

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION ON FRANCE, THE ENTENTE CORDIALE,
AND THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN ENTENTE: 1903-8.



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Declaration

The undersigned hereby declares that this thesis has been composed entirely by himself and is his own original work.

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ABSTRACT

The Anglo-French Entente received almost from the moment of its inception the endorsement of the British people. Although Anglo-French relations had been steadily improving since the end of the Boer War and the dénouement of the Dreyfus affair, it was the warm and friendly greeting which King Edward VII received during his State visit to Paris in the spring of 1903 that first made the various quarters of British public opinion desirous of a full-fledged understanding with France. The conclusion of the colonial Convention of 8 April 1904 reinforced this desire. With the exception of a handful of 'High Tories' and imperialist stalwarts, most of whom complained that Britain lost more territory and privileges than she gained, the terms of this Convention proved acceptable to the bulk of the nation. Most Conservatives and Liberal Imperialists saw the Convention as a development which bolstered Britain's position in the world and which helped the nation meet the challenge of German expansionism, while most Radicals and Socialists saw it as a peaceful event which heralded the beginning of a series of bi-lateral pacts among the Powers, including Germany.

Despite these high expectations, some disillusionment soon set in in various quarters of public opinion. Businessmen who nourished the idea that the rapprochement was economic as well as political in its ramifications discovered to their dismay that the Entente had done nothing to encourage the French to abandon protectionism. The short-lived trade boom which followed the signing of the 1904 Agreements was little

compensation to them. Similarly, those City financiers who continued to encounter intrigues and sharp practices made by their French equivalents in various parts of the world were scarcely consoled by the abandonment of the policy of 'pin pricks' in Egypt or the increased investments in Russia. Meanwhile, humanitarians like E.D. Morel were disturbed that the Entente had not been used by the Foreign Office as a lever to put a halt to the régime concessionnaire in the Congo. Their sense of outrage was echoed to a lesser extent by the country's military and naval leaders who, while on the whole pleased with the general direction which Anglo-French relations had taken since 1903, were nevertheless highly annoyed at France's behaviour on certain occasions; the illegal coaling and provisioning of Russian ships during the 1904-5 Far Eastern War was a case in point. But it was the Left which in due course voiced the greatest dissatisfaction. By the time of the Tangier crisis, Radicals and Socialists had become uneasy about the very closeness of Anglo-French relations and openly began to wonder whether the Entente had got 'perverted' into an alliance against Germany.

Precious little of this disillusionment, however, left a serious mark on Anglo-French relations. For one thing, the very people who expressed the greatest concern put the blame for what they construed to be wrong at the door of misguided statesmen on both sides of the Channel/^{RATHER} than on the rapprochement itself. For another, such disillusionment ran counter to an even more widespread feeling in Britain that France was the ideal country with which to enter into diplomatic partnership. It was a sentiment largely fostered by the bulk of the press which in its leader-articles propounded almost daily the thesis that French

foreign policy was essentially cautious and pacific, that French political institutions were stable and secure, and that the French themselves were a serious-minded and reliable folk. But individual writers contributed to this campaign as well by pointing out the similarities between Britain and France in terms of government, culture, and even national character.

The Anglo-Russian Entente, however, was something of a different matter. Here, too, there were a number of criticisms from the Right as regards the terms of the colonial Convention; and here, too, the Left became increasingly uneasy about the anti-German implications of the arrangement, not to mention the disregard it showed for the welfare of Persian and Russian parliamentarianism. But unlike the 1904 understanding, the 1907 one was not based upon any real cultural and political affinities between the two countries involved. Hence, both the Government and its sympathisers in the press had a more difficult time defending and justifying the latter arrangement than they did the former. The Anglo-Russian Entente, while not exactly unpopular in Britain, was considerably less popular than its forerunner of 1904.

FOREWORD

Precious few historical studies are completed without at least some indebtedness to others, and this one is no exception. Throughout the six years during which I have been engaged on this thesis, I have encountered a willingness to be of service on the part of virtually all those from whom I have sought assistance. Obviously to list all such people would be well-nigh impossible; nevertheless, there are a few whose help has been so great that I cannot overlook them.

To Professor V.G. Kiernan and Dr V.H. Rothwell, both of the History Department of Edinburgh University, I owe perhaps the most gratitude. It is largely thanks to their advice and friendly criticisms that this study has managed to reach some degree of coherency. Indeed, their pointers on the proper usage of the English language, not always the most readily come by of attributes in an American, are particularly appreciated.

To Dr J.N. MacLean of Glensanda, yngr., also of the History Department at Edinburgh University, I owe a word of thanks for taking the time to read and criticise Chapter III of this thesis. His expert knowledge on the history of Morocco gave me a better insight into some of the complexities and intricacies of the politics of that country. Whatever mistakes or shortcomings that are to be found in this study can only be attributed to me and not to the efforts of these three gentlemen.

No list of acknowledgements is ever complete without the mention of the names of those who by their kind permission gave me access to important materials. In this respect I should

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PREFACE

This study attempts to record and analyse in detail the attitudes and impressions that existed in pre-World War I Britain to one of the more important developments to appear in the high politics of the early twentieth century world, the rise of Entente diplomacy. This study also attempts to examine as closely as possible the opinions that existed in pre-1914 Britain about the French way of life and the French people. That it could not be a purely diplomatic study hardly need any explanation here. The diplomatic side of Anglo-French, and for that matter Anglo-Russian, relations in the period 1870-1914 has been too thoroughly covered by various historians to render much opportunity to unearth anything new. By contrast, studies of British public opinion for these years have been comparatively neglected, thereby leaving one with a good deal of room to write about a subject hitherto scarcely touched upon.

But apart from this consideration, there are other, equally valid reasons for studying British attitudes to certain events shortly after the turn of the century. For one thing, such a study gives us a better understanding of the decision-making process in Britain. After all, contemporary diplomatists either tended to take public opinion into account before charting a particular policy or used it as an excuse to justify pursuing a certain course of action. By examining what the British public really did think about certain issues or developments, then, we are in a good position to attack or defend the decisions which these men took. For another, a study of this sort promotes, if only in a rather small way, a clearer appreciation

of all the similarities and differences between two of Europe's more prominent peoples; and this, at a time when these two peoples have only just been brought permanently together under a common economic (and possibly political) roof, cannot be an entirely bad undertaking.

Although there have been relatively few studies dealing with British public opinion and foreign affairs for this period, this is not to say that the following thesis touches upon completely virgin soil. Quite a few works, many of them written in recent years, are concerned with more or less the same subject matter as mine. P.J.V. Rolo's The Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiations of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904 (London, 1969) and C.M. Andrew's Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale (London, 1968) both have something to say about the attitude of the press and certain groups of people towards the 1903-4 understanding between the two Powers; but not very much, for their primary emphasis is on diplomatic events. Samuel R. Williamson Jnr.'s The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), on the other hand, does have a great deal to say about the view of France and the Entente held in high-ranking British military and naval circles, so much so, in fact, that there is little more one can add to what he has written. Still, as the thoughts of the Generals, Admirals, and other defence experts constitute such an integral part of British public opinion as a whole, and as the secret military conversations of 1905-6 changed the nature of the Entente in such a drastic manner, I felt duty-bound to devote a chapter of

my own to this aspect of the subject. Unlike Dr Williamson I have endeavoured, wherever possible, to place military and naval attitudes towards the Entente in the wider context of British public opinion.

The same more or less applies to what others have already written about left-wing attitudes in Britain towards France and the Entente. Precisely why the views of the British Left - Radicals, Socialists, and pacifists alike - have attracted the special attention of historians is a matter for discussion in itself. Yet whatever the reason, no one can deny that the publication of such studies has aided our understanding of left-wing dissent to British foreign policy prior to 1914. A.J.P. Taylor's The Trouble Makers (London, 1957), A.J.A. Morris's Radicalism against War (London, 1972), and Howard Weinroth's article 'The British Radicals and the balance of power, 1902-1914' (Historical Journal, XIII, 1970), have, between them, explained fully why the Left at first welcomed the understanding with France and later entertained doubts about its real purpose. Here again, however, there is a difference of emphasis between these works and mine. While all three have much to say about the Left, they make little mention of the Conservatives and the Liberal 'Right'. All three works discuss only foreign policy matters and not what that British Left was thinking about other developments in France. Finally, although these works, especially Dr Weinroth's, have scrutinised left-wing attitudes to events happening abroad, I have attempted in many instances to analyse events in even greater detail.

All these comparisons bring me to the matter of how I have approached this thesis. Having opted for a broad study covering a comparatively short-time span rather than a narrower one comprising an analysis of only one section of British public opinion over a greater number of years, I decided to arrange my material around leading themes such as politics, religion, commerce, the arts, as well as diplomacy, instead of presenting British attitudes to events more or less as they developed. Such an approach makes for two or three discussions of the same event in various parts of the thesis, and as a result cross-references from one chapter to the next abound. It is to be hoped that this does not cause too much inconvenience for the reader.

Since the pivot of Anglo-French relations at this time was the 1904 Agreements, I have tried to keep the Entente Cordiale in the foreground as much as possible. In the Introduction to this thesis and in Chapters II, III, IX, and X, the pursuance of this task has not been too difficult; in some of the remaining Chapters it has proved a good deal more so. Many contemporary newspaper editors and individual writers dwelt on a host of internal issues in France, much as if they were matters of interest in their own right and had little to do with the rapprochement between the two countries. To make the comments of these writers appear more relevant to the Entente than they in reality were by introducing a certain amount of speculation in the absence of definite evidence was, I felt, wrong. At the same time, I felt it only right and proper to record and assess reactions to these issues on the ground that this thesis is a study

of British attitudes towards France and all things French as well as the Entente and the later Anglo-Russian understanding. This, I trust, will explain to the reader why Chapter V is devoted more to the reactions in Britain to the Church-State quarrel in France than to religious attitudes towards the 1904 understanding or why so much of Chapter IV deals at length solely with domestic events in France. In both Chapters, however, I have sought to stress some underlying themes that fit into a more general picture of France.

Other aspects of my thesis title I have construed in a slightly less than literal sense. Originally I intended to have the phrase 'British public opinion' refer only to the views and attitudes of British subjects, an intention which I believe has for the most part been realised. Nevertheless, there are a few instances in which it has proved advantageous to draw upon the opinions of other nationals who, while not British, were sufficiently British in their outlook to render their inclusion acceptable. In this context I felt it safe to mention the complaints of Australian and Canadian business groups when discussing British commercial grievances against France in Chapter VII and to include the American Henry James when talking about intellectual and cultural relations between Britain and France in Chapter VIII. On the other hand, I have not gone so far as to include French or Russian opinions on Entente diplomacy, except in those few instances where I thought it impossible to divorce them from British opinion, on the ground that both these areas are well and truly beyond the scope of this study.

