves upon the unmanly war waged against Hungarian women and children by those Austrians who were unable to stand up against the Hungarians until they had called to their assistance an army of 100,000 Russians.[37]

By virtue of his temperament and principles, Palmerston was the one aristocrat in government whose attitudes on foreign

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36. Ibid., p. 9.

37. J. Ridley, Lord Palmerston, London, 1970, p. 379.

affairs coincided with those of the public. He believed that Englishmen were superior and won the warm approbation of the public when he identified Britons with the citizens of ancient Rome who were accorded preferential treatment wherever they travelled:

> Whether, as the Roman in days of old, held himself free from indignity when he could say Civis Romanus Sum; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong.[38]

To the consternation of the rest of the Government, the Foreign Secretary was an outspoken advocate of the theory that Britain should put her moral weight behind liberal movements on the continent:

> I say, that armed by opinion, if that opinion is pronounced with truth and justice, we are indeed strong, and in the end likely to make our opinions prevail...for a good many years the Governments of Europe imagined that they could keep down opinion by force of arms....We gave an opinion to the contrary effect, and we have been blamed for it.[39]

A confrontation between Palmerston and his opponents occurred in Parliament in 1850 during a major debate over foreign policy. During the course of this debate, the public came to suspect that most aristocrats were in league with continental autocrats, and continued to believe this long after the debate had been concluded. Palmerston, on the other hand, emerged from

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38. Ridley, p. 387.

39. Southgate, 'The Most English Minister...', p. 235.

the debate as a national hero and the public considered him to be the only leader who could be trusted to protect British interests against Russia.

The bulk of the opposition to Palmerston came from the Conservative Party and the Peelites who were firm supporters of the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations unless British interests were in immediate danger. Leaders like Peel and Aberdeen, maintained that, if properly used, diplomacy could settle in an amicable manner most of the problems which arose between nations. Referring directly to Palmerston in a speech delivered to Parliament in 1850, Peel said:

> If your application of diplomacy be to fester every wound, to provoke instead of soothing resentments, to place a minister in every Court of Europe for the purpose of...continuing an angry correspondence, and promoting what is supposed to be an English interest, by keeping up conflicts with the representatives of other Powers, then I say that... the great engine used by civilised society for the purpose of maintaining peace is perverted into a cause of hostility and war.[40]

Most aristocrats believed that the public was irrational and misinformed and should not play a determining role in foreign policy. The Conservatives and Peelites conspired to remove Palmerston and to install a Foreign Secretary who would use diplomacy to resolve rather than to create problems.

The opportunity for removing Palmerston came in 1850 when

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40. D. S. Parker (ed.), Sir Robert Peel, London, 1970, Vol. 3, p. 543.

his attempt to bully the Greek Government escalated into a crisis which strained relations between Britain, France and Russia. Palmerston backed the demands of Don Pacifico, a naturalized British citizen, for compensation after a mob in Athens had sacked and burned his house. Failing to secure this by diplomatic means, the Foreign Secretary ordered the Mediterranean fleet to blockade the coast of Greece until the government capitulated. Palmerston had taken this action without consulting either France or Russia who, along with Britain, were the guarantors of the independence of the Greek state. Lord Derby, Conservative leader in the House of Lords, moved to censure Palmerston on the grounds that his method of conducting foreign policy was "calculated to endanger the continuance of our friendly relations with other Powers."[41] Aberdeen supported the motion by characterizing Palmerston's policy as "double dealing" and destructive of the best interests of England:

> When I look back but four short years, and recollect that this country was then honoured, loved and respected by every State in Europe,... I confess I do not look with any...satisfaction even at the new species of friendship which the noble Lord has discovered to exist between us and other countries.[42]

Because the censure of Palmerston was carried in the exclusively aristocratic House of Lords, public opinion accused members of the upper House of being agents of the Tsar.[43]

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41. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 111, 17 June 1850, p. 1331.

42. Ibid., pp. 1351, 1361.

43. Ridley, p. 389.

The charge of treason levelled against aristocrats by radicals within and outside of Parliament in 1850 was not a new development. The Conservatives had been singled out on earlier occasions by radicals as being the group most likely to succumb to Russian influence. In 1835, for example, The Poor Man's Guardian had stated that "The great object of Russia is to get a Tory administration established in England", and had asked the question: "Is it not rational to suppose that Russia may contribute largely to the funds of the English Tories?"[44] This theme was picked up by Parliamentary radicals in 1850 who supported Palmerston and hoped to discredit the Conservatives. Most Parliamentary radicals denounced the censure of the Foreign Secretary by the House of Lords as "un-English and unjust."[45] Mr. Ashborne maintained that the public was intelligent enough to be able to discern the hand of Russia behind the action of the upper House: "but I do say that the public out of doors... will consider the treatment of the noble Lord on this occasion as savouring rather of the Jesuitical evasions of Muscovite chicanery."[46]

The motion to censure Palmerston was not carried in the House of Commons. Roebuck led the movement to support the Foreign Secretary and introduced his own resolution to that effect. In his estimation, England had to bring to bear

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44. The Poor Man's Guardian, Vol. 4, 12 December 1835, p. 783.

45. Hansard, Vol. 111, 25 June 1850, p. 356.

46. Ibid., p. 334.

> the great moral force of her name to maintain constitutional government, not...despotism,...by warning foreign governments to make ready and proper concessions to the increasing enlightenment of the people: telling those people that so far as our physical power is concerned,...the world shall know that we...are friendly to all endeavours, wherever we may find them being made on the part of men to vindicate for themselves the right of self-government.[47]

The success of the Parliamentary radicals has to be attributed to the overwhelming support they received from public opinion. Letters poured into Parliament from the middle and lower classes demanding that Palmerston be retained as Foreign Secretary.[48] In the eyes of the middle and lower classes, Palmerston became synonymous with England. One citizen captured the prevailing sentiment when he said that if any foreign ruler hated the Foreign Secretary, "This proved his worth: hereafter be our boast: he who hated Britons hated him the most."[49]

Cobden, one of the few radicals in Parliament who supported the censure motion, did so because he feared for the future peace of Europe should Palmerston, supported by public opinion, continue to operate as Foreign Secretary. Writing to his friend Bright, Cobden lamented that "under the influence of Lord Palmerston, the British people seemed to be growing...more willing to involve themselves in Europe and elsewhere."[50] Cobden believed

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47. Ibid., pp. 231-32.

48. Ridley, pp. 387-91.

49. Ibid., p. 389.

50. Read, p. 115.

that the Don Pacifico incident had illustrated how deep the chasm was which separated the Government from its public and feared that if a future crisis should arise involving Britain and Russia, the "pugnacious, self-sufficient, foreigner-despising and pitying character of...John Bull"[51] would impede attempts to resolve matters peacefully. Unlike most Government leaders who continued to believe that the public's bellicose attitudes would dissipate if they were actually faced with the possibility of war, Cobden maintained that the public's hatred and fear of Russia was so strong by 1850 that war with Russia was considered in many quarters to be inevitable.

Cobden's assessment of the mood of public opinion was essentially correct. Not only was Russia despised as the major enemy of liberalism, but she was also feared as a grave threat to Britain's position as an imperial power. Nationalists, liberals and radicals led the public to believe that a Tsarist "plot" existed to invade and seize control of India and that the only way to thwart Russia's ambitions was to destroy her as a great power.

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51. Ibid., p. 115.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RUSSIAN "THREAT" TO INDIA

Suspicion that Tsar Nicholas intended to seize control of India resulted from two sets of circumstances which seemed to make this fear credible. The first was the geographically advantageous position which Russia had vis-à-vis the basin of the Black Sea and Central Asia. The second was the rapid expansion of the Tsar's empire into Central Asia and the growth of his influence in Turkey after 1830. Together, these facts were sufficient to convince many Britons that Russia posed a grave danger to vital national interests in India.

The individuals who supported this theory could be found at all levels of national life. They included powerful Government leaders, Ambassadors, authorities of the East India Company and Governors General of India.

Sir John MacNeill, British Ambassador to Persia in 1838, insisted in his book The Progress and Present Position of Russia In the East[1] that Persia, because of her geographic position, was the major barrier standing in the way of a Russian conquest of the subcontinent:

> The independence of Persia is the only apparent obstacle to a position by Russia which would enable her to destroy in Asia the power of the

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1. Sir John MacNeill, The Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East, London, 1836.

> Sultan, already shaken in Europe; to annihilate our commerce in Central Asia, to force us to...augment our expenditure to India,... to threaten it with invasion in war; and to oppose to our maritime and commercial supremacy her power to shake our empire in the East.[2]

Lord Palmerston was of a similar opinion about Persia. Writing to the Queen in 1837, he stated:

> The geographical position of Persia, interposed as that kingdom is, between the southern frontier of Russia and the northern frontier of British India, has for many years past, rendered the British government anxious to convert Persia into a barrier to prevent the Russians from attacking British India...[3]

Two of Britain's Ambassadors to the Porte, Lord Ponsonby and Sir Stratford Canning, were also convinced that Russia was embarked upon a program to conquer as much of Asia as she could. Ponsonby formed his convictions as a result of his presence in Constantinople at the time when the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessie was drawn up, while Canning's prejudice against Russia was solidified by the events of the Eastern Crisis in 1853 when he was Britain's chief representative to the Porte. In one way, the fears of MacNeill, Ponsonby and Canning were natural ones. These men served in weak and divided countries which were located uncomfortably close to a powerful and expanding state. Looking at the strength and vitality of Russia, it was logical for them to believe that because Russia was a great power, she would be imperialistic. Since these men held important positions, their

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2. Quoted in "The Progress of Russia in Central Asia", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 75, 1854, p. 627.