In much the same way, I have adhered closely, but not

rigidly, to the dates incorporated into the title of this thesis. To abide too strictly by the dates 1903-1908 would be to cut across some processes only just begun as well as to leave out others not yet completely finished. To do so would, moreover, be to exclude the writings of certain authors whose works either summed up well the sentiments of a certain quarter of British public opinion or exercised a great influence on the public at large. Norman Angell's Europe's Optical Illusion, written in 1907-8 but not published until 1909, is perhaps the most notable work that fits into this category. Nevertheless, there are others as well, and on balance I have regarded it worthwhile to sacrifice distinct boundaries of this sort in order to convey a better impression of what outspoken contemporaries were thinking about certain issues and developments.

In any event, the choice of the six year period from 1903 to 1908 will no doubt strike some readers as a bit curious. If this is the case, then it must be said that this particular time span was not arbitrarily chosen. The year 1903 was thought to be as good a starting point as any for a study of British attitudes towards France and the Entente Cordiale, inasmuch as it was in May of that year that relations between the two nations began to improve markedly with the visit of King Edward VII to Paris. The summer of 1907 was thought to be a convenient stopping point inasmuch as more than four full years had passed since the King's celebrated visit, time enough to assess British feelings towards France after the earlier and somewhat misleading euphoria had died away. Moreover, by that time a good deal of the focus on Entente diplomacy in the press and elsewhere in Britain had shifted from France towards Russia.

At this stage it would perhaps be wise to say a few words about the inclusion of the Anglo-Russian Agreements in this study. As the third cornerstone of the Triple Entente, the other two being the Dual Alliance and the 1904 Agreements, I felt compelled to include this subject in my thesis. Indeed, not only was the 1907 understanding an integral part of Entente diplomacy, but its inception also helped to shed some more light on the colonial arrangement with France three years earlier. Contemporary students of foreign affairs forever liked to make comparisons and point out contrasts between two similar developments, and the observations which they made as regards the Anglo-French and the Anglo-Russian understandings are revealing. Not that too much time and effort could be spent researching into British attitudes towards Russia and the 1907 Entente. The considerable treatment already accorded to France and the 1904 Entente did not permit this. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the inclusion of reactions in Britain to the improved relations between London and St. Petersburg from the signing of the 1907 Convention to the outbreak of the Bosnian annexation crisis in 1908 will give the reader a better appreciation of how popular or unpopular was the foreign policy of the British Government at home during these years.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Any historical work which purports to examine the attitudes of one large group of people towards another immediately encounters some problems of theory and method. Providing a precise definition of the term 'public opinion' is perhaps the most obvious difficulty of this type, but examining the various sources of public opinion and weighing up their relative importance figures prominently as well. Ideally a public opinion study should be one which represents the totality of all the thoughts and views of a group of people towards a particular subject. In practice, of course, this proves well-nigh impossible. For one thing, the sheer size of the group concerned puts the task beyond the realm of human endeavour. No one can record the views of more than forty million people about a certain subject. For another, the comparative lack of anything to go by renders such an exercise futile as well as impossible. Generally speaking, the ordinary man in the street in Britain had, as elsewhere, a scant and imperfect understanding of foreign affairs. More often than not, he was willing to leave such questions to the specialists and experts and accept their judgments.

1. The problem of defining 'public opinion'.

Obviously, then, the term 'British public opinion' does not refer in this instance to the feelings in aggregate of all those people living in early twentieth century Britain

towards France and the Entente Cordiale. But if such is the case, then it must be said that the term cannot refer simply to the views of 'specialists' or 'experts' either. There were too many people from too many diverse backgrounds who were acquainted with France at this time to permit such a narrow interpretation. Apart from the journalists and politicians, there had always been a significant number of people in Britain who had taken an interest in France, and by the turn of the century, their numbers were growing. Included in this category would be the nearly forty thousand Englishmen who lived in France during this period, of whom more than fourteen thousand were engaged in various types of employment in 1906;¹ the swelling ranks of British tourists, for whom Paris once again became a favourite visiting spot after the opening of the famous Exhibition of 1900;² and those culture enthusiasts who, even if they never set foot outside of Britain, were at least becoming more and more familiar with France thanks to the increasing number of books, articles, and plays in evidence dealing with that country. Needless to say, only a handful of these individuals ever bothered to put down their reactions and impressions on paper. Nevertheless, for our purposes their numbers were sufficient to make the term 'British public opinion' amount to something more than the composite reactions of the press and the politicians.

1 Sylvaine Marandon, L'image de la France dans l'Angleterre victorienne, 1848-1900, (Paris, 1967), pp. 102-103.

2 P.J.V. Rolo, The Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiations of the Agreements of 8 April 1904, (London, 1969), p. 156. It should be noted, however, that the provinces were gaining in popularity as well, with the South of France beginning to attract some of the middle as well as the upper echelons of British society by the early 1900s. See Marandon, op. cit., p. 74.

Yet even these remarks are too vague and imprecise if we are to gain any accurate understanding of what is meant by the phrase 'British public opinion towards France and the Entente Cordiale'. For the fact of the matter is that there have been known instances in which the 'man in the street' did from time to time give frank and outspoken expression of developments concerning foreign affairs. Commenting in his diary on the crisis with France over Madagascar in 1894, the writer W. Somerset Maugham was struck by the very widespread desire for war in Britain. Even two postmen he encountered while on his way to visit friends were talking about the 'common topic'.³ The Radical writer Norman Angell might have been offended by the 'crude xenophobia, mainly Anglophobia' of the farmers of the American West during the Venezuelan crisis of the same year, but in his memoirs he admitted running into 'the same kind of irrationalism in the France of the Dreyfus affair and the Britain of the Boer War'.⁴ Both of these gentlemen noticed a certain ignorance on the part of ordinary folk as to why exactly there should have been trouble. Indeed, for his part Angell was convinced that the war which these people desired was detrimental to their livelihood. But neither really went on to say the obvious, namely, that such manifestations occur only during moments of great international stress and tension and that for the rest of the time phobias and hatreds of this sort either remain dormant or are non-existent. As a result, the historian is left in something of a quandary on the matter of how much the attitudes of ordinary people should

3 W. Somerset Maugham, A Writer's Notebook, (London, 1949), p. 8.

4 Norman Angell, After All, (London, 1951), pp. 85, 87.

be included in the term 'public opinion'. To the extent that men and women from even the most uninfluential stations in life could speak up on matters of foreign affairs they obviously deserve to be closely considered. On the other hand, to the extent that such attitudes were voiced only when the 'national mind' was confronted by problems of war or defence, and even then only sometimes, they might well be all but overlooked.

Since it is usually only in times of deep crisis that the passions of the people are ever aroused about foreign affairs to any significant extent, it is worth recounting some of the more important events of the period to see how often the general public had occasion to vent its feelings. Certainly Britain's relations with France had of late provided a number of opportunities for expressions of this sort. Even before the eruption of Fashoda, a series of colonial incidents marred the already somewhat cool relations between London and Paris: a minor crisis over Siam in 1893; the afore-mentioned annexation of Madagascar by the French in 1894; and the decision of the French foreign minister Hanotaux to launch in the face of British objections an expedition to the Sudan in March 1895. Marchand's raising of the French flag on the Nile in 1898, coupled with the anti-British outbursts of a good many Frenchmen during the Dreyfus affair and the insulting caricatures of John Bull and Queen Victoria in the French press during the Boer War, only served to excite further the hostility which a considerable number of people in Britain had already felt towards France.

Nor was sentiments of this sort directed merely against France. Russia and Germany, too, were exposed to it, again as the result of deteriorating relations with Britain. Like the

French, the Russians ridiculed British reverses in the South African campaign and, indeed, went one step further by taking advantage of that campaign through the deliberate furthering of their own interests in Asia. The military occupation of Manchuria and the sending of special agents to Persia and Tibet were readily accomplished while the British Government was preoccupied in South Africa. An important section of the British public, ever sensitive about the security of India, demanded that steps be taken to safeguard the Empire in Asia. Their wish was soon realised with the formation of an alliance with Japan in 1902. It was more or less the same with Germany. Here, too, the leaders of a foreign Power had sought not merely to mock but to take the utmost advantage of Britain's embroilment in a far away colonial struggle. In the midst of the Boer War Kaiser Wilhelm II, with the recent success of the Franco-Russo-German triumvirate against Japan apparently still fresh in his mind, attempted to form a Continental League of the same countries against Britain. His plans came to naught when France refused to co-operate while the burning question of Alsace-Lorraine remained outstanding. Nevertheless, to many observers in Britain the proposal of the Continental League was but the latest in a series of developments seeming to suggest that Germany was bent upon challenging Britain's position throughout the world. Wilhelm's startling telegram to President Kruger in early 1896 was to many minds the first step in this direction; von Tirpitz's concept of the 'risk theory', the passage of a new German naval law in 1898, and the ever-growing demands of German imperialists for 'a place in the

sun', were all thought to be part and parcel of the same aim. But while all this gave rise to considerable worry in Britain, not everyone was equally disposed to regard Germany as an enemy; and, significantly, it was to Berlin rather than to Paris or to St. Petersburg that Joseph Chamberlain, one of the most outspoken and influential Unionists of the day, turned in 1901 in order to remove Britain from her by now all too dangerous 'splendid isolation'.

Up to the time of the Chamberlain-Bülow negotiations whatever xenophobic sentiments that existed in Britain were directed against not merely one, but several countries; beyond this point, however, such feelings began to be concentrated increasingly against Germany. A good deal of this can be attributed to the abrupt, almost curt, manner in which the negotiations were broken off. Rightly or wrongly, the German Chancellor's continued criticisms of the Government's conduct in the South African War was widely held in Britain to be responsible for this failure, and as a result various organs of opinion in the country began to see nothing but evil in German plans and intentions thereafter. Within a short time this attitude had reached such a pitch that the Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne was finding it more and more difficult to implement even the smallest policy of co-operation with the Germans; the financing of the Baghdad Railway affair and the Venezuelan debts question, both of which arose in early 1903, were cases in point. By contrast, the Government was able towards the end of 1902 and in the early part of 1903 to co-ordinate policies with the Quai d'Orsay over a host of issues, the most notable of them being the question of

Macedonian reform, without producing a public uproar. That it was able to do this was no doubt due largely to the absence of any recent quarrels with France, but the advent to the throne of a king who was noted for his pro-French outlook also played a part. Even before his famous visit to Paris in the spring of 1903, the presence of a highly francophile monarch on the throne undoubtedly went some way towards making the British people look upon France with less suspicion.

In the years immediately prior to the formation of the Anglo-French Entente, there was a good deal of concern in various circles of British opinion about foreign policy matters. In saying this, however, we are once again confronted with the problem of assessing how much of this concern belonged to the proverbial 'man in the street' and how much to the press. It is important to draw a distinction between 'public' and 'newspaper' opinion. As will be seen below, the newspapers and journals were all too willing to take a hand in leading those forces they claimed to represent. Rather than speaking on behalf of the people on foreign affairs issues, they tended to pass on the views and policies of the Government to the people. Even those organs of opinion that did not necessarily perform this function cannot, strictly speaking, be regarded as spokesmen for the general public; for as A.J.P. Taylor suggests, the editorials of all the newspapers and journals, however untainted by outside influences, represent little more than the views of a handful of men appealing to certain sections of the reading public. It is the 'personal, accidental factors', writes Taylor, that count most 'when trying to study the so-called organs of public opinion'.⁵ Inasmuch as we more often than not have no solid

5 A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers, (London, 1957), p. 112 n3.

evidence that ordinary people in Britain felt this way or that about countries like France and Germany, save for a few exceptional moments like the Trafalgar Square demonstrations immediately prior to the outbreak of war in August 1914, we are all but forced to make the term 'public opinion' synonymous with the term 'newspaper opinion'.

Is all this to argue, therefore, that in this instance the examination of British public opinion amounts to little more than a study of what a select number of individuals had to say about the Entente? To contend this would be to over-simplify matters. For despite Taylor's reasoning, there is another aspect of the problem to be considered as well. The press in Edwardian Britain did consist of a multitude of newspapers and journals, each of which expounded a particular shade of opinion on foreign affairs and other topics. Taken together, these opinions covered a very wide range of thought across the political spectrum. Hence, by gleaning the files of as many newspapers and journals as possible and by taking into account the views of particular groups in British society - the trade unions, the businessmen, the churches, and individual contemporary writers - one can hope to draw a reasonably comprehensive picture of British attitudes towards France and the Entente Cordiale between 1903 and 1908. The views of the man in the street might be hard to evaluate, but an assessment of the broad outlines of British 'public opinion' and the general intellectual climate of the period ought not be impossible.

2. The press as a source of public opinion

The British press did not take long to pronounce the 1904 Anglo-French Convention a success. The arrangement was formally

signed in Paris on 8 April, and within a day the newspapers and journals were apportioning credit for its consummation. To King Edward VII and President Loubet went first mention for having broken the diplomatic ice with their State visits to Paris and London in 1903. To the statesmen on both sides of the Channel - in particular, Lord Lansdowne and M. Delcassé - went much recognition for having laid the foundations of the Agreements by proposing a series of talks to settle all outstanding disputes in the colonial sphere between the two Powers. And to Paul Cambon and Sir Edward Monson, the Ambassadors of the two countries, went some credit for having successfully negotiated the complex details of the Agreements. Taken together, these various acknowledgements, along with similar tributes made by a number of historians, have tended to create the impression that the Anglo-French Convention, like most diplomatic agreements and treaties of the period, was almost entirely the work of the politicians and the heads of state and owed little of its existence to the efforts of others.

Certainly, the contemporary British press would have rebutted this notion. Staffed by an alert and competent corps of foreign correspondents and wielding an influence that was by no means restricted to their immediate reading public, the newspapers had an important part to play in the making of British foreign policy; and Anglo-French relations were no exception. Press polemics had been a major source of ill will between Britain and France at the turn of the century, and afterwards it was the friendlier tone adopted by the newspapers that helped to make way for a rapprochement. Thus it is not

Thus it is not surprising that when the 1904 Convention was signed, the press claimed its fair share of the responsibility for that agreement. In the words of J.A. Spender, editor of the Westminster Gazette: 'The King, Lord Lansdowne, M. Delcassé, M. Cambon, the French Deputies and men of commerce who visited England, the English M.P.s who visited France, the newspapers on both sides which determined to stop the fruitless bickerings which had become a habit with journalists - have each and all contributed their part'.⁶ But at the same time the newspapers were only too well aware that if the rapprochement was to become truly meaningful to Britons and Frenchmen, much more would have to be done. For as the Manchester Guardian pointed out, the Entente was a 'sensitive plant', 'an intellectual movement', which 'has yet to take root in the hearts of the peoples of both countries...' and 'has still to be converted into one of those noble popular zeals which work miracles'.⁷ How well the press and other spokesmen for British public opinion performed the task of rendering the Entente more popular will, it is hoped, be one of the major themes of this thesis. Of more immediate importance, however, are the character and political complexion of those newspapers and journals that led the discussion on foreign affairs, and it is to their background, in addition to the background of other forces and institutions claiming to represent certain sections of the general public, that we now turn our attention.

6 Westminster Gazette, 9 April 1904.

7 Manchester Guardian, 9 April 1904.

The newspaper industry underwent a major transformation during the Edwardian period. A more popular type of journalism was being evolved to attract larger reading audiences; while technical advances were rapidly being made in order to keep pace with the increased circulation demands of the public. In both cases, the transformation had been going on for some time, and in both cases, the changes had their origins in the social reforms of the late nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1891 Parliament passed a series of acts which made elementary education compulsory and made attendance free at State-run schools till the age of ten. The impact of these reforms was profound, particularly with regard to the problem of illiteracy. Whereas twenty-five per cent of adult men and thirty-five per cent of adult women in England could neither read nor write in 1861, only five per cent of adult men and six per cent of adult women were unable to do so by 1893.⁸ In short, a whole new reading public had been created by the Education Acts of the late nineteenth century, and huge financial rewards awaited any newspaper proprietor enterprising enough to appeal to the needs and interests of this vast group. In 1883, W.T. Stead made the first step in this direction when he replaced John Morley as editor of the Pall Mall Gazette and introduced to the paper a number of technical innovations which launched what later became known as the 'New Journalism'. By contrast with the changes which men like William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were bringing to American newspapers at this time, these reforms were timid indeed; nevertheless, they

⁸ Helen M. Lynd, England in the 1880s (New York, 1945), p. 367.

managed to shock most of Fleet Street. They included the use of headlines and cross-headings to facilitate quicker reading, the development of gossip and social columns, and the use of the interview, hitherto regarded by most journalists as an invasion of privacy.⁹ Five years later, the Radical Irishman T.P. O'Conner followed Stead's example when he founded the Star, a half-penny paper designed to arouse the political consciousness of London's East End. And in 1894, Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, borrowed many of Stead's techniques not long after he purchased the flagging Evening News.¹⁰ But as yet the 'New Journalism' had affected only the London evening press. In order for the Education Acts of the late nineteenth century to make a true impression on the newspaper world, a similar transformation would have to take place in the morning and provincial press. Not until Harmsworth launched the Daily Mail on 4 May 1896 did this transformation finally arrive.

To the superficial eye, perhaps, the advent of the Daily Mail was hardly an earth-shaking affair. Small, compact, and printed in the traditional fashion of front-page advertisements, the paper looked like a cheaper version of the 'quality' morning papers. Indeed, every day its front page carried the caption: 'A Penny Newspaper for One Half-penny'. Yet despite its conventional appearance, the Daily Mail started a new era in

⁹ Oron J. Hale, Publicity and Diplomacy, with Special Reference to England and Germany, 1890-1914 (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1964), p. 13; also S. Morison, English Newspapers, 1622-1932 (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 283-284; and Francis Williams, The Right to Know (London, 1969), p. 66.

¹⁰ Hale, op. cit., pp. 13-14; also Williams, loc. cit.; and Kennedy Jones, Fleet Street and Downing Street (London, 1920), p. 133.

British journalism. For of all the morning newspapers in existence in Britain in the 1890s, it alone made a conscious effort to attract the reading public recently brought into being. Chatty, sensational, and informative all in one, it offered many ordinary people hitherto ignored by the press an escape from their humdrum existence. Special features and gimmicks were introduced in the hope of drawing a bigger audience: an enlarged sporting news section for men; an entire page of news and features for women; and a series of contests and prizes for everyone. As for the more standard type of news, it too was included in the paper, though in condensed form. All news stories and articles were kept short, editorials confined to one paragraph, and parliamentary speeches quoted only in part. But whatever the Daily Mail lacked in length it more than made up for in excitement. Rather than bore its readers with a detailed discussion of political issues, the paper simply played on their imaginations. If, as has been alleged, Harmsworth truly believed that the public enjoyed nothing better than a 'good hate', then there is no field in which he and his subordinates on the staff of the Daily Mail developed this sentiment better than that of foreign affairs. First France and then Germany became the national enemy, thanks in part to the sabre-rattling columns of the Mail.¹¹ What is more, the impact of these innovations and this jingoism was dramatic. In 1897, only a year after its first appearance, the paper was selling 300,000 copies a day. From then till long after the outbreak of the Great War, it had the largest circulation of any daily newspaper in

¹¹ R.C.K. Ensor, England, 1871-1914 (London, 1936), p. 314.

the country.¹²

No doubt the Daily Mail was not an entirely new venture in British journalism, being in some respects little more than a daily version of the cheap, large-selling organs of opinion which grew up in the late nineteenth century. In 1880, George Newnes founded Tit-Bits, a weekly journal which consisted of 'potted, easily assimilated facts about a multitude of different things',¹³ and which within three years had a circulation of more than 700,000 copies. Even older were the Sunday newspapers like Lloyds Weekly News, News of the World, and Reynolds News, whose steady diet of crime and sensationalism attracted millions of readers. Harmsworth himself, moreover, had already drawn a large audience since 1888 with the birth of Answers, an unabashed imitation of Newnes's Tit-Bits. Nor can it be said that the Daily Mail reached all of the new reading public. Conservative to the core in both appearance and politics, the paper appealed primarily to those with a small but still vested

12 On newspaper circulations: there is no reliable source of information about the sales figures for leading journals and papers of the Edwardian period, and a newspaper historian of the early twentieth century can only give rough estimates of circulation figures, many of which are based on the figures given in the memoirs of contemporary editors and proprietors. According to A.P. Wadsworth, editor of the Manchester Guardian from 1945 to 1954, the historian 'can only guess at the circulations of most of them during the period of secrecy between the 1850s and the 1930s. Then all but a few papers jealously guarded the volume of their sales; it was usually much less than was commonly supposed. And now most of **their** business books have long ago gone for waste paper. Even papers with continuous existence have, more often than not, suffered changes of ownership and their records too have gone. And papers that, like my own, have had continuity of ownership, have only imperfect records'. See A.P. Wadsworth, 'Newspapers circulations, 1800-1954', Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, (1954-1955), pp. 1, 25, 35.