3. J. A. Norris, The First Afghan War, 1838-1842, London, 1967, p. 125.

fears had an impact upon public opinion. Their anxiety often led them to initiate actions which not only created unnecessary tension between Russia and Great Britain, but also strengthened the public's anti-Russian bias.

There were others, however, who also contributed to the public's fear of Russia. A host of books appeared after 1830 written by individuals who had travelled extensively in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. Many of these writers were biased against Russia and condemned her national life as well as her foreign policy. This fact is significant because the public was fascinated by Russia, the Near East and Central Asia and tended to look upon these authors as experts. Laurence Oliphant, for example, visited the region of the Black Sea and published his observations in Along the Northern Shores of the Black Sea. Captain Edmund Spencer travelled in Circassia, as well as in Turkey, and wrote Turkey, Russia and Circassia, while Sir Henry Layard, a Parliamentary radical in 1853 and archeologist, had travelled widely in Turkey, the Balkans and Persia. He was author of a number of books, including Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana and Babylonia.[4]

Probably the best known analyst of Russia's supposed

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4. L. Oliphant, The Russian Shores of the Black Sea in the Autumn of 1852, with a Journey Down the Volga, and a Tour Through the Country of the Don Cossacks, London, 1853.

   Capt. Edmund Spencer, Turkey, Russia, and the Black Sea, and Circassia, London, 1855.

   Layard, Sir Henry, Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana and Babylonia, London, 1887, 2 vols.

intentions towards India was David Urquhart. He devoted his career to "awakening" the British public to the dangers of Russian policy in Asia and to the supposed connivance of British and Russian officials in Tsarist plans.[5] Urquhart's views, as expressed in pamphlets such as England, France, Russia and Turkey, also did much to create a sympathetic attitude toward Turkey.[6]

The origins of the fear that Russia desired to control India can be traced to the reign of Paul I. In 1801, Tsar Paul ordered a force of some 22,000 Cossacks to move against India via Orenberg, the Syr-Daria River and Hindu Kush.[7] While the expedition never materialized, the Tsar's intention frightened some Britons into believing that Russia's policy was based on seizing control of India. Colonel Walker, a British officer who had served in India, remarked in 1818 that an overland invasion of India was feasible. "Russia can approach us by land. She once entertained the thought of marching thither, and to a conquering nation like her, there is no scheme so vast...which she may not be expected to attempt."[8] In 1928, Colonel de Lacy Evans, who was a member of Parliament in 1853, published his Practicability

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5. David Urquhart, The Edinburgh Review and the Afghan War, London, 1843, passim.

6. H. Senior, The Activities of David Urquhart in British Diplomacy and Politics, 1830-1844 (MA Dissertation, McGill University, Montreal), 1951, p. 181.

7. Spencer, p. 399.

8. "Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company", British Sessional Papers, Vol. 9, 1832, p. 322.

of an Invasion of British India. Sir William Bentinck, Governor General of India in 1828, agreed with de Lacy Evans' opinion and specified the size of the force which Russia would need in order to make her conquest of India successful: a "Russian force of 20,000 men fully equipped and accompanied by a body of 100,000 horses may reach the shores of the Indus."[9]

Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control of the East India Company in 1828 and Governor General of the colony between 1841 and 1843, also believed in the existence of a "plot" to establish Russian hegemony over the Indian subcontinent. Ellenborough maintained that Afghanistan was the key to Indian security and that if Tsarist forces occupied Cabul in eastern Afghanistan, India was lost.

> It is not on the Indus that an enemy is to be met. If we do not meet him in Cabul, at the foot of the Hindu Koosh, or in its passes, we had better remain on the Sutleu. If the Russians occupy Cabul they may remain there with the Indus in their front 'til they have organized insurrection in our rear and completely equipped their army...[10]

The differences in opinion as to what country was the "primary outwork for the defence of India",[11] reflected the undue reliance which all of these men placed on political geography. The size, climatic conditions and topography of Central Asia were ignored in favor of "facts" which, as Oliphant pointed out

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9. Quoted in Norris, p. 75.

10. Quoted in Ibid., p. 30.

11. "Correspondence relative to the affairs of Afghanistan and Persia", British Sessional Papers, Vol. 40, 1839, p. 6.

"any glance at the map will confirm."[12] Magazines like Blackwood's, considered distance to be irrelevant to the question of whether Russia was capable of invading India. Cabul was 700 miles from Herat in north-western Afthanistan, and 700 miles from Attock on the Indus, while the distance between Astrabad on the Caspian and Delhi was "1,500 miles, or somewhat less than the distance from Paris to Moscow."[13] Napoleon I had supposedly proven that distance was no problem for an army that had the will to conquer. The popular concept of Tsar Nicholas and his military forces was that they would stop at nothing in order to seize the wealth of India. According to Spencer, Russia was united behind the Tsar in his determination to conquer India. As proof, he quoted an exhortation ostensibly taken from the Moscow Gazette: "Go on! go on! debt-burdened Albion; thy hour is not yet come, but be assured we shall soon teach thee a lesson at Calcutta."[14]

The public was presented with an ambivalent picture of Russia's military establishment. In many respects, the Russian army was not considered to be a formidable foe. Supposedly, it was riddled with corruption and funds allocated for food, clothing and medical supplies ended up in the pockets of officers. The Russian soldier was also thought to be a slave who lacked the

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12. Oliphant, p. 360.

13. "Persia, Afghanistan, and India", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 45, 1839, p. 95.

14. Spencer, p. 220.

intelligence to be a good soldier. Overall, it was believed that the Russian army and navy had not kept pace with technology.[15] Lord Grey, a Member of Parliament in 1853, believed that Russia's backwardness prevented her from building a military force that was capable of competing with Britain's:

> It is easily accounted for by the fact that a nation of slaves can never have the energy, intelligence, or wealth of a nation of freemen; and in modern war it is not the mere brute strength of so many millions of men which is really effective. Intelligence, energy and wealth enter into the conflict more effectually than mere numbers; and that is becoming every day more strikingly true.[16]

Russia's Black Sea navy was treated in a similar disparaging manner. Oliphant visited Sebastopol in 1853 and concluded that the Russian navy was not in fighting condition and that Sebastopol could be easily destroyed. He described Sebastopol as being in a "state of collapse" and insisted that there was "nothing whatsoever to prevent any number of troops landing a few miles to the south of the town,...and marching down the main street...sack the town, and burn the fleet."[17]

Despite the poor condition which the Russian army was supposed to be in, the British public continued to fear it because of its size and "barbaric" character. English visitors to Russia believed all Russians were soldiers and that the army was the basis of the Russian economy. The Tsar was frequently described

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15. Oliphant, pp. 226, 262; Spencer, pp. 249, 325-26.

16. Hansard, Vol. 130, 14 Feb. 1854, p. 604.

17. Oliphant, pp. 256, 260-61.

as being a victim of his military because unless he satisfied its desire for war, the army would revolt. As Captain Spencer wrote,

> In a country like Russia, where a soldier continues on during life, it is necessary to find him employment, to prevent a revolution at home, and nothing could be more alluring than the promise held out to him of the plunder of India,...[18]

The dehumanization of the Russian army added greatly to the apprehension which the English public had about Russia's foreign policy. It seemed that the combination of "brute" strength and a sense of "mission" would result in a Russian conquest of the subcontinent unless the Tsar was forcibly contained on the north shores of the Black Sea. The rapidity with which Russia was expanding south and southeast after 1820 provided an opportunity for individuals like Urquhart and Ponsonby to construct their theory that every advance Russia made in the region of the Black Sea was an immediate threat to the security of India.

The Treaty of Adrianople which concluded the Russo-Turkish War in 1829 gave Russia de jure possession over the greater part of the isthmus lying between the Caspian and the Black Sea. Russia's difficulty in subduing Circassia focused the attention of Russophobes on this region in the 1830's. Blackwood's maintained that the fate of Circassia was of vital importance to Britain's position as an imperial power because its "fall" would open the road to India, because for Russia

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18. Spencer, p. 400.

> it is only as a means of accomplishing her greater purposes that she makes such sacrifices to subjugate the Caucasus and the Circassians in particular. But that is an indispensable condition of success, and therefore to be purchased at all expense and risk. It is the costly centering and scaffolding of the bridge which is to bring her to supreme and paramount power.[19]

Circassia was important because of its position vis-à-vis the Black Sea. If Russia's war in the Caucasus was successful, then, supposedly, the entire eastern portion of the Black Sea would come under the Tsar's control. In the eyes of the Russophobes, Tsar Nicholas wanted to turn the Black Sea into a "Russian lake" in order to make his empire invulnerable to attack. Only by doing so could he feel free to dispatch his armies to the Indus. But, sealing off the Black Sea required that Russia control Turkey. So long as the Straits remained in the hands of an independent Porte, Britain would be able to invade Russia and destroy the Russian armies before they began their march against the Indus. Consequently, Britain had to intervene on the side of the Circassians in order to preserve Turkey and the Black Sea as an invasion route to Russia.[20]

While Turkey's control over the Straits made her the lynchpin in the defense of India, Russian activities in Persia and Afghanistan in the late 1830's focused attention on these states

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19. "Circassia", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 42, 1837, p. 759.