13 P. Williams, op. cit., p. 67.

interest in society, the lower middle classes. The much larger working class was either ignored or overlooked, possibly because Northcliffe was not interested in the workers but almost certainly because most of them could not have subscribed to the Daily Mail, even if they had so wished. Great Britain might have been the wealthiest country in Europe at the turn of the century, but she was still plagued by widespread poverty; and newspapers, however inexpensive they were becoming, continued to remain outside the reach of most people's pockets. In the words of one newspaper historian: 'It is extremely improbable that the purchasers of Edwardian half-penny dailies came mainly from among those who could not afford enough food to keep them in health and had nothing to spare for inessentials...'.¹⁴ The point is an important one; for it yet again severely qualifies one's use of the term 'public opinion' when talking about British attitudes to foreign affairs matters in the early 1900s. A significant slice of the population at this time was not even reading about, much less forming an opinion on, such subjects as France and the Entente Cordiale.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to minimize the changes that Harmsworth was introducing to the British newspaper industry. After all, the birth of the Daily Mail in 1896 did mark a significant advance in the growth of the popular press in the country, even if it did not constitute the revolutionary development that is sometimes supposed. But a far more complete break from the past than either the style or presentation of the paper was the new sense of purpose with which it was

¹⁴ H.J. Perkin, 'The origin of the popular press', History Today, VII (July, 1957), 429.

instilled when first launched. Whereas other dailies had been started primarily in the hope of giving their owners access to political power and influence, the Daily Mail under Harmsworth was intended to be a profit-making enterprise. Later Harmsworth was to alter his priorities somewhat, but in the early stages of his proprietorship at least, he was interested almost exclusively in the acquisition of personal wealth. Indeed, it can be said with no exaggeration that in the beginning he devoted all his energies to securing this aim. At a time when most newspapers were either family-owned or controlled by politically financed cliques, the Daily Mail was started as a public company, complete with stocks and shares for willing buyers. Harmsworth, of course, retained for himself the controlling interests in the paper; but by appealing to investors he was attracting capital in the same way that other companies tried to do on the stock exchange. Similarly, he made quick use of the technological advances then taking place both in America and Britain so as to reap a larger financial reward. Only recently a number of mechanical improvements had been made in the newspaper field: a rotary press in place of the traditional flat bed printing in order to speed up production; the introduction of linotype, a machine which hastened the process of setting up and arranging lines of type; and the development of wood pulp as paper with sufficient tensile strength to withstand the pressure of the new presses.¹⁵ By being the first to take full advantage of these innovations, Harmsworth and his staff were able to have 200,000 copies of the Daily Mail cut, folded, and pressed per

¹⁵ Francis Williams, The Dangerous Estate, (London, 1957), pp. 122-124.

hour, a feat which reduced the production costs of the paper by thirty to fifty per cent and which enabled it to be sold in great numbers for half the price of its rivals.¹⁶

Of course, this more mercenary spirit which Harmsworth introduced did not immediately catch hold in Britain. Newspaper proprietors tended by nature to be opposed to change, and for many of them the Daily Mail was what Lord Salisbury once contemptuously called it - 'a newspaper written for office boys by office boys'. In due course of time, however, this type of sentiment began to fade, and in its place came a growing respect for Harmsworth and his business-like techniques. In 1900, Arthur Pearson established the Daily Express, another morning half-penny paper with sensationalized news and numerous special features. But Pearson was simply hoping to repeat Harmsworth's success story. Most owners adopted Harmsworth's attitudes and methods for sheer survival. For the fact was that the Daily Mail, although it appealed to a different class of reader, still struck a blow at the economic well-being of even the oldest, most respected newspapers. The reason is simple. Commercial advertisers invariably did business with those newspapers with the largest readership, and the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, because of their huge circulations, quickly began to take in a sizeable amount of the revenues from this all-important source. As a result, all newspaper proprietors were forced to adopt a more commercial outlook or face ruin.¹⁷ To the owners of the 'class' newspapers this problem posed by the

¹⁶ Kennedy Jones, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁷ Hale, op. cit., p. 16.

Daily Mail and the Daily Express was particularly difficult; for they had to consider how to win back the advertisers without lowering the quality or seriousness of their papers. Some, like C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian, managed to remain financially solvent by improving the services and features of their newspapers; while others, notably the owners of the Daily News and the Daily Chronicle, simply reduced the price of their newspapers from 1d. to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the hope of boosting circulations. All, however, began to keep pace with the technical improvements and changing attitudes. It was the only way to avoid succumbing to the economic pressures.

Of the newspapers affected by the 'Harmsworth revolution', undoubtedly the most important in the coverage of foreign affairs was The Times. Founded in 1785, The Times was one of the oldest dailies in the country and certainly one of the most influential. Almost as far back as the date of its establishment it had been in close contact with the Foreign Office, and throughout the years this relationship had grown so that by the beginning of the twentieth century The Times was regarded the world over as a national institution and the semi-official voice of the British Government. Heads of state read its leader-articles with particular attention, and foreign diplomats working in London regarded the opportunity of talking to a member of The Times editorial staff as second in importance only to a conversation with a Foreign Office or Cabinet figure. The man who did most during this period to help The Times maintain its high reputation was the paper's Foreign editor, Valentine Chirol. A former member of the

Foreign Office, Chirol was completely trusted by his one-time companions in the Diplomatic Service. He was a good friend of Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador to Germany, Sir Charles Hardinge, Ambassador to Russia, and Cecil Spring-Rice, British minister at Teheran from 1904 to 1906. Chirol also visited the Foreign Office regularly and was on good terms with such figures as Sir Thomas Sanderson, the permanent under-secretary, William Tyrrel, later Sir Edward Grey's private secretary, and Eyre Crowe. When Hardinge left St Petersburg in 1906 to take Sanderson's place in London, Chirol frequented the Foreign Office even more often and was confided in on a widening range of issues.¹⁸ Chirol, moreover, was an experienced traveller, and, while abroad, he came into contact on numerous occasions with leading members of foreign governments, businessmen, and other journalists. These acquaintances gave him an unusual insight into moods and attitudes in foreign capitals, as Chirol's correspondence in The Times Archives indicates.

Yet The Times's claim to fame did not rest entirely upon the activities of its Foreign editor. Even if Chirol had not cultivated so many friendships, the newspaper still would have ranked as the most informative in Britain in the coverage of world events. For The Times had by far the most elaborate foreign news service of any daily paper in the country. It alone had correspondents in virtually all the world's capitals, and the men it sent abroad often wielded an

¹⁸ Zara Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, (London, 1969), p. 189.

influence that rivalled or even surpassed that of H.M. Government's official representatives. In Morocco, The Times correspondent Walter B. Harris constantly gave advice to British diplomats in the country. A resident there since 1887, Harris was recognized throughout Europe as the foremost Western expert on Morocco.¹⁹ At Vienna, Henry Wickham Steed reputedly gained the confidence of the Austrian Government more than did the British Ambassador, Sir George Goschen.²⁰ And, indeed, in all the major European capitals the correspondents of The Times were accorded rights and favours which were usually reserved for British diplomats. They were granted interviews with leading members of the host government; they attended many of the same social functions as did the Embassy staff; and they often had important private contacts of their own. In Paris, still regarded in Printing House Square as the most illustrious post of all, The Times correspondent William Lavino repeatedly made use of friends in high places to gain access to the Quai d'Orsay. Through Eugène Etienne, the influential deputy for the Oran and head of the parti colonial, Lavino was able to meet Delcassé, the French foreign minister. Later, when Etienne became War Minister, Lavino had an important link with the entire Rouvier Cabinet of 1905-6.²¹

¹⁹ The History of The Times, vol. III: The Twentieth Century Test, 1884-1912 (London, 1947), p. 410. But as Zara Steiner points out, Arthur Nicolson, the British ~~ambassador~~ minister at Fez, ceased to listen to Harris after 1904 once it became apparent that The Times correspondent was supporting the Sultan's efforts to resist France's penetration of Morocco. See Z. Steiner, op. cit., p. 188 n3.

²⁰ Ibid., loc. cit.

²¹ The History of The Times, vol. III, p. 377.

The importance of The Times's correspondents, however, was not confined to their ability to secure sources of information. Under the régime of Charles Moberly Bell, the Managing Director of the paper, the chief function of a foreign correspondent was 'to comment on the news rather than give it'.²² As might be expected, such a policy tended to grant The Times's representatives abroad comparative freedom to interpret events as they saw fit. From time to time, of course, the Foreign editor did intervene to make corrections with regard to style or obvious factual errors or to make deletions in order to save precious printing space.²³ Moreover, any article which ran counter to the general editorial policy of the paper or threatened to offend significant sections of British public opinion either underwent similar modifications or was suppressed outright.²⁴ But in the main, a correspondent

²² E.H.C. Moberly Bell, The Life and Letters of C.F. Moberly Bell (London, 1927), p. 167; also quoted in Hale, op. cit., p. 21.

²³ See, for example, Chirol's letter to Lavino, 19 May 1904, in The Times Archives F(oreign) L(etter) B(ook), vol. IV, 878f., in which an article written by the Paris correspondent and his staff about a proposed Channel Tunnel project is criticized by the Foreign editor as being 'not English at all, but a sort of Anglicized French'. Chirol continues: 'there is scarcely a sentence which we have not had to alter to some extent. The same thing happens constantly with dramatic and artistic critiques'.

²⁴ Chirol was forever urging Lavino, for example, to tone down his articles on the Church-State struggle in France because of the indignation these articles were producing in Roman Catholic circles in Britain. See Chirol to Lavino, 6 October 1904, The Times Archives F.L.B., V, 212. And, as will be explained in Chapter III of this thesis, many of the despatches of The Times correspondent at Fez in the spring of 1905 did not reach the foreign news pages of the paper because their strongly anti-French outlook conflicted with Chirol's and Moberly Bell's view of the first Moroccan crisis.

for The Times was able to report the news with few restrictions imposed upon him by his superiors. Considering that most provincial newspapers of the day had yet to acquire their own foreign news service and often quoted the despatches in The Times, this was not a matter of small consequence. For the interpretations which a correspondent for The Times gave to the news helped to shape the attitudes not only of his own newspaper's readers but also those of a good many other organs of opinion throughout the country.

The format of The Times reflected well this emphasis which the editors at Printing House Square placed upon the acquisition and the reporting of foreign news. The first two pages of the paper were filled with the customary classified advertisements, after which came the foreign news items. The length of these latter entries varied from day to day, depending upon the amount of news available. As a rule, they occupied one, if not two, pages. The longest despatches tended to come from the correspondents at the major European capitals - Lavino at Paris, George Saunders at Berlin, Henry Wickham Steed at Vienna. Even if there was no news of any great importance to be reported, these men still sent home lengthy articles. Lavino, for example, often used to summarize the proceedings of the Chamber of Deputies for lack of anything better to report. In subsequent pages, The Times devoted as much, if not more, space to foreign business and financial news in conjunction with its own City notes. It also had detailed law and police reports and covered the parliamentary debates with greater thoroughness than any other

newspaper. But its coverage of domestic news tended to be patchy and inferior to that of other London and leading provincial dailies. On the editorial page, there was proportionately less comment on home affairs than in other newspapers. Instead, the accent was on foreign and imperial matters, and scarcely a weekday passed without The Times expounding Britain's relations with the Powers or the state of the Empire, or both. Although technically an independent organ of opinion without any political ties, The Times spoke on issues of the day from a strongly Conservative viewpoint. As far as foreign policy was concerned, this meant opposition to virtually all things German, and it can well be argued that before 1914 the utterances of The Times did as much as anything to worsen relations with Berlin. But if, as one historian has alleged, the editors and the various correspondents of The Times around the world co-ordinated their efforts to present Germany in the worst possible light, then it must be said that they also worked together to help give France and her policies a most favourable image.²⁵ From Paris, Lavino sent despatch after despatch about the enthusiasm with which Frenchmen greeted the Entente Cordiale and the goodwill they felt towards Britain; from Rome, William Hubbard wrote about the desirability of an Anglo-French-Italian triplice in the Mediterranean; at St Petersburg, The Times correspondent stressed France's efforts to smooth over any difficulties in Anglo-Russian relations; and in London, Valentine Chirol steadfastly refused to print anything that might tarnish the Entente or hurt French feelings. This bias continued unabated throughout the decade

²⁵ See Hale, op. cit., p. 22.

that preceded the First World War.

In terms of influence, the only newspaper in Britain that rivalled The Times was the Westminster Gazette. Like The Times, it had a small circulation of about 50,000 and was in deep financial trouble for most of the years of its existence. Its annual loss of £10,000 eventually forced the proprietor, Sir George Newnes, to sell the paper in 1908. Yet despite its flagging sales, the Westminster Gazette had a political importance which few other newspapers in the entire history of British journalism have enjoyed. It had been founded in 1893 simply as a Liberal alternative to the three or four Tory penny evening newspapers in London. But when J.A. Spender took over as editor of the paper in 1896, the Westminster began to grow in reputation. Spender was on good terms with many of the prominent figures in the Liberal party, particularly Grey and Asquith, and when these two men entered the Liberal Cabinet of December 1905, the Westminster was quickly acknowledged both in Britain and abroad as the semi-official voice of the Government.²⁶

Spender has subsequently denied in his memoirs that Grey used his newspaper as a mouthpiece to voice Foreign Office views and added that Berlin wrongly attached too much importance to his relationship with the Foreign Secretary.²⁷ But the correspondence between the two men does not quite bear this out. On several occasions, Grey did seek Spender's help in

²⁶ Zara Steiner states that there were also financial connections between the Westminster and the Liberal Cabinet but does not elaborate on the claim. See Z. Steiner, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁷ J.A. Spender, Life, Journalism, and Politics, I (London, 1927), p. 170.

making the Liberal Government's stance on foreign policy matters clear, and the Germans were right to read closely the leader-articles of the Westminster.²⁸

The presentation of the Westminster Gazette, however, differed significantly from that of The Times. To begin with, it was much shorter than its morning rival. Hard-pressed financially, the Westminster averaged sixteen pages a day to The Times's twenty; it had only one leader-article a day instead of the normal three; and its foreign news service was not nearly as complete as that offered by Printing House Square. Whereas The Times sent scores of men abroad to write daily from their posts, the Westminster Gazette employed but a handful of foreign correspondents, each of whom reported events irregularly. The costs were so prohibitive that even an important city like Vienna was by-passed. Austrian affairs, it was thought, could be adequately handled by the paper's Berlin correspondent.²⁹ But whatever the Westminster Gazette lacked in quantity, it more than made up for in quality. Spender's leader-articles, for example, were among the best in Edwardian journalism. Printed daily on the front page of the paper, they attracted the attention of important people in both major political parties for their argumentation and lucidity of style. Charles Geake was the assistant editor. His 'Notes of the Day' column immediately followed Spender's

²⁸ Towards the end of 1905, for example, Grey asked Spender to write an editorial refuting Conservative-inspired rumours that an incoming Liberal Government might go back on Lord Lansdowne's recent agreement with France. See Grey to Spender, 19 October 1905, in the J.A. Spender Papers, British Museum Add MSS 46, 389; see also Chapter III of this thesis for further details.

²⁹ Spender, op. cit., p. 168.

editorial and dealt with domestic and foreign news items equally well. In P.C. Gould, the paper had the most celebrated political cartoonist of the day, and various experts were frequently called upon to write special articles relating to their own field. Lucien Wolf, the editor of the Daily Graphic, gave a more penetrating analysis of foreign affairs in a series of articles under the pen name 'Diplomaticus' for the Westminster Gazette than he had ever done as leader-writer for his own newspaper. Politically, the Westminster expounded only a moderate brand of Liberalism. The Free Trade controversy was its main preoccupation, and by far the largest number of its editorials was devoted to combating Joseph Chamberlain's campaign for Tariff Reform. Foreign affairs, of course, were another of the paper's chief concerns, and in this field the Westminster Gazette was a firm advocate of good relations with Germany and Russia as well as with France. But the paper never joined the chorus of Radical journalists hostile to Sir Edward Grey's policies. Instead, it became after 1906 one of the few organs of opinion in Britain to express confidence in the Foreign Secretary's policies while advocating all along an understanding with Germany.

In appearance, the Westminster Gazette closely resembled the Pall Mall Gazette. Undoubtedly this was because the Westminster was in many respects a continuation of that paper. Throughout the 1880s the Pall Mall Gazette had been a Liberal party organ. Then in 1892 the American multi-millionaire William Waldorf Astor purchased the paper and converted it into a Conservative organ of opinion. E.T. Cook, who hitherto had edited the Pall Mall Gazette, resigned to write leader-articles

for the newly-founded Westminster Gazette, and J.A. Spender and F.C. Gould, who also had been on the staff of the Pall Mall, joined him. Behind them lay a newspaper much diminished in stature and prestige. For although the Pall Mall Gazette continued to thrive until well into the 1920s, it never secured for itself the same degree of influence with the Conservative party that it had earlier achieved with the Liberal party under the successive editorships of John Morley, W.T. Stead, and Cook. Rather, it sank to a level scarcely above that of the half-penny London evening papers. It had no foreign news service whatsoever and relied completely upon Reuter and other agencies for information. Its leader-articles on foreign affairs, printed on the front page of the paper and characterized by some particularly provocative titles, were of the more hysterical anti-German kind usually associated with the cheaper newspapers. Between 1896 and 1909, Douglas Straight was the editor-in-chief of the Pall Mall Gazette, and E.G. Barnard was its foreign editor.³⁰

One newspaper which had been steadily improving its position throughout this period, however, was the Daily News. In 1901, George Cadbury, the cocoa king, bought the paper for a princely sum of money and immediately introduced several changes in order to reverse its dwindling sales. Consistent with his pacifist and Quaker views, Cadbury first of all made the paper adopt a pro-Boer line during the South African War. E.T. Cook, who had been editor of the paper since he left the Pall Mall Gazette in 1896, resigned rather than support

³⁰ Hale, op. cit., p. 17.

Cadbury's anti-Government outlook, and A.C. Gardiner was appointed to take his place. Under Gardiner, the Daily News recruited a galaxy of Radical journalists talents that helped to make it one of the most formidable left-wing newspapers in Edwardian Britain. H.W. Nevinson and H.N. Brailsford were employed on the editorial staff, and together with Gardiner, they spearheaded the movement of the 'new Liberals' agitating for sweeping social reforms. The Christian Socialist writer C.F.G. Masterman was the paper's literary editor, but he too became caught up in the campaign against social injustices and soon was devoting as much of his energies for the paper to attacking living conditions as to reviewing books. Yet for all this emphasis on Britain's internal problems, the Daily News did not ignore foreign affairs. On the contrary, it was very much interested in this field. Along with H.W. Massingham and G.H. Ferris, the latter of whom headed the paper's foreign department until 1910, Gardiner was to make the Daily News one of the most consistent critics of British foreign policy between 1902 and 1914. The attacks on Sir Edward Grey for his insularity and his susceptibility to the 'sinister influence' of certain anti-German permanent officials at the Foreign Office constituted the central theme of the paper's criticisms in this area. Indeed, by the time the Agadir crisis had erupted in 1911, these attacks had gone some way towards breaking up the Liberal party.³¹

No less striking were the improved finances of the Daily News during this period. Gradually losing the battle for securing

31 Ibid., p. 23-24.

classified and commercial advertisements, Cadbury decided to take a risk in early 1903 and reduce the price of the Daily News from 1d. to ½d. in the hope that the resulting increased sales would more than offset the paper's cheaper price.³² The gamble paid off. In 1905, the circulation of the Daily News rose to about 135,000, an increase of nearly 100,000 over the corresponding figures for 1901. Five years later, it was selling 200,000 copies a day.³³ By contrast with other contemporary Liberal newspapers, its growing clientele consisted of people who came from varying walks of life rather than from any particular section of British society. In the words of a recent biographer of Gardiner, the Daily News 'made its appeal, not like the Westminster, to the gentlemen of the Pall Mall clubs, nor, like the Manchester Guardian, to the educated upper middle classes, but, more widely, to the amorphous suburban classes whose self-regard and dedication to self-improvement set the tone for the era'.³⁴

Apart from the Daily News, the only Liberal morning paper in London during this period was the Daily Chronicle. Like the News, the Chronicle cut its price from 1d. to ½d. in an effort to continue attracting a reasonably large slice of the reading public in the capital. In this instance, too, the tactic

³² It should be added, however, that Cadbury himself had been partly responsible for the financial difficulties of the Daily News. He banned the lucrative liquor advertisements on the grounds that they might exercise an immoral influence on the paper's reading audience. The equally popular racing tips were likewise excluded. See ibid., p. 23.