20. Ibid.; see also: H. H. Bolsover, "Lord Ponsoby and the Eastern Question (1833-1839)", The Slavonic Review, Vol. 13, 1934, p. 106; Spencer, p. 398; D. Urquhart, The Secret of Russia in the Caspian and Euxine: The Caucasus War as Affecting the Insurrection in Poland, 1863, p. 12.

as also constituting the perimeter of Indian defenses. It was believed that Tsarist agents had successfully negotiated treaties of alliance with powerful Moslem leaders in Persia and Afghanistan in order to subvert these Central Asian states. MacNeill believed that the seige of Herat in 1836 by Yar Muhammed, the Persian Shah, had been instigated by Russia. The British Ambassador to Persia wrote to Palmerston stating that Russian officers were directing the seige and that if Herat fell all of Afghanistan would come under the "influence or authority of Russia and Persia".[21] MacNeill predicted that Russia would establish a consul in Herat who would exploit his position by subverting all of Afghanistan. The British Ambassador concluded his remarks to Palmerston by saying that the loss of Afghanistan to Russia would have a disastrous effect upon the "internal tranquility and stability of India,..."[22]

The Foreign Secretary reacted angrily to Russia's "challenge" by questioning the sincerity of the Emperor's assurance that he had no ulterior designs on India. He accused Russia of professing a disinterest in the affairs of Central Asia while, simultaneously, instructing agents to win the allegiance of these states. Palmerston warned Russia that Britain had special rights in Persia because it served as a "barrier for the security of India against attack from any European Power" and informed Russia

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21. "Correspondence Relative to Afghanistan and Persia", British Sessional Papers, Vol. 40, 1839, p. 84.

22. Ibid., pp. 6, 84.

that her interference in the affairs of Central Asia had to cease.[23]

The fear of the possible subversion of India dominated the thoughts of Lord Auckland as well. Auckland was Governor-General of India in 1839 and was led to believe by Palmerston, MacNeill and agents of the East India Company who operated in Afghanistan, that Dost Mohammed, the Moslem ruler of Cabul, was also an agent of the Tsar. Dost Mohammed desired to re-establish his control over Peshawar in the Pumjab, and Auckland feared that if this Hindu state came under Moslem authority, Britain's tenuous control over millions of Indian Moslems would be jeopardized.

Britain's precarious position in India during the 1830's and 1840's accounted for much of the clamour over Russia's supposed intentions towards the subcontinent. Governors-General like Lord Ellenborough as well as individuals in the Indian civil and military administrations believed that Russia was anxious to capitalize on the problems England faced in ruling the colony. One problem was the alienation of the English from the native population which vastly outnumbered them and the other was the mercenary character of the Indian army.

The Indian administration was kept small in order to fulfill the Company's directive to secure large profits by not incurring heavy expense for the colony's administration. Having to rule in isolation from the native population resulted in a feeling of insecurity on the part of some administrators who feared that there was no way to predict a crisis before it occurred.[24]

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23. Ibid., pp. 109, 179, 193.

24. "Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan and Persia", pp. 8, 15.

Uneasiness was greatly exacerbated by the existence of a largely native army whose loyalty was doubtful. Ellenborough expressed the fear which many officials in India felt about the situation when he said: "I dread mutiny more than war. I dread nothing but mutiny in India,..."[25] The necessity of having to depend upon a Sepoy army to protect English interests and lives was partially responsible for Auckland misinterpreting events occurring in Afghanistan in 1838.

Auckland interpreted Dost Mohammed's claim to part of the Punjab as an attempt to exploit the possibility of insurrection in India in order to place India under the dual control of Moslem and Russian authority. To prevent this "threat" from materializing, the Governor-General deposed him and ordered the Indian army into Afghanistan to seize control of Cabul and Candahar, the cities through which a Russian army was expected to march on its way to the Indus. Auckland justified his action to the Secret Committee of the Company's Court of Directors by stating that internal security necessitated the establishment of Afghanistan as a British sphere of influence:

> Russian agents have not put themselves prominently forward in aid of the designs of Persia, and we could scarcely, with prudence, allow this new and more formidable element of disorder and intrigue to be established, without opposition, on our frontiers. The extraordinary excitement which has been produced in the public mind, as well in the Punjab, as in Afghanistan, in consequence of the approach of the Persian Power, is

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25. Parker, p. 16.

> also a signal to us of the mischief which might arise, were that power to acquire a settled authority or influence over all the Afghan countries.[26]

Others picked up Auckland's theme and presented the English public with a picture of Tsarist agents operating surreptitiously within India in the hope of igniting a "holy war" on the part of Indian Moslems. Blackwood's demanded the extension of the Indian frontier to the Indus River in order to prevent Russian subversion and claimed that unless this were done, "an outbreak of all the independent tribes, and of the turbulent spirits within the British territories, would be the immediate consequence of the appearance of an invader;...".[27] Even Sir John Kaye, who published his History of the War in Afghanistan some 34 years after the First Afghan War, maintained that Indians were ripe for subversion in 1838:

> In their eyes, indeed, the movement beyond the Afghan frontier, took the shape of a Mohammedan invasion, and it was believed that countless thousands of true believers were about to pour themselves over the plains of the Punjab and Hindostan, and to wrest all of the country between the Indus and the sea from the hands of the infidel usurpers.[28]

Most of Britain's political leaders between 1830-1854 largely rejected the public's growing concern for the security of India and they thought that the threat of internal disturbances

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26. "Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan and Persia", p. 5.

27. "Persia, Afghanistan and India", p. 104.

28. Sir J. W. Kaye, History of the War in Afghanistan, London, 1874, Vol. 1, p. 301.

was the product of Indian conditions.

Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister in 1839, believed that the First Afghan War was largely the result of overambitious officers in the Indian Army as well as civil administrators who were ardent imperialists. He was aware, for example, that an alarmist such as Ellenborough had dreams of establishing Britain's authority over all territority lying between Egypt and the Indian Ocean.[29] Peel's desire to avoid unnecessary expansion of British India was shared by military leaders such as Sir Henry Harding who believed that much of the talk about the necessity to expand the frontiers of British India to the Indus was a result of the army's desire for "medals and glory".[30] Harding was aware of the appeal which imperialism had for liberals, who believed in the existence of an English "mission" to civilize the world, and for ultra-nationalists, who thought that the power and prestige of Britain was dependent upon the size of her empire:

> The very name of the Indus is associated with ancient recollections, which render it difficult to suppress the desire to make that magnificent river the boundary of the B. Empire. Young civilians and gallant soldiers ardently desire annexation and even sexagenarians might forget what is prudent, in the patriotic pride of giving to England's greatest conquest a frontier worthy of British India.[31]

Peel agreed with Harding and requested him to concentrate on

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29. Parker, p. 30.

30. Harding Papers, McLennon Library, McGill University, Montreal, Harding to Sir Walter James, 19 September, 1845.

31. G. D. Bearce, British Attitudes Towards India, 1784-1858, Oxford, 1961, p. 193.

consolidating England's hold over that part of India which she already possessed. Writing to the Governor-General in 1844, the Prime Minister stated:

> If you can keep peace, reduce expense, extend commerce, and strengthen our hold on India, by confidence in our justice, kindness, and wisdom, you will be received here on your return with acclamations a thousand times louder; and a welcome infinitely more cordial than if you have a dozen victories to boast of, and annex the Punjab to the overgrown empire of India.[32]

Many British officials also rejected the feasibility of an invasion of India because they did not believe that the Russian army was capable of launching a major offensive against India and they were convinced that the geography of Central Asia would prevent a modern army from using this region for military operations. In 1830, Baron Heytesbury, British Ambassador to Russia, informed the Government that Russia was in no condition to mount an offensive against India.

> Whatever wild thoughts may be germinating in the heads of Russians generally, the Emperor and his Government have, I am convinced, too thorough a consciousness of the real weaknesses of the country to entertain, for an instant, serious thought of ever embarking on so gigantic an enterprise as the marching of an army to India...[33]

Intelligence confirmed the fact that the Russian army was not prepared to conduct large-scale operations thousands of miles away from Russia. Lord Durham, British Ambassador to Russia in

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32. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 202-03.

33. Quoted in Norris, p. 39.

1833, forwarded statistics to England which showed the armaments of Russia to be essentially defensive.[34]

Government leaders also had the positive assurances of the Tsar that "he had no wish to disturb British supremacy in India,..."[35] During the course of the conversations between Count Pozzo de Borgo, Russian Ambassador to Great Britain in 1838, and Lord Palmerston, the former pointed out that "a single glance at the map ought to be sufficient to dissipate, in this respect, all prejudice, and to convince every impartial and enlightened man, that no hostile design against England in Asia can direct the policy of our Cabinet."[36]

With the exception of Lord Palmerston, the remainder of the government had come to a similar conclusion. The First Afghan War had proven that the geography of Afghanistan was an excellent natural defense against a large scale invasion. Following the "disaster at Cabul" in 1841 in which the Army of the Indus was forced to retreat in the face of hostile Afghan tribes, relief expeditions sent out from India to aid the withdrawing forces found it virtually impossible to reach them. Attempts to cross the Bolan Pass in Southeastern Afghanistan failed completely, while General Pollock was able to traverse the Khyber Pass only after suffering severe losses in troops, weapons and pack animals.

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34. Bolsover, p. 109.

35. Sir Robert Peel, The Speeches of the Late, Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, London, 1853, Vol. 3, p. 101.

36. "Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan and Persia", p. 187.

Pollock realized that his worst military problems lay before him in Afghanistan and that his weakened army would find it difficult to accomplish its objectives:

> I have shown from the system of supplying carriage-cattle, I have not the means of movement, as the country around cannot supply my wants. To establish depots or strong points at intervals on the road...would so reduce the force,... that it would be too weak to effect the desired object. For several marches, no forage is procurable. Even if we had carriages, the conveyance of forage would so increase the number of animals to be protected that I should... doubt our being able to convey them in safety; and I confess, after the treachery we have experienced,...I could have no confidence whatever in the promise of supply from any Afghan.[37]

Generals Wellington and Harding maintained that it was impossible for a modern army to invade India via Afghanistan. Writing to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell in 1847, they argued that there was no point along the Indian frontier from which a successful assault could be launched. An attack through Sind in the southeast was not feasible because the invader would have to cross an impassable desert in order to reach Sind. Circumventing Sind by moving northeast towards Bahwalpur on the Indus was rejected as a possibility because it would require an additional march of 700 miles through country bereft of supplies. An offensive along the northwest frontier through the Punjab was also dismissed as unrealistic. No modern army with its complement of artillery, munitions and stores could get through the Khyber Pass and still be in fighting condition when they reached the Indus.