³³ A.P. Wadsworth, op. cit., p. 25.

³⁴ Stephen Koss, Fleet Street Radical: A.C. Gardiner and the Daily News (London, 1973), p. 66.

worked, and the Daily Chronicle managed to stay in print until 1930, when it merged with its more Radical rival to become the News Chronicle. Politically, the paper's sentiments belonged to the Liberal 'Right'. Robert Donald, editor of the Daily Chronicle throughout much of this period, was a prominent member of the National Liberal Club and a fervent admirer of Lord Rosebery. Undoubtedly this friendship helps to explain why the paper was imbued with a strongly Liberal Imperialist outlook and usually, though not always, echoed Rosebery's opinions on the major issues of the day. One important exception was the Anglo-French Entente, which the Liberal leader, but not the Daily Chronicle, regarded as dangerous for its anti-German implications. But although the paper was closely identified with a prominent figure in the Liberal party, it never wielded as much influence as either the Westminster Gazette or the Daily News. In part, this can be attributed to its smaller size. Limited to a mere twelve pages a day, both its domestic and its foreign news services tended to be more incomplete than those offered in Spender's or Gardiner's newspapers. Moreover, Rosebery's sway over fellow Liberals had been steadily declining throughout these years, and, correspondingly, the Chronicle's reputation as an influential paper began to diminish. Nevertheless, its short, well-tempered leader-articles did attract a following, and along with the Westminster Gazette, the Daily Chronicle distinguished itself as one of a handful of newspapers in Britain to support Grey's Entente policies without abandoning the idea of a reconciliation with Berlin.

Founded in 1772, the Morning Post was the oldest of the 'quality' London dailies. Its proprietor was Algernon Borthwick,

later Baron Glenesk, who bought the paper in 1876 and turned it into the voice of the British aristocracy. Whereas The Times was read by the politicians, the diplomats, the City investors, and the imperial administrators, the Morning Post appealed primarily to the leisure class. It devoted an inordinate amount of space to social and literary columns that could only interest men and women of property. Indeed, according to R.D. Blumenfeld, the editor of the Daily Mail, the Post was 'snobbish, with information about duchesses and advertisements about butlers'.³⁵ Yet the paper had a serious side to it as well. Within its twenty pages was a comprehensive coverage of London, national, and foreign news. It had numerous correspondents abroad, more perhaps than any other newspaper apart from The Times. And it enjoyed some important links with the Foreign Office. Henry Spenser Wilkinson, the renowned military expert and foreign affairs editor for the paper from 1895 to 1909, was the brother-in-law of Eyre Crowe. H.A. Gwynne, editor-in-chief of the Morning Post from 1910 onwards, was a close friend of Cecil Spring-Rice. As might be expected, the paper was ultra-Tory, almost reactionary, in its political outlook. It bitterly opposed Irish Home Rule, House of Lords reform, and virtually all the social legislation proposed by the 1906 Liberal Government. Its foreign policy was decidedly imperialistic, and it was inclined to look with misgivings upon any arrangements with rival colonial Powers. In 1904, it berated the Conservative Government for coming to terms with France. Later, however, the paper redressed its outlook on the Entente Cordiale, and by the time that Gwynne had succeeded Wilkinson as chief

³⁵ Quoted in Wilfred Hindle's The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper (London, 1937), p. 5.

leader-writer, the Morning Post was, according to its biographer, 'first for England, then the Empire, and then France'.³⁶

Also solidly Conservative in its political opinions was the Daily Telegraph. But unlike The Times or the Morning Post, the Daily Telegraph did not speak for the governing classes or the upper echelons of British society. Instead, it reflected the views and tastes of the new backbone of the Conservative party - the middle class. Everything about the appearance of the Daily Telegraph suggests that it was geared towards attracting this particular group: it made some important concessions to the 'New Journalism' without lowering the tone of the paper; it greatly extended its news service to cover unusual items of interest as well as the main issues of the day;³⁷ and it improved its financial news section in order to attract more businessmen to subscribe to the paper. In financial terms, such changes paid off handsomely. Circulation, although steadily declining throughout these years, still managed to stay above the 200,000 mark; and on the front page of the paper there was the proud reminder that the Telegraph was Britain's largest selling penny daily. At the same time, the proprietors of the paper, the Levy-Lawson family, made significant inroads on other newspaper owners in securing commercial and classified advertisements. Next to the Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph was the most profitable venture in Fleet Street.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

³⁷ The daily column 'Paris Day by Day', which informed readers of the social and cultural goings-on in the French capital, was one of the more prominent special features of the paper.

³⁸ Hale, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

Yet despite its undeniable financial success, the Daily Telegraph somehow fell short of being a truly great newspaper. At home, it had no contacts with important governmental figures; while abroad it was represented by few men of distinction. True, in Berlin the Daily Telegraph did have on its staff two correspondents who were well received at the Wilhelmstrasse. J.L. Bashford, whom one historian has described as 'the most pro-German member of the British foreign correspondent corps',³⁹ reported for the paper until 1904. E.J. Wilcox, resident correspondent for the Daily Telegraph at Berlin from 1906 to 1914, was also genuinely liked by the German authorities. But neither Bashford nor Wilcox had any real impact on the editorial policy of the paper, which was largely pro-French and anti-German. Moreover, the leader-articles on foreign affairs seemed to lack the forcefulness and conviction of those of other newspapers, a fault which might be attributed to the staff organization of the paper. Unlike most other organs of opinion, the Daily Telegraph had no single editor. Rather, it employed a group of journalists, each of whom was distinguished enough in his own right but was unable to devote his full energies to writing for the paper. W.L. Courtney, one of the most consistent contributors, gave his first priority to editing the Fortnightly Review. J.L. Garvin, another leader-writer for the Telegraph, wrote foreign affairs articles under the pseudonym 'Calchas' for several Edwardian periodicals. Likewise, Archibald Hurd was engaged in writing on military and diplomatic matters for numerous other journals. This arrangement was not rectified until well after the Great War,

39 Ibid., loc. cit.

when the ownership of the Daily Telegraph changed hands and a separate foreign department under the direction of one man was created for the paper.

Less important in almost every respect than the Daily Telegraph was its morning rival, the Daily Graphic. Of all the London newspapers, it offered the least value for the money. Consisting of a mere twelve pages, little of which contained any news or comment, the Daily Graphic was over-priced at 1d. a copy. It appealed mainly to those who wished to see rather than read the news; for throughout the paper photographs and drawings abounded in place of written articles. Its foreign news service was almost non-existent, and the paper relied heavily upon the established agencies for the little information it did print. Editorials, which usually numbered three a day, were short and carried little influence. Politically, the Daily Graphic was Conservative, although its leader-writer, Lucien Wolf, was a Liberal - a combination which might explain why the Graphic was the least Germanophobe of all the Tory papers in London. But despite Wolf's presence on the staff, the Daily Graphic was not authoritative newspaper. Significantly, W.T. Stead, then editor of the Review of Reviews and a man intimately acquainted with the British Newspaper world, gave the paper a rather low rating in his December 1904 inventory of London editors and organs of opinion.⁴⁰

40 Of the 'quality' London newspapers, Stead put The Times and the Westminster Gazette at the top of his list in terms of influence, followed by the Standard, the Daily News, the Morning Post, the Daily Chronicle, the Morning Leader, the St James's Gazette, and the Daily Graphic, in that order. Surprisingly, Stead rated the Pall Mall Gazette below the Graphic. Then in a separate category of newspapers which, as Stead put it, 'combined

Founded in 1896, the Daily Mail was one of the most recent ventures in Fleet Street journalism during this period. As has been suggested before, it was also one of the most dynamic. For more than any other British newspaper of the day, the Mail was a success in terms of circulation and advertising revenues. Between 1903 and 1908, the sales figures of the paper averaged about 750,000, and although this constituted a significant drop from the near one million copies it sold during the Boer War, the Daily Mail nevertheless had a dominance in numbers which no other newspaper had hitherto enjoyed.⁴¹ Its nearest competitor, the Daily Express, was selling only about 400,000 copies as late as 1910.⁴²

At the same time, Harmsworth exploited the advertising field with a near ruthlessness. Almost half of the Daily Mail's eight pages were filled with classified advertisements, and the remainder of the paper was laced with advertisements offering commercial products.⁴³ Beyond a doubt, the popularity of the Mail rested upon its cheap price and

the maximum of advertising with the minimum of influence', he placed the Daily Telegraph at the head of the list, followed by the Daily Mail and then the Daily Express. This lumping together of the respectable penny Daily Telegraph with the two half-penny mass circulating organs of opinion is curious. Nevertheless, Stead's assessment serves as a useful guide to the London press in Edwardian times. See W.T. Stead, 'His Majesty's Public Councillors', Review of Reviews, XIX (December, 1904), p. 595.

41 In 1904, the Daily Mail's sales averaged 809,500 copies. In 1907, the figure had dropped to 720,300, after which time the sales began to level off till the outbreak of the First World War, when the paper surpassed the million mark. In 1900, at the height of the South African campaign, the paper was selling an estimated 989,300 copies a day. See Wadsworth, op. cit., pp. 25, 35.

42 Ibid.

43 A typical copy of the Daily Mail at this time would run thus: page one would be devoted entirely to classified advertisements; on page two, classified advertisements would share space with business news; page three would consist of national news; page four, the editorials and entertainments guide; page five, the foreign news; page six would consist of sporting news and advertisements; on page seven, fashion and women's news would compete with advertisements for printing space; and page eight, like page one, would be devoted entirely to advertisements.

over-dramatization of events. Selling for a mere $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a copy and presenting the news in a highly sensational manner, the paper offered the reading public an inexpensive and exciting way of keeping up with what was happening in the world. It achieved this effect in the field of foreign affairs by adopting a strongly patriotic, almost jingoist, tone on its leader pages. After the first Moroccan crisis erupted in 1905, it clamoured for a bigger navy, army conscription, and the conversion of the Entente with France into a military alliance. Thomas Marlowe edited the paper; H.W. Wilson was its chief leader-writer; and Fenton Macpherson headed the foreign department. But behind all these men loomed the personality of Northcliffe.

In 1900, Sir Arthur Pearson established the Daily Express, another half-penny paper which enjoyed a mass circulation and which dramatized the news. It too consisted of eight pages and devoted considerable space to classified and commercial advertisements. But its income from such sources did not match that of the Daily Mail, and for the first decade or so of its existence the Daily Express lost quite a bit of money. It was the only newspaper in Britain to adopt the American practice of featuring the news on the front page. The headlines were not too bold or striking, but by merely challenging accepted newspaper conventions, such a presentation was bound to add an element of sensationalism to the Express. Its leader-articles numbered only one or two a day. Like those of the Mail, they were short, to the point, and Conservative in political outlook. The Daily Express never shied away

from stating bluntly its views on all subjects, and the paper's bitter opposition to Free Trade became an important asset to Joseph Chamberlain in his campaign for imperial federation. The Express was particularly forthright in its discussion of foreign policy matters, and in this field it looked upon the 1904 understanding with France as an instrument to curb German expansionism. Pearson himself directed the paper from 1900 to 1903. In 1904, R.D. Blumenfeld, an American journalist who eventually became proprietor of the paper, was appointed editor.⁴⁴

Of course, the coverage of foreign news in the press was not confined to the London dailies. In the provinces, too, there existed a significant number of newspapers which strove to keep their readers reasonably well informed on events abroad. These were the penny morning dailies that were printed in the larger cities and distributed throughout widespread regions of the country. Usually, they were ably edited, and the judgments which they passed on foreign affairs in their leader-articles could sometimes be every bit as penetrating as those made in the editorials of the London papers. Where the provincial press lagged behind its counterpart in the capital was in the reporting of foreign news. By and large, the newspapers of Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other major cities found it too costly to employ a staff of correspondents writing from the Continent or elsewhere during this period. But each of the most important provincial papers did have a London office, which kept in touch with the Foreign Office and secured information from the established news agencies like

44 Hale, op. cit., p. 29.

Reuters as well as the foreign news services of the leading metropolitan dailies. As a result, the provincial press placed less emphasis on international affairs than it did on national or local news. Moreover, the foreign news that was wired home from the London bureau tended to be stale and out of date by the time it appeared in print. Nevertheless, many provincial organs of opinion had journalistic qualities in their own right and deserve to be read for giving one a general idea of what people outside London were thinking and writing about foreign affairs.

Unquestionably the most important provincial newspaper in Britain in the coverage and treatment of foreign news was the Manchester Guardian. Founded in 1821 as a 7d. weekly, the Manchester Guardian was one of the longest surviving organs of opinion in the North of England. With Parliament's repeal of the stamp duty on newspapers in 1855, the Guardian was converted into a daily paper. Throughout its early life it was only mildly Liberal in its political outlook. When the Home Rule issue split the Liberal party in 1886, the paper under the editorship of C.P. Scott made an immediate swing to the Left in its views. Thereafter it consistently espoused Radical causes, regardless how unpopular these causes were. During the South African campaign, for example, the Manchester Guardian continued to support the Boers, despite the fact that this stance cost the paper a heavy loss in circulation. Scott's leader-articles, of course, were not entirely responsible for the paper's poor financial condition. As was the case with the London dailies, the provincial press was put under considerable strain in the competition for sales with the arrival of the

mass circulation dailies. In 1900, the first northern edition of the Daily Mail was printed, and the Guardian, because it happened to be located in the same city that Harmsworth and later other newspaper magnates chose to distribute their expanding newspapers, was among the first to suffer. C.P. Scott, who in addition to editing the Guardian was also slowly buying up the paper's shares, was thus forced to take drastic action. Unlike some newspaper owners of the day who were in much the same position, he did not seek to restore his paper's profit margin by lowering its price. Instead, he chose to improve its quality and service. The space allocated to advertisements was greatly extended, special feature articles were introduced, and, above all, more attention was paid to the length and style of the leader-articles. Yet for all these alterations, it took a long time for the paper to recover. In 1905, the year when the Scott family took over full control of the paper, the Manchester Guardian was still circulating only about 36,800 copies a day, no less than 12,000 below its corresponding figure for 1898. In subsequent years, however, sales went up, and by 1910, the paper was able to embark upon a foreign news service of its own.⁴⁵

Yet like The Times and the Westminster Gazette, the Manchester Guardian wielded an influence that was far greater than its circulation figures would suggest. As the only 'quality' Radical daily in the North-west of England, it was the spokesman for the progressive-minded educated classes not only in Lancashire but in neighbouring counties as well. As the only penny newspaper in Britain to expound a truly

⁴⁵ Hale, op. cit., pp. 30-31; also Wadsworth, op. cit., p. 25.

anti-imperialist foreign policy during the Boer War, it also gained a following in London and the South-east. Morley, Lloyd-George, and Campbell-Bannerman frequently read the paper and were good friends of Scott. When these three men helped to form a government in 1906, the Manchester Guardian had an inside view of the Liberal Cabinet in operation. Scott was also intimate with Loreburn, the Lord Chancellor in Campbell-Bannerman's and Asquith's Governments. Their correspondence during these years was prolific and touched upon a number of matters, including foreign affairs, where Loreburn frequently impressed upon Scott the dangers of Sir Edward Grey's policies to Anglo-German relations. But to suggest, as one contemporary journalist has done, that Scott placed too much confidence in the Lord Chancellor's judgment when writing about foreign affairs in his editorials is to overlook the importance which the editor of the Manchester Guardian had always attached to viewing international relations from a highly moral standpoint.⁴⁶ The spirit of righteous indignation which prompted Scott to criticize the Liberal Foreign Secretary time and again during this period for failing to find a proper solution to Europe's diplomatic problems was the same as that which had earlier led him to attack the Government during the South African campaign. Moreover, and more significantly perhaps, the Manchester Guardian had been pestering the Foreign Office with demands for such policies as an extension of the Entente Cordiale to incorporate Germany as far back as the summer of 1905, several months before either Grey or Loreburn took office.

⁴⁶ See J.L. Hammond's article 'C.P. Scott, 1846-1932' in C.P. Scott, 1846-1932: the Making of the Manchester Guardian, edited by A.P. Wadsworth (London, 1946), p. 46.

Another English provincial newspaper of considerable importance was the Birmingham Daily Post. Like the Guardian, the Post had been greatly affected by the Home Rule issue in 1886. But instead of adopting a more Radical approach to politics, the paper gradually shed its progressive views in the light of Gladstone's Bill and supported Joseph Chamberlain in his efforts to create a Liberal Unionist party. From the late 1880s onwards, its political outlook closely resembled that of the Birmingham civic leader. In 1905, it backed Chamberlain in his campaign for protectionism; in 1898, it first sought an alliance with Germany; but when this came to nothing, it echoed Chamberlain's plea for an understanding with France. The Birmingham Post was a smaller newspaper than its more left-wing counterpart in the North. It consisted of only eight pages and did not devote much attention to foreign affairs. Whereas the Guardian did at least employ men of the likes of J.A. Hobson to report from South Africa during the Boer War, the Post had no overseas correspondents whatsoever. Nor did the editor of the paper employ Scott's practice of writing long leader-articles on either foreign or domestic questions. Moreover, the circulation of the paper was static and averaged only about 28,000 copies daily between 1903 and 1908. Nevertheless, the Birmingham Daily Post was the leading paper in Britain's second largest city and was associated with one of the most formidable politicians of the day. As such, its leaders were bound to carry some weight in the country.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ H.R.G. Whates, The Birmingham Daily Post, 1857-1957: A Centenary Retrospect (Birmingham, 1957), pp. 122-126, 176; also Wadsworth, loc. cit.

Founded in 1783, the Glasgow Herald was one of the oldest and most respected newspapers in the country. Circulating primarily in Scotland and to a lesser extent in Ulster, it enjoyed an immunity from the competition which many English newspapers had to endure as a result of the 'Harmsworth revolution'. Scotland did not have a mass circulating newspaper until the Daily Express opened a Glasgow office after the Great War. Hence, the sales figures of the Herald and a number of other Scottish penny dailies did not flounder during this period. Between 1903 and 1908, the Glasgow Herald averaged slightly more than 50,000 copies sold per day, a healthy increase of 10,000 over the corresponding figures for the early 1890s.⁴⁸ The politics of the paper, however, are difficult to pin-point. Traditionally, the Herald was a Conservative paper, but under C.G. Russell and William Wallace, editors of the paper from 1888 to 1909, it adopted a more Liberal outlook towards foreign affairs.⁴⁹ Its attitude towards France throughout much of this period, while certainly pro-Entente, was somewhat cooler than that of the bulk of the Tory press, and occasionally the Glasgow Herald took part in the campaign of the Radicals against 'secret diplomacy' and excessive military expenditure.

The chief rival of the Glasgow Herald in terms of political influence in Scotland was the Edinburgh-based paper, the Scotsman. Established in 1817 as both a literary and a political newspaper, it made its appeal from the beginning as

48 Wadsworth, loc. cit.

49 Hale, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

a 'serious' and a cultivated organ of opinion. Like The Times in England, the Scotsman stood apart from other newspapers in its appeal to the propertied and leisure classes north of the border. Indeed, the similarity of the two newspapers in this respect was so strong that some people dubbed the Scotsman 'The Times of the North'. Politically, the paper was Conservative and its foreign policy was highly imperial in outlook. At first, it greeted the 1904 Convention simply for putting an end to colonial difficulties with France. But like many right-wing newspapers in England, it later campaigned for the conversion of that arrangement into an instrument to check German expansionism. The Scotsman had no foreign news service of its own at the time and relied entirely upon Reuter and the correspondence columns of the London dailies, chiefly The Times and the Daily Telegraph, for information. Dr Charles A. Cooper and J.P. Croal edited the paper between 1903 and 1908.⁵⁰

Apart from the leading metropolitan and provincial dailies, the only other newspapers worth mentioning are a handful of those in the Sunday press. And even of these not too much need be written. For in Edwardian, as in Victorian, times, the Sunday newspapers played a far less important role in informing and guiding British public opinion than do their latter-day counterparts. The explanation for this, of course, can be found in the social and moral conventions of the day. By tradition, Sunday was regarded as the Sabbath, a day of rest. Not only did people take the day off work, but they also rigorously abstained from any 'frivolous' activities such as the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 33; also C.A. Cooper, An Editor's Retrospect (London, 1896), p. 151.

reading of newspapers. Although the prejudice against Sunday newspapers was beginning to weaken, Sabbatarianism was still a force to be reckoned with at the turn of the century. When fierce competition for readers induced the owners of the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail to publish Sunday editions for their newspapers in 1899, religious groups, particularly the Nonconformists, protested and a considerable uproar ensued in the country. Shortly afterwards, both papers acknowledged the public resentment and reverted to publishing only six issues a week.⁵¹ Those newspapers that did resist the pressure of the churches almost invariably suffered financially as a result. The Observer, oldest of the Sunday papers, was selling only about 5,000 copies when Alfred Harmsworth bought it in May 1905.⁵² The Sunday Times, owned by an international business syndicate under the chairmanship of Hermann Schmidt, was scarcely doing any better; it failed to bolster its circulation beyond the 25,000-30,000 mark.⁵³ Of course, there were exceptions. Sir George Riddell's News of the World sold approximately a million copies every Sunday in the early 1900s, but its squalid

51 R. Pound and G. Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London, 1959), pp. 240-241; also H. Hobson, P. Knightley, and L. Russell, The Pearl of Days: An Intimate Memoir of the Sunday Times, 1822-1972 (London, 1972), p. 72.