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37. Sir Robert Peel, p. 170.

Furthermore, there was only one portion of the northwest frontier that was capable of supporting an army. This was the area lying between the Cenab and Sutlej Rivers and it was already occupied and heavily defended by the Indian army.[38]

As a result of all of these considerations, by the 1850's the British Government had largely rejected the possibility of any European power launching an overland invasion of India. Despite the rationality of this view, it was the fears of the Russia-haters which had the greatest impact upon public opinion. The public continued to suspect that Russia was a grave danger to India because it subscribed to the theory that the contiguity of Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan made these countries ideal stepping stones to India. Relying on what it read, the public came to believe that the security of the subcontinent was contingent upon the disposition of the Black Sea and the fate of Turkey. Looking back on the rapid expansion of Russia's empire along the eastern shores of the Black Sea after 1829 and the influence which she had secured in Turkish affairs as a result of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessie in 1833, the English public rejected the assurances of the Tsar that he had no interest in India. Instead, it supported the views of many radicals, liberals and nationalists who maintained that the absolute integrity of Turkey was vital to the preservation of India as a British possession.

The majority of Aberdeen's cabinet, on the other hand,

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38. Hon. E. Ashley, The Life and Correspondence of Viscount Palmerston, London, 1879, Vol, 2, pp. 37-39.

rejected the fear of a Russian invasion of India and they also discarded the theory that the integrity of Turkey was of vital national interest to Great Britain. Therefore, it was apparent at the inception of the Eastern Crisis in 1853 that substantial differences of opinion existed between the Government and the public on what was at stake in Turkey.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ABERDEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE EASTERN CRISIS OF 1853

The Eastern Crisis of 1853 originated from a religious dispute which involved France, Russia and the Porte. Seeking to increase his influence in Turkish affairs, Napoleon III received a reaffirmation by the Porte of France's ancient right to protect the Latin clergy in the Holy Land. Tsar Nicholas looked upon these proceedings with suspicion and, in February 1853, he ordered Prince Menshikov to secure a new treaty with the Porte in which Russia's position as protector of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans would be confirmed. Failing to accomplish this aim, Menshikov returned to Russia and Tsar Nicholas notified Europe in May 1853 that he would occupy the Principalities until the Porte acquiesced.

The Eastern Crisis brought the conflict between the Government and the public over foreign policy to a head and undermined the confidence which the public had had in the Aberdeen Cabinet. Public resentment against the Peelites because of their opposition to intervention in the internal affairs of other countries was intensified by the vascillation which characterized Aberdeen's Eastern policy. Following Turkey's declaration of war against Russia in October 1853 and the refusal of the Government to side openly with the Turks, many Britons came to suspect that the Prime Minister was in collusion with the Tsar.

By 1853, the popular conception of Turkey was substantially different from the view which most Ministers had of the Turks. Radicals and liberals over the preceding two decades had convinced the nation that the sole cause for the decay of the Ottoman Empire was Russian interference in Turkish affairs. The public believed that if Russia could be eliminated as a threat to Turkey's existence, the Porte would be able to solve whatever problems existed within the empire. The Sultan was held up as a model of what a liberal reformer should be because of his "enlightened" policy of religious toleration towards Christian minorities within the empire. In fact, The Manchester Guardian proclaimed that

> There are few governments at present more tolerant than the Sublime Porte. The chief representatives of Turkey at foreign courts are now Christians, and the Sultan...has lately given...proof of how entirely His Majesty is a stranger to anything like religious prejudice.[1]

Because many MP's as well as the radical press pictured Turkey as an ideal society, it was logical for the public to believe that a defense of the Porte would also be a defense of liberalism. As the Eastern Crisis escalated throughout the summer and autumn of 1853, radicals and liberals stepped up their campaign to convince Britons that Turkey would be the battleground upon which the war between the forces of liberalism and despotism would take place. Bulwer Lytton, a liberal MP interpreted a war between Russia and Britain over Turkey as a great

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1. The Manchester Guardian, 7 Jan. 1852, p. 4.

moral Crusade to protect civilization.

> Surely...if there ever was a war waged on behalf of posterity, it is the war which would check the ambitions of Russia,...a war fought, not for our own generation, but that the liberties of our children may be secured from some future Attila.[2]

Most officials, however, did not believe that the Turkish Empire could be preserved and they completely rejected the idea that the Sultan was a benevolent ruler. Aberdeen, Gladstone and Clarendon considered the Turks to be anathema because of their cruel and oppressive treatment of Balkan Christians. The Prime Minister was less concerned about the possible effects which the disintegration of the Turkish Empire might have upon the balance of power than he was with the benefits which the demise of Turkey would bring to Balkan Christians. Writing to Lord Palmerston in 1853, Aberdeen stated that regardless of whoever might profit from the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, "it is to be expected that the Turkish barbarians would speedily disappear, never more to return to a soil upon which, to the disgrace of Christendom, they have so long encamped."[3] Aberdeen sympathized with the difficulties which the Tsar faced in his position as protector of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, and found it impossible to understand how anyone could prefer the "fanaticism and immorality of the Turks" to the "Christianity and civilisation of Russia."[4] As a whole, the Aberdeen Government

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2. B. Kingsley Martin, The Triumph of Lord Palmerston, London, 1924, pp. 229-30.

3. Sir Arthur Gordon, The Earl of Aberdeen, New York, 1893, p. 238.

4. Quoted in Conacher, p. 149.

opposed a policy that would commit Britain to a defense of Turkey because they feared a situation in which England would deny her character as a Christian nation by supporting a system of oppression which, in their opinion, ought to be destroyed. It was expected that Balkan Christians would exploit any crisis in Turkish affairs to revolt and Aberdeen's Government had no intention of perpetuating the "political solecism of Mohammedanism over twenty million...Christians"[5] by defending Turkey.

There was another consideration which accounted for the Cabinet's determination to avoid any unilateral defense of the Porte. The rapid disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had been evident since the Russo-Turkish War of 1828. Greece and Egypt had established their independence, the Principalities were semi-independent and Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, had established his control over Arabia and Syria. Clarendon was convinced as a result of the Mehemet Ali Crisis of 1840 that Turkish integrity no longer existed and he opposed the policy of Palmerston, Foreign Secretary in 1840, to preserve the Turkish Empire by force of arms.

The Eastern Crisis of 1840 had originated over claims made by Mehemet Ali to Syria and Arabia. The Egyptian Pasha insisted that his de facto control over these areas be recognized by the Porte as legitimate. What was essentially an internal dispute between the Sultan and a Pasha acquired an international character when France refused to relinquish her support for

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5. Gordon Waterfield, Layard of Nineveh, New York, 1968, p. 242.

Mehemet Alli's claims and Palmerston threatened to go to war with France over the issue. Palmerston insisted that the Ottoman Empire had to be preserved en toto and that Britain had an obligation to carry this out by force of arms if necessary.[6] While the Foreign Secretary believed that the threat of war was sufficient to bring France to her senses, Clarendon and the rest of the Melbourne Government were horrified that Palmerston would risk war "at a time when we are so ill-able to bear it that would almost amount to national ruin."[7] But, what angered Clarendon most was his belief that an armed defense of Turkey would be futile because he believed that the principle of "Turkish integrity" was of questionable validity.

> We wish to maintain the "integrity" of Turkey, but the word is somewhat vague and the interpretation to be given to it is not very easy. When we consider that at no period of this century can Turkey be said to have had undisputed possession of Syria,...that the Morea and the islands of the Archipelago are lost to Turkey, that the Powers of Europe have made an independent kingdom of Greece, that Besserabia and the provinces of the Euxine are become Russian, that Servia has an independent Prince, that Wallachia and Moldavia are under the protectorate of Russia, that Bosnia and Albania are in a state of de facto independence, that Arabia was lost to the Wahabees, that Egypt is... governed by Mehemet Ali,...I must consider the term "integrity" vague and, as the groundwork of a system, not easy to be interpreted.[8]

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6. Hon. E. Ashley, The Life and Correspondence of Viscount Palmerston, London, 1879, Vol. 1, pp. 370-73.

7. K. Bourne, The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902, Oxford, 1970, p. 241.

8. Ibid., p. 239.

The majority of Cabinet Ministers, then, rejected Palmerston's Turkish policy. On the basis of their moral convictions, they did not believe Turkey was worth a war, while as far as British interests were concerned, they could not see where any specific British interest was at stake in the Ottoman Empire. Aberdeen stated the position of his government on the "Turkish Question" to Parliament in August 1853 when he informed members that "We are not bound by any treaty, for I deny, that this country is bound by the stipulations of any treaty to take part in hostilities for the support of the Turkish Empire."[9]

The Prime Minister's statement raises the question of what course of action his Government was prepared to take in the event of a crisis between Russia and the Porte. The Cabinet recognized that Russia posed the greatest external danger to the existence of the Turkish Empire,[10] and they feared that the sudden demise of the Ottoman Empire would endanger the balance of power. But Aberdeen and Clarendon maintained that Turkey's existence was a "European necessity"[11] and their intention was to make the major powers jointly responsible for Turkish affairs. If this were done, then Russia's unilateral interference in Turkish affairs might be eliminated and Britain would be saved from having to act on her own.[12] Throughout the duration of the

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9. Hansard, Vol. 129, 12 August 1853, pp. 1650-51.

10. Bourne, p. 238.

11. Gordon, p. 237.

12. Ibid.

Eastern Crisis of 1853, the Prime Minister clung stubbornly to his idea that Turkish problems had to be solved by the Concert of Europe or not at all, and his refusal to consider any alternative policy made him unprepared to deal with the crisis in a decisive manner. The vascillation that characterized Aberdeen's eastern policy resulted as much from the Prime Minister's inability to rise above his personal abhorrence of the Turks as it did from domestic considerations over which the Cabinet had no control.

Palmerston's presence in the Aberdeen Coalition as Home Secretary made the Eastern Crisis a domestic issue as well as a problem in international relations. Palmerston insisted that Turkey was capable of reform because its existence was vital to British interests. He rejected all the talk about the inevitable dissolution of the Ottoman Empire as "pure and unadulterated nonsense",[13] and maintained that once foreign interference in Turkish affairs had been eliminated, a successful reform program could be carried out.

> People go on talking of the inevitable and progressive decay of the Turkish Empire, which they say is crumbling to pieces. In the first place, no empire is likely to fall to pieces if left to itself, and no kind neighbours tear it to pieces. In the next place, I much question that there is any process of decay going on in the Turkish Empire,...for some years past, the foundations at least of improvement have been laid; and it is certain that the daily increasing intercourse between Turkey and Europe must in a few years, if peace can be preserved...

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13. Quoted in Bourne, p. 235.

lead to various improvements therein.[14]

While Palmerston was also repelled by the religious fanaticism which characterized the Porte's treatment of its Christian subjects, he was pragmatic enough to believe that the logical heir of the Turkish Empire was Russia.[15] But, while Palmerston was convinced that Russian policy was based on a desire to seize control of the Straits, he did not believe that Russia was willing to go to war with Europe to secure her goal. The Home Secretary maintained that Russia used covert means to achieve her aims and that, when challenged, Tsar Nicholas retreated to await a more propitious moment to renew his "aggressive" policy.[16] Palmerston had arrived at these conclusions as a result of his successful handling of the Mehemet Ali Crisis in 1840. While Palmerston had incurred the displeasure of the Crown and the Government for bringing Britain to the brink of war with France, he had persisted in his policy until France had capitulated and Mehemet Ali's threat to the Sultan's authority had been destroyed.

Lord Palmerston believed that decisive action was necessary to resolve contentious issues of foreign policy. Once he had decided what was at stake and determined the course of action which Britain should follow, Palmerston refused to budge from his position unless his own government forced him to do so. The

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14. Ashley, Vol. 1, p. 355.

15. Ibid., p. 351.

16. Quoted in Southgate, 'The Most English Minister'..., p. 324.

opinions which he expressed to Henry Bulwer, British chargé d'affaires in Paris in 1840, at the height of the Eastern Crisis, are indicative of the manner in which he would have handled Russia in 1853 had he been in a position to decide policy.

> Notwithstanding the mysterious threatening with which Thiers (French Prime Minister) has favoured us, I still hold to my belief that the French Government will be too wise and prudent to make war; and various things which come to me from different quarters confirm me in that belief. Besides, bullies seldom execute the threats they deal in; and men of trick and cunning are not always men of desperate resolves. But if Thiers should again hold to you the language of menace,...pray retort upon him to the full extent of what he may say to you, and with that skill of language which I know you to be the master of, convey to him in the most friendly and unoffensive manner possible, that if France throws down the gauntlet we shall not refuse to pick it up; and that if she begins a war, she will to a certainty lose her ships, colonies and commerce before she sees the end of it; that her army of Algiers will cease to give her anxiety, and that Mehemet Ali will be chucked into the Nile.[17]

In view of the strategically advantageous position which Russia had vis-à-vis the Straits, Palmerston, in 1853, was especially insistent that Aberdeen not allow any doubts to remain in the mind of the Tsar about Britain's willingness to go to war in order to protect the Porte. The Russian occupation of the Bosphorus in 1833 had convinced him that Britain would not be able to dislodge Russia from the Straits once she had occupied them.

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17. Quoted in Ridley, p. 237.

> In some respects, the Russian Government has great advantages of position for the execution of any plans it may contemplate. The Russian fleet in the Black Sea and the Russian troops in the Krimea are within a few days' sail of the Bosphorus, and may, at any time, return thither, before the British Squadron could arrive to prevent them, let it be stationed where it may, if not actually within the Dardanelles.[18]

The presence of Palmerston in the Cabinet posed a major threat to its unity, and a compromise on Eastern policy became essential if the Government were to survive. The "peace party" which comprised a majority of Ministers feared Palmerston because his bellicose views were increasingly shared by public opinion and a growing number of warhawks in Parliament.

Russia's occupation of the Principalities in July 1853 frightened the public, aroused the anti-Russian bias of radicals and liberals, and divided the Government. Palmerston and Russell favored a firm policy towards Russia and proposed that the British fleet be sent to join the French navy, already stationed in Besika Bay, and that Stratford Canning, British Ambassador to the Porte, be empowered to send the allied fleet into the Black Sea should Russia attack Turkey. Palmerston insisted that it was better to immediately decide the issue of peace or war rather than to allow the Tsar to think that he could do what he wanted to with Turkey.

> Nothing is to be gained with the Russian Gov't, or indeed with any other, by anything which

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18. R. L. Baker, "Palmerston on the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessie", The English Historical Review, Vol. 43, Jan. 1928, p. 87.

> looks like doubt, hesitation, or fear, while on the other hand, a bold firm course founded on right, and supported by strength, is the safest way of arriving at a satisfactory and peaceful result.[19]

The public feared that Russia was precipitating the "final settlement" of the Turkish Question and the radical press exploited the situation in order to reduce the chances the Government had to resolve the matter peacefully. The Daily News declared that the "first blow has probably been struck by oppressive absolutism against the peace and liberty of Europe:...,"[20] while The Morning Herald believed that the "March on Constantinople has begun."[21] Turkey was described in glowing terms as an "enlightened" state which had offered refuge to the Hungarian liberals in 1849,[22] and the British Government was castigated for not making the occupation of the Principalities a casus belli.[23] The Morning Chronicle foresaw the "whole country rising to the occasion if Russian aggression continues", in spite of the Government.[24] Aberdeen was denounced as "the author of Adrianople",[25] his Government referred to as a "corrupt oligarchy"[26]

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19. Quoted in Southgate, 'The Most English Minister,...', p. 328.
20. Quoted in Kingsley Martin, p. 130.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 127.
23. Ibid., p. 130.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 127.
26. Ibid.

and his foreign policy attacked as "anti-English".[27]

By accusing the Government of appeasement of Russia, members of Parliament exacerbated the public temper. Radicals and nationalists alike declared that the Tsar's "invasion" of Moldavia and Wallachia constituted a declaration of war against the Porte and that Britain and France ought to defend the Porte by waging a preventative war against Russia. Lord Ellenborough believed that "it would be better to make war for the preservation of the integrity of the Turkish Empire, then, after that integrity is gone, to make war with other Powers with reference to the...dismembered Turkish Empire."[28] Layard thought that the time had come to stop Russian "aggrandizement" at the expense of her neighbors. In his estimation, the Anglo-French alliance offered a "valuable opportunity, which may never occur again, of setting on a proper basis this great Eastern question,...and of assigning to Russia that place...which the safety of Europe and the interests of civilisation and freedom forbid that she should not go beyond."[29]

The demands of the public and Parliamentary extremists for full military support of the Porte forced the Government to vascillate, because the "peace party" was unwilling to jeopardize the efforts being made at Vienna by representatives of Prussia, Austria, France and Great Britain to mediate the dispute.

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27. Ibid.

28. Hansard, 12 August 1853,pp. 1648-49.

29. Ibid., p. 1780.

Consequently, the fleet was kept outside of the Dardanelles but Canning was empowered to order it to Constantinople should Russia attack Turkey. Clarendon insisted that this decision was necessary as the "least measure" which would "satisfy public opinion, and save the Government from shame hereafter, if the Russian hordes...pour into Turkey..."[30]

Throughout the course of the Eastern Crisis, a large share of the burden of reconciling diverse opinions within the Cabinet fell upon the shoulders of the Foreign Secretary. Clarendon found it "shocking and incredible" that the peace of Europe would be jeopardized by "two sets of barbarians quarreling over a form of words."[31] Like the other moderates in the Ministry, Clarendon realized that the situation at home was dependent upon what happened abroad and he pinned his hopes on the ability of the Vienna Conference to reach a settlement that would be acceptable to both Russia and Turkey. If the Concert resolved the Crisis peacefully, then the potential political crisis brewing in Britain would dissipate and the Coalition would survive.

It was these considerations which made the acceptance of the Vienna Note[32] by Russia and Turkey so important to the fate

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30. Quoted in Conacher, p. 151.

31. Ibid., pp. 199-200.

32. The Vienna Note stated that the Sultan "will remain faithful to the letter and spirit of the stipulations of the treaties of ... and of Adrianople, relative to the protection of Christian worship... The Sublime Porte officially promises that no modification shall be made in the state of things which has just been regulated without a previous agreement with the governments of Russia and France, and without prejudice whatever to the existing Christian communities." Quoted from The Manchester Guardian, 3 September 1853, p. 5.

of the Aberdeen Government. When Tsar Nicholas announced in August that the Note met with his approval, Government leaders believed that the worst was over. In Clarendon's mind, there was no legitimate reason why Turkey could not accept it because the proposed settlement contained nothing "derogatory to the dignity or the independence of the Sultan,..."[33] His request for Turkey's quick assent to the Note, however, fell upon deaf ears because Turkey was anxious to embroil Britain and France in a war of revenge against Russia,and Aberdeen and Clarendon suspected that the British Ambassador to the Porte was supporting this belligerent attitude. Unable to dictate to either Canning or Turkey without arousing the public's ire and jeopardizing the existence of the Government, these leaders were powerless to prevent the direction of policy from being transferred into the hands of the Turks and Canning.[34]

Stratford Canning possessed considerable knowledge about Turkish affairs. This fact, in addition to his popularity with the reformist party in Turkish politics, had resulted in his appointment to the post of British Ambassador to Turkey in February 1853. The animosity which Canning felt towards Tsar Nicholas because of his refusal to consider Canning for the post of British Ambassador to Russia, intermingled with his genuine belief that Russia was a persistent danger to the Porte's

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33. G. P. Gooch (ed.), The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell, London, 1925, Vol. 2, p. 152.

34. A. Benson and V. Esher, A Selection From Her Majesty's Correspondence Between the Years, 1848-1853, London, 1907, Vol. 2, p. 560.

existence.[35] Although Canning was not convinced that Turkey could be reformed, he believed that it was in the best interests of Britain to make the attempt.[36] The British Ambassador to Turkey was not a man who took direction easily from those who entertained opinions contrary to his. Graham described him as a man of "morbid vanity" and "implacable antipathies",[37] and his opinion came to be shared by Government leaders who held Canning personally responsible for their inability to force Turkey into accepting the Vienna Note.

Canning's advice to the Porte to reject the proposed peace settlement confirmed Turkish belligerency against Russia and culminated in the Porte's declaration of war against Russia in October 1853. This decision made war between Russia and Britain a distinct possibility because the public's reaction forced the Government to increase its military commitment to the Porte.

With the exception of The Times which continued to support Aberdeen's pacific policy, much of the press inflamed public opinion by pouring abuse on the Tsar and the Prime Minister. Every aspect of Russia's national life was attacked in the most virulent terms. The Manchester Guardian, for example, "compared" the "liberal" religious policies of the Porte with the "barbarism"

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35. S. Lane Poole, The Life of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, London, 1890, p. 195.

36. Ibid., p. 315.

37. Conacher, p. 164.

of Russian orthodoxy.

> Were the subject open, it would be interesting to consider whether,...there is a more pitiable object in the whole world than a Russian peasant prostrating himself before his glass baubles and his wretched pictures...[38]

The religious theme was also picked up by individuals such as the Reverend Charles Kingsley who declared that the Turks were "fighting on God's side,...",[39] while at a public meeting held in Manchester in November, another clergyman presented a resolution calling upon Britain to uphold Turkey by force of arms.[40]

David Urquhart appeared frequently at public meetings held throughout England in October and November 1853 in order to stir up support for Turkey. His campaign was directed against Aberdeen, Palmerston, Clarendon and Russell, whom he maintained were the "Tsar's four Archangels."[41] Urquhart was one of the few public agitators who criticized Palmerston. Most papers and speakers who discussed the Crisis considered the Home Secretary to be the only man capable of protecting Britain's honor and interests. At a public meeting in London in October, a speaker insisted that "If we had a bold, energetic, far-seeing man at the head of affairs, yes if we had...Palmerston, I do not think that the Russian army would have crossed the Pruth."[42] Lord

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38. The Manchester Guardian, 19 November 1853, p. 8.

39. Ridley, p. 417.

40. The Manchester Guardian, 19 November 1853, p. 8.

41. Kingsley Martin, p. 148.

42. Ibid., p. 184.

Dudley Stuart, a Liberal MP, noted that "Wherever I go, I have heard one opinion on the subject, and that opinion has been pronounced in a single word, or in a single name - Palmerston."[43]

The majority of the Cabinet reacted to the news of the Turkish declaration of war with dismay. Clarendon expressed the prevailing sentiment of Ministers when he said that "The beastly Turks have actually declared war."[44] Despite their personal sentiments, Government leaders realized that in view of the enraged state the public was in, they had to act or lose the confidence of the public altogether. At a meeting of the Cabinet on October 7th, the diametrically opposed viewpoints of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary clashed and made compromise difficult to achieve.

Palmerston was in a much stronger position than was Aberdeen. Because of Turkey's declaration of war, Palmerston could insist that the prospect of preserving peace was no longer viable and that Britain had a moral duty to see Turkey through the crisis. He reminded the Cabinet that "we passed the Rubicon when we first took part with Turkey and sent our squadrons to support her" and that now, Turkey "must be carried in safety through the difficulties."[45] With the support of Russell, Palmerston recommended that the Allied fleets establish their supremacy in the Black Sea before Russia sealed Turkey's fate by

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43. Ridley, p. 419.

44. Waterfield, p. 242.

45. Southgate, "The Most English Minister,...", pp. 332-33.

closing off the Straits.[46]

For his part, Aberdeen favored abandoning Turkey to her richly deserved fate.[47] Since this was impossible,he insisted that Britain not initiate hostilities with Russia by entering the Black Sea.[48] The Prime Minister therefore agreed to the compromise proposal presented by Clarendon which concentrated the British fleet at Constantinople but provided for its entry into the Black Sea if Russia attacked Turkey.[49]

Adhering to the policy that he had established at the beginning of the Crisis, Clarendon re-affirmed that this decision had to be made to appease public opinion and assure the survival of the Government. "With reference to public opinion in England, we could not do less, and if any Russian attack were made upon Turkey that our fleet could have prevented, we never should hear the end of it."[50]

Most of Britain's leadership was still unwilling to initiate hostilities with Russia because they could not, in good conscience, believe that a war would be justifiable. However, by the end of October, Cabinet members realized that their policy of temporizing was making war increasingly inevitable. As Clarendon admitted in a moment of candor to Parliament, "our

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46. Ridley, p. 417.

47. Conacher, p. 202.

48. Benson and Esher, p. 551.

49. Conacher, p. 197.

50. Sir Herbert Maxwell, The Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon, London, 1913, Vol. 2, p. 26.

hopes of maintaining (peace) are gradually dwindling away, and... we are drifting towards war."[51] Sinope ended the Government's indecision by deciding the issue of peace or war for them.

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51. Hansard, Vol. 130, 14 February 1853, p. 568.

CHAPTER FIVE

SINOPE AND THE DECLARATION OF WAR

On 30 November 1853, a superior Russian fleet under the command of Admiral Nakimov descended upon what was virtually the entire Turkish navy lying at anchor at its Black Sea base of Sinope. Within hours, the Porte's navy had been shattered and some 3,000 Turkish sailors killed. Sinope was a legitimate act of a state of war that had existed between Russia and the Porte since October 1853 and the ships which the Russian navy destroyed contained arms and munitions destined for Batum and Circassia where a Turkish army was fighting the Russians.

The initial impact of this incident upon public opinion in Britain was negligible. The Illustrated London News, for example, wrote the incident off as a "small egg of victory, not worth the lusty cackle"[1] presumably made over it. In fact, the same newspaper proclaimed that Tsar Nicholas "deserved" one small victory in a war which was going badly for Russia.[2] However, as the circumstances surrounding Sinope became known, and the extent of Turkey's losses determined, the Russian victory created a public outrage which could not be controlled. The British public already considered Russia to be barbaric and now

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1. The Illustrated London News, Vol. 23, 17 December 1853, p. 505.

2. Ibid.

believed that the Tsar's navy had deliberately taken advantage of the "helpless" Turks in order to "massacre" them.[3] Thus, Russia demonstrated at Sinope that it wanted to destroy all the Turks and would use any means available to carry out this desire. As a whole, the nation believed that they had a moral duty to defend the Porte in order to prevent it from being

> exterminated from the face of Europe by such butcheries as Russia has shown us, in the memorable example of Sinope, that she is not ashamed to perpetrate in the face of the civilized world in the name of Christianity.[4]

While these facts outraged the nation's sense of decency and fair play, Sinope was even more significant in that it made the Government an enemy of its own public. The presence of the Allied fleets at Constantinople, while Russia was destroying the Turkish navy in the Black Sea, was sufficient to convince the public that Aberdeen had no intention of preserving the Porte. In the eyes of the public, the British Government itself was responsible for the tragedy because Sinope would never have occurred had the British navy been in the Black Sea where it belonged. In effect, Sinope caught the Cabinet in a "lie" and raised the suspicion that the Government was conniving with the Tsar. The fear that an international conspiracy of aristocrats

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3. The Illustrated London News, Vol. 23, 31 December 1853, p. 606.

   Kingsley Martin, pp. 195-97.

   R. Postgate and A. Vallance, England Goes to Press, 1815-1937, New York, 1937, p. 96.

4. "The Commercial Results of a War with Russia", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 75, April 1854, p. 382.

existed to suppress liberalism reappeared and those who wished to destroy Aberdeen's Coalition exploited this fear to the utmost.

The picture of Government "treason" was created by the radical press. The Morning Herald, The Morning Standard, The Morning Chronicle and The Daily News all exploited the sympathy which Britons felt for the Turks as "underdogs". They capitalized on the embarrassing position of the Government in order to convince the public that aristocratic government and conservative foreign policy were responsible for Sinope. The attacks of these papers were directed as much against the Prince Consort as against the Prime Minister, both of whom were accused of being the Tsar's chief agents in Britain. Statements made about high officials were so abusive that Greville found it necessary to remark that in his long experience he had never seen anything to equal the "virulence and profligacy" which characterized the articles in the radical press.[5]

Because Prince Albert had been born in Germany, he was suspect in the eyes of the radicals. The Daily News insisted that "educated as he has been, connected as he is by his family ties", the Prince Consort could never be brought "to feel and act as an English liberal."[6] The Standard maintained that the Prince was part of a "conspiracy" of foreign autocrats which was headed by Lord Aberdeen. Supposedly, Britain was governed by a

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5. Reeve, Vol. 3, p. 111.

6. Theodore Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, London, 1876. Vol. 2, p. 541.

> clique of Austro-Russian-Belgaic slaves... At the head of this clique stands Lord Aberdeen, and so long as this man shall retain office, so long will the Prince Consort - who is believed to be his especial patron - be the object of the same feeling.[7]

The Morning Chronicle believed that Prince Albert was unfit to be the husband of an English Queen and asked why the English people allowed a situation to exist which placed their Queen at the mercy of foreign agents.

> Why do Englishmen tolerate the swarms of Northern intrigues which luxuriate in our palaces and block up the ingress by which good old English truth and feeling...might find its way to the Throne.[8]

In their attempts to discredit the Government, radicals and liberals blamed it for past "mistakes" in foreign policy. the "crime" of Sinope was neatly grafted on to the "crimes" which conservative aristocrats had supposedly allowed Russia to commit in Poland, Hungary and Circassia. The Westminster Review maintained that Sinope was the logical result of the "old Absolutist practice of diplomatic secrecy",[9] under which reactionary aristocrats had operated to suppress liberalism.[10] The North American Review agreed and proclaimed that

> From the death of Paul,...there has been no act of insolence or rapacity on the part of the Northern despot in which England has not

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7. Quoted in Postgate and Vallance, p. 99.

8. Quoted in Kingsley Martin, p. 199.

9. "England's Foreign Policy", The Westminster Review, Vol. 5, 1 Jan. 1854, p. 22.

10. Ibid., pp. 202-03.

> cheerfully acquiesced, and few in which she has not borne a conspicuous and dishonourable part.[11]

In the eyes of many liberals and radicals, Poland remained the outstanding victim of Britain's non-interventionist foreign policy. Lord Dudley Stuart, a liberal MP, insisted that the English people did "penance" at Sinope for the "sin" which they had committed against Poland in 1830. He held, "In days now passed, a great crime had been perpetrated in allowing the partition of Poland." Now at Sinope the English were "expiating the pusillianimity which their forefathers had been guilty of."[12]

Because extremists within and outside Parliament were able to use Sinope to show that Government policy was anti-English, public opinion was led to believe that it had to be proved to Russia that the sentiments of the Aberdeen Cabinet were not those of the nation. David Urquhart, editor of The Morning Advertiser, expressed the hope

> that the country would arise as one man, and take the national affairs into its own hands. Let the imbecile minions of Russia, constituting the Cabinet, be swept by a storm of popular indignation from their official places, and men be appointed in their stead, who will ...afford effective aid to Turkey and frustrate the plans of the Czar to achieve a universal empire in Europe.[13]

Had the Aberdeen Government been faced with unfavorable

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11. "Russia and the Porte", The North American Review, Vol. 78, April 1854, p. 509.

12. Hansard, Vol. 132, 31 March 1854, p. 273.

13. Quoted in Postgate and Vallance, p. 97.

reaction only from radicals and liberals, it might have been willing to ride out the storm of popular indignation over Sinope and to preserve its conviction that war with Russia would be unjustifiable. As it was, however, the Government faced a solid block of opposition from the Conservative Party in Parliament and the combination of Conservatives, radicals and liberals made it impossible for the Cabinet to maintain the support of Parliament unless they acquiesced to the public's demand for war.

The opposition of the Conservative Party to the Coalition was motivated by partisan politics. Derby, Leader of the Party in the Lords, and Disraeli, Leader in the Commons, looked upon Sinope as an opportunity to destroy the Government and establish the Conservative Party in the eyes of the nation as the defender of English interests and honor. Disraeli believed that Sinope was the means by which he could accomplish these aims because it was evident to him, when Parliament convened in January 1854, that the Government was in serious trouble.[14] Consequently, he and Derby launched a relentless attack on Aberdeen from the floor of Parliament and in the press. Writing in "his" newspaper, The Press, Disraeli belittled Government policy with devastating irony: "The tone of the Cabinet on foreign affairs we are told, is not to be relaxed. As for lowering the tone of the Cabinet - that we defy them to do. As to their energy, its evidence may be found in the Bay of Sinope."[15] In Parliament, these men

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14. Kingsley Martin, p. 97.

15. Ibid., p. 298.

assailed the Prime Minister as having endangered vital national interests by acquiescing to the Tsar. Derby accused Aberdeen of "political connivance" with Russia and of allowing the Tsar to establish a "preponderating power, both in the North and South of Europe."[16] Disraeli followed suit by stating that "from the moment Lord Aberdeen was the First Minister of this country, the Emperor of Russia never lost a moment in attempting to carry out his policy."[17]

Criticism levelled by Conservatives, liberals and radicals centered on the "danger" in which Government policy had placed India. Supposedly, Russia's destruction of the Porte's navy eliminated the only other rival that Russia had on the Black Sea and Tsar Nicholas had succeeded in making Russia invulnerable by turning the Black Sea into a Russian lake. In the eyes of Government opponents, Sinope had completed the Tsar's military preponderance over the Porte and provided him with an ideal opportunity to complete his "Mission" by destroying the Ottoman Empire, subjugating Central Asia and invading India.[18]

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16. Hansard, Vol. 130, 14 Feb. 1854, p. 640; Vol. 132, 31 March 1854, p. 155.

17. Hansard, Vol. 132, 31 March 1854, p. 298.

18. "A Painter in Persia", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 75, Jan. 1854, p. 18.

    The Westminster Review, p. 230.

    Hansard, Vol. 130, 6 Feb. 1854, p. 226; 14 Feb. 1854, pp. 646-47; Vol. 132, 31 March 1854, pp. 150, 190, 275.

    The Illustrated London News, Vol. 24, 7 Jan. 1854, p. 2.

Blackwood's stated the popular conviction that Constantinople was the key to India and that Britain could not "see Russia in possession of the keys of the Dardanelles", without witnessing the simultaneous expansion of the Russian Empire "to the limits of the Indus."[19] Lord Grey and other MP's tried to calm the public's fears for the safety of India, but radicals used the issue of "threatened" national interests to intensify the public's clamour for war. Roebuck insisted that Sinope presaged the fall of India, while Layard, who devised a peace settlement for a war which still had to be declared, maintained that India could be saved only if Tsar Nicholas was forced to relinquish his control over all territority in the basin of the Black Sea as well as his right to maintain a navy in those waters.[20]

Those Britons who did not respond to Sinope in an irrational manner were unable to understand what the furor was about. Thomas Carlyle, for example, was astonished that a Christian people would even sympathize with the "lazy, ugly, sensual, dark fanatic - that Turk", let alone be anxious to fight for him.[21] Expressing his disbelief over the public's enthusiasm for war, Carlyle remarked that he had

> hardly seen a madder business... It is the idle population of editors, etc. that have done all this in England. One perceives clearly the Ministers go forward in it against

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19. "The Aberdeen Cabinet", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 75, Jan. 1854, pp. 124-25.

20. Hansard, Vol. 130, 14 Feb. 1854, p. 605; Vol. 130, 17 Feb. 1854, pp. 854, 892.

21. Quoted in Kingsley Martin, p. 226.

> their will. Indeed, I have seen no rational person who is not privately...inclined to be of my opinion: All fools and loose-spoken inexperienced persons being of the other opinions. Poor Souls! What could the Ministry do after all?[22]

Prince Albert believed that the nature of British politics created situations in which public emotion would prevent the Government from adopting a foreign policy aimed at rational goals. In a letter to his close friend and mentor, Baron von Stockmar, Prince Albert wrote:

> The Government...is a popular Government, and the masses upon which it rests only feel, and do not think. In the present instance, their feeling is something of this sort:- The Emperor of Russia is a tyrant and the enemy of all liberty on the Continent, the oppressor of Poland. He wanted to coerce the poor Turk. The Turk is a fine fellow; he has braved the rascal; let us rush to his assistance.[23]

Cobden, one of the few Parliamentary radicals to support Aberdeen's eastern policy, accused the MP's from the "manufacturing towns" of needlessly exacerbating the public temper.[24] In a memorable address to the Commons, Cobden denounced the "glib talk" of these representatives and praised the Government for

> wisely disregarding the cry of thoughtless men;...(for) not listening to the cry of the newspapers, some of which profess the democratic principle, as if democracy ever gained by war. I have nothing to say to the Ministers. I do not blame them because they have taken up a position to defend the Turkish Empire. It is

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22. Ibid., p. 226.

23. Quoted in Read, p. 121.

24. Quoted in Bourne, p. 327.

> a traditional policy which they have followed, which has been handed down to them by previous governments, and unless they had public opinion with them, no Government could avoid doing so.[25]

The person who was most baffled over the public's reaction to Sinope was the Prime Minister himself. Aberdeen found it incredible that any nation would desire war, even under justifiable circumstances. Unable to bring himself to "fight for the Turk",[26] the Prime Minister was astonished and revolted by the public's refusal to accept a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the East. Addressing Parliament in February 1854, a month before Britain declared war against Russia, Aberdeen lamented,

> we have been so long without having experienced the horrors and the miseries of war, that it is but too common to look upon it now as a source of pleasurable excitement. I...believe that if...we should still be enabled to preserve peace, a very great disappointment will ensue in many quarters.[27]

The Aberdeen Government rejected the public's interpretation of Sinope. In the eyes of the Cabinet, Russia's destruction of the Porte's navy was a legitimate act of war and had little military significance. Malmesbury, a political opponent of Aberdeen and an outspoken critic of his eastern policy, admitted in private that "the ships at Sinope had on board 45,000 stand of arms and a great quantity of ammunition destined for

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25. Ibid., p. 328.

26. J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, London, 1903, Vol. 1, p. 492.

27. Hansard, Vol. 130, 14 Feb. 1854, p. 646.

Circassia and the coast of Asia Minor."[28]

As a whole, the Cabinet blamed Turkey for Sinope because Turkish warhawks had deliberately sent their navy into the Black Sea to challenge Russia. Henry Reeve, correspondent for The Times, reported that even Canning had tried to dissuade the Turkish admiral from taking this course of action.[29] Captain Edmund Lyons, who had joined the British fleet at Constantinople in October 1853, termed Sinope a blunder that could have been avoided had the Turkish admiral in charge had the sense to realize that it was foolhardy to send an inferior force to lie in an open roadstead 180 miles from Sebastopol.[30] Lyons described the Turkish admiral as a man who "held an exalted position, but who did not appear to have...any clear idea of what his force could or could not do."[31]

In any event, British officials remained totally at odds with the public's contention that Sinope had altered the balance of power in the Black Sea, and, therefore, placed Russia on the road to India. The balance of power had operated in Russia's favor long before Sinope occurred. It was an accepted fact among British leaders that the Turkish navy was "bad and incapable

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28. Earl of Malmesbury, Memoirs of an Ex-Minister, London, 1884, Vol. 1, p. 420.

29. J. K. Laughton, The Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, London, 1898, Vol. 1, pp. 316-17.

30. Eardly-Wilmot, Life of Vice Admiral Edmund, Lord Lyons, London, 1898, pp. 130-31.

31. Ibid., p. 131.

of fighting alone"[32] and that the Porte's sole protection throughout the crisis had been the presence of the Allied fleets near or at Constantinople. In view of these facts, most Cabinet members viewed Sinope as a logical result of their inability to control Turkish belligerency.[33]

Nor did the Government consider Russia to be a formidable naval rival. If the Allied fleets were to enter the Black Sea, they would eliminate Russia's supremacy. The few references made to the subject in annual Parliamentary discussions of military estimates bear out the contention that in terms of size and degree of modernization the Russian navy was significantly outclassed by the British. In 1852, it was estimated that the Tsar's steam fleet comprised approximately 32 vessels as compared to some 134 British ships.[34] Overall, the number of Russian ships in commission was half that of Britain.[35] The prevailing opinion of Russia as a naval power was summed up by one MP who declared that the strength of the Tsar's navy was "not more than equal to the ships of two of our most eminent shipping firms."[36]

Sinope had a fatal effect upon the cause of peace because

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32. Malmesbury, p. 413.

33. Benson and Esher, p. 565.
Eardly-Wilmot, pp. 130-31.
J. K. Laughton, Vol. 1, pp. 317-18.

34. Hansard, Vol. 120, 30 March 1852, p. 383.

35. Ibid., pp. 382-83.

36. Hansard, Vol. 114, 10 March 1851, pp. 1236-37.

it forced the peace party within the Cabinet to insist upon the adoption of a belligerent policy towards Russia. While Ministers believed that Sinope had not created a justifiable cause for war, they realized that war had become a political necessity. Unable to justify their policy in the face of an angry public and alarmed over their loss of support in Parliament, those who had supported Aberdeen's pacific policy now believed that decisive military action had to be taken if their reputations were to be preserved and the Government were to survive. Lord Clarendon told Aberdeen in a moment of exasperation that policy had to be determined on the basis of satisfying the public:

> You think I care too much for public opinion, ...but really when the frightful carnage of Sinope comes to be known, we shall be utterly disgraced if, on the mere score of humanity, we don't take active measures to prevent any more such outrages.[37]

The "active measures", which Clarendon and a majority of Ministers felt were necessary, involved the movement of the Allied fleets into the Black Sea. The Prime Minister continued to cling to his hope that war was not inevitable and opposed a course of action which would challenge Russia directly.[38] As had been true on other occasions, the Cabinet's dilemma was resolved by events over which it had no control. On 10 December 1853, Palmerston resigned from the Ministry and his action ended the vacillation in Government policy.

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37. Conacher, p. 240.

38. Ibid., p. 247.
Morley, p. 491.

While Palmerston claimed he resigned because he opposed Russell's Reform Bill, Sinope determined his decision. The Home Secretary was aware that the public considered him to be the only Minister who could be trusted to deal effectively with Russia. If, after Sinope, Palmerston had not dissociated himself from Aberdeen's eastern policy, he would have been attacked by the public along with the rest of the Cabinet as a bungler and a traitor. Not only did resignation protect his image and career, but it also strengthened his position at the expense of Aberdeen. The Morning Post, which was thought to be Palmerston's newspaper, stated that Sinope was the real reason for the Home Secretary's resignation, and Aberdeen agreed.[39] Writing to Delane, the editor of The Times, the Prime Minister maintained that "the Eastern Crisis was the cause and the sole cause of Palmerston's resignation."[40]

The public reacted to the news in a manner which was favorable to Palmerston by interpreting his resignation as proof that Government policy had been dishonorable and disastrous to the nation. Overwhelming popular support rallied to Palmerston's side and radicals and liberals lauded him for his decision. Kingsley Martin, author of The Triumph of Lord Palmerston, summarized the favorable impression which Palmerston's action had on the public:

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39. Ridley, p. 421.

40. Reeve, Vol. 3, p. 99.

> The Tsar, in collaboration with the Court and the Ministry, had known that the English fleet would be allowed to take no part in aiding the Turks and had, therefore, indulged in the "massacre of Sinope." No Cabinet Council "had been convened" and "Palmerston, the only English Minister," refused to stand by and see a "murder" committed before his eyes. It was, indeed, high time for "Palmerston to come out from such a mess of infamy."[41]

As a private Member of Parliament and the only leader the public trusted, Palmerston was in a position where he could destroy the Government.[42] Because the remaining Ministers could not allow Palmerston to lead the opposition to the Government in the Commons, they took the step that made war between Russia and Britain a virtual certainty. On 20 December 1853, the Government approved Canning's decision to send the Allied fleets into the Black Sea because it was "only by obtaining the complete command of the Black Sea...that the policy of the English and French Governments can be effectively carried out."[43] Palmerston's reinstatement on 22 December 1853 reassured public opinion that this firm policy towards Russia would be continued. The Illustrated London News reflected the general consensus when it said that Palmerston's return "proclaimed to the world that, at the present time, whatever may have been the case hitherto, his Lordship and his colleagues are fully agreed as to the course to be adopted against the public enemy."[44]

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41. Kingsley Martin, p. 200.
42. Benson and Esher, p. 471.
43. Conacher, p. 241.
44. The Illustrated London News, Vol. 23, 31 Dec. 1853, p. 606.

On 31 March 1854, Britain declared war against Russia. A year had passed since the Menshikov Mission to Constantinople and the opening of the Eastern Crisis. Throughout the long duration of the Crisis, the Government had temporized on policy in order to appease public opinion and yet avoid an unnecessary and unjustifiable war with Russia. Sinope wrecked these attempts to preserve peace by creating a situation in which the survival of the Government forced Aberdeen to go to war against his better judgment.

CONCLUSION

The Crimean War was a political necessity because the survival of the Government depended upon its willingness to acquiesce to the public's demand for war with Russia. Aberdeen's inability to fly in the face of public opinion and prevent a needless and unjustifiable war resulted from a set of circumstances which his Government had inherited in 1852, but which it was unable to control. The destruction of traditional Party structures created a situation where Aberdeen had no assured basis of support either in Parliament or in the Cabinet and, as a result, he had to rely upon public opinion to keep his enemies in check and preserve the existence of his Government. But, public opinion was the least dependable source of support that the Government could have had because it comprised those classes who were hostile towards aristocratic Government and a conservative foreign policy.

The public favored an interventionist foreign policy and believed that the success of liberal revolutions abroad would spur the establishment of a liberal Government at home. The Peelites, on the other hand, who formed a majority in the Cabinet, opposed interference in the affairs of other nations and this basic disagreement over policy exacerbated the Eastern Crisis of 1853 and, ultimately, proved fatal to the Cabinet's attempts to preserve the peace.

The Crimean War is filled with ironies. Britons went to

war in 1854 believing that Russia was the arch-enemy of liberalism and that her defeat would aid the cause of reform at home. In reality, some of the reform which the middle and lower classes were demanding was in the offing. Russell had prepared his Reform Bill which would have given the franchise to many within the working classes and Aberdeen had promised him that he would support it.

Lord Palmerston, who was a hero to the public, was a staunch opponent of increased liberalization of the Government. Had Sinope not provided Palmerston with an opportunity to enhance his reputation as the outstanding defender of liberalism, he would have been faced with the problem of reconciling his popular image with his opposition to reform.

Those radicals and liberals who claimed to speak for "the people", as well as "the mob", had consistently ignored the liberal character of the Government in order to concentrate on ways and means of destroying the power of the aristocracy. They deluded the public into believing that it could never expect reform from aristocrats and they exploited the Eastern Crisis and Sinope in order to convince the public that a defense of Turkey was a blow struck against absolutism.

The Conservative Party denounced the Government's eastern policy in order to destroy the power of the Peelites. But, in condemning Aberdeen for his failure to act belligerently towards Russia, Derby and Disraeli were attacking a foreign policy which the Conservatives had traditionally supported. Like Palmerston

and many radicals and liberals, the Conservative Party exploited the incident at Sinope in order to advance its political interests at the expense of peace.

In effect, in 1854, the public demanded war to secure those reforms which, in all likelihood, would have been granted at that time if the Crimean War had not interfered to destroy the Aberdeen Coalition.

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