52 By the summer of 1908, however, the sales figures for the paper had risen to about 30,000. See A.M. Gollin, The Observer and J.L. Garvin, 1908-1914 (London, 1960), pp. 6, 61.

53 Wadsworth, op. cit., p. 39; also Hobson et al., op. cit., p. xv. Schmidt was a German financier who had controlled most of the shares of the Sunday Times since 1897. Among the other members on the board of directors were Sir Basil Zaharoff, the munitions agent for Vickers-Armstrong; Dr Jameson, former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony; and Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, later M.P. for East Birmingham and chairman of the Conservative party. Leonard Rees, formerly editor of the defunct Sunday Special, wrote leader-articles for the paper.

articles on sex and crime and only served to reinforce the prejudice of the Sabbatarians.⁵⁴ Indeed, it was only after several years of technical changes and attempts to create a new image that the Sunday press began to win over the reading public. In the main, this was due to the efforts of Northcliffe, who halved the price of the Observer from 2d. to 1d. and installed J.L. Garvin, the accomplished leader-writer for the Daily Telegraph, as editor in 1908, thereby in effect giving the paper more quality and value for the money. But for the time being, both the Observer and the Sunday Times lagged well behind the dailies in the dissemination and the interpretation of the news. Neither paper had any overseas correspondents and neither devoted any extra printing space to special articles on foreign affairs. Leader-articles, incidentally, were limited to one per week. Less lengthy than those in the daily papers and more often than not devoted to national rather than international news, they failed to provide an adequate commentary on events taking place abroad.

Far more important than either the Sunday Times or the Observer as a weekly source of information and opinion were the London-based periodicals which sold for the then rather prohibitive cost of 6d. These periodicals, or 'class weeklies', as they were sometimes called, combined some of the best features of the penny daily newspapers with those of the less political monthly reviews. They not only gave considerable attention to the reporting and interpretation of the news, but they also devoted a good deal of space to literary and cultural subjects. Indeed, out of the thirty or forty pages they each printed every week, close to fifteen or twenty dealt

54 Hobson et al., op. cit., p. 72.

with such items as book reviews, stage productions, and West End cultural exhibitions. The format of these weeklies was very much the same. As a rule, the first few pages were given to summarizing the main events of the week's news. Written in paragraph form, each entry in this section provided a reasonably good recapitulation of major developments. Foreign news figured prominently, although none of the weeklies sent correspondents abroad. Then followed the leader-articles. These usually amounted to four or five in number and were written carefully enough to win a great deal of influence in political circles. After the editorials came several pages of feature articles and weekly columns written by some of the most talented contemporary journalists and men of letters. The literary and theatrical reviews were relegated to the second half of the periodical along with the advertisements.

Oldest of the 'class weeklies' was the Spectator. Founded in 1828, it had by this time been in existence longer than any of its rivals to reach the twentieth century. But age was not the Spectator's only claim to distinction. For throughout its comparatively long history, the Spectator achieved a reputation as being one of the most high-minded and politically rebellious organs of opinion in Britain. Its long-standing association with the Conservative party was from time to time jarred by what one writer has called the paper's 'left centre' politics. The same independent spirit that led the Spectator to support the Reform Bill in 1832 and back the cause of the North in the American Civil War led ~~it~~ to side with the Liberals in the fight against Tariff Reform in the early 1900s.⁵⁵ But with

⁵⁵ William B. Thomas, The Story of the Spectator, 1828-1928 (London, 1928), pp. 5-6.

regard to foreign affairs in the last decade before the Great War, it adopted an outlook that was more in step with that of its fellow Tory organs of opinion. Highly anti-German in its views, the Spectator consistently beat the drum for an alliance with both France and Russia in order to complete the military encirclement of the Central Powers. John St Loe Strachey, editor and proprietor of the Spectator throughout these years, was a close friend of Cecil Spring-Rice and through him had a number of important contacts at the Foreign Office.⁵⁶

Equally influential with the Spectator was the trio of Radical Liberal weeklies - the Speaker, the Nation, and the Economist. The Speaker was established in 1890 by Sir John Brunner, the Liberal industrialist, as a left-wing intellectual alternative to the Spectator. From the moment of its first issue, it supported Irish Home Rule, campaigned for social reforms, and sympathised with the trade unions in their struggle for recognition. Foreign affairs, however, remained very much in the background of this paper's editorial section until J.L. Hammond replaced Wemyss Reid as editor in 1899. During the South African War, it was criticized in several quarters for its 'pro-Boer' articles and later Hammond was to heap praise on France and her handling of the Moroccan question to an extent that went far beyond the bounds of Radical enthusiasm for the Entente Cordiale.⁵⁷ Yet despite its

⁵⁶ Steiner, op. cit., p. 189.

⁵⁷ See A.J.P. Taylor in which it is said that Hammond 'stood out in enthusiasm for France and dislike of Germany' in Radical circles in Britain, whereas C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian, for example, 'was always cooler towards France, and more restless about Morocco'. This divergence in view about France and the Entente might well explain Hammond's afore-mentioned intimations that Scott leaned too heavily on Lord Loreburn's judgment of foreign affairs, particularly after the Agadir crisis. Taylor, loc. cit.

controversial opinions, the Sneaker was constantly plagued by poor sales. Its circulation, which reached 4,000 after the first year of publication, was never high enough to make a profit, and Brunner, tired of financing the Sneaker's losses, sold the paper outright in 1907.⁵⁸ The new proprietor was Joseph Rowntree, the Yorkshire confectionery manufacturer and philanthropist, who rechristened the paper 'The Nation'. Rowntree appointed H.W. Massingham, whose weekly column 'Persons and Politics' had been one of the highlights of the Sneaker, as editor, and almost immediately the new periodical set out to distinguish itself against its less fortunate predecessor.⁵⁹ The Nation expanded its news summary section, doubled the number of editorials from two to four, and recruited men like Brailsford, Nevinson, Hobson, and L.T. Hobhouse, to write special articles on the leading questions of the day. Under Massingham, the Nation also assumed a more balanced approach towards foreign affairs than did the Sneaker under Hammond. Gone was the excessive pro-French bias, and in its place was substituted an ardent desire to see the 1904 Entente followed up by a similar arrangement with Germany. The persistence with which the Nation pursued this theme made it one of the most dedicated and formidable exponents of a pacifically oriented British foreign policy. Unfortunately, it too suffered chronically from financial troubles, and after the Great War the paper was forced to merge with yet another Radical weekly, the New Statesman.

⁵⁸ Stephen E. Koss, Sir John Brunner: Radical Plutocrat, 1842-1919 (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 159-160. By comparison, the Spectator was selling about 23,000 copies a week in 1903. See Thomas, op. cit., p. 102.

⁵⁹ F.W. Hirst, In the Golden Days (London, 1947), p. 205.

The third leading Radical weekly, the Economist, was founded in 1843. As its title suggests, financial affairs were the main pre-occupation of this periodical. The literary and cultural items that filled the pages of the other 6d. weeklies were excluded from the Economist in order to make room for banking news, trade statistics, and stock market reports, international as well as national. But politics also had a place in the make-up of the paper, and as was the case with the Spectator and the Nation, the Economist devoted several long leader-articles every week to a thorough discussion of major events at home and abroad. The paper's deeply engrained Liberalism and its traditional emphasis on commerce combined to give it a strongly Cobdenite outlook on foreign policy matters. In 1904, it welcomed the colonial settlement with France for many reasons, not the least of which was the improved trade that this arrangement promised to bring to the two countries. For most of this period, the Economist was edited by Edward Johnstone, a journalist who had previously worked in the financial news departments of the Scotsman and the Pall Mall Gazette. Johnstone's narrow interest in this field led him to employ several men to write about foreign affairs, a practice which, like J.M. Le Sage's managing of the Daily Telegraph, did not always produce a consistent approach to this all-important area. Then in 1907 F.W. Hirst became editor and stamped his own personality on the paper. He wrote all his own editorials, and as a devoted disciple of Gladstone and a close friend of John Morley, he gave the Economist a more Radical flavour.

Between 1908 and 1914, Hirst took up the cudgels along with fellow Radicals Gardiner, Massingham, and Scott in attacking Sir Edward Grey's 'unLiberal' foreign policy.⁶⁰

Finally, there are the Socialist weeklies to be considered. Three principal organs of opinion fit into this category - Justice, the Labour Leader, and the Clarion - all of which came into being as a result of the growth in size and influence of the organised labour movement in Britain since the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Each of the three either represented or became identified with a differing strand of the movement. Justice, founded by H.M. Hyndman in 1884, was from the moment of its inception the weekly spokesman for the Marxist Social Democratic Federation; the Labour Leader, edited by J. Bruce Glasier, was the official voice of the Independent Labour Party. The Clarion, on the other hand, had no such formal connections. Edited since its first issue in 1891 by Robert Blatchford, an independent left-wing thinker, this periodical was more a forum for the various types of Socialists - Fabians, Marxists, and others - than a spokesman for any particular group. The strong emphasis which all three of these weeklies placed upon changing social and economic conditions at home precluded their spending much time on foreign affairs. Moreover, the little that was said about diplomatic questions was quite often out of step with the opinions of other dissident groups. Of the Socialist weeklies, only the Labour Leader adopted an outlook that consistently approximated that of the Radical Liberal press. Blatchford of the Clarion was to sound the alarm about an impending German invasion with

⁶⁰ The Economist 1843-1943, A Centenary Volume (London, 1943), pp. 19, 90-91.

increasing frequency as time went on during these years; while Hyndman in Justice was busily advocating a citizen's army to resist such an invasion. Nevertheless, both Justice and the Clarion as well as the Labour Leader were representative of a movement that was beginning to grow out of its embryonic stages at the time in Britain and as such form an important part of British public opinion.⁶¹

By recording and emphasising such information, one can get a general impression of the newspapers and their format, political complexion, financial state, and comparative appeal to the public. Yet however valuable these facts are, they do not give one a proper idea of the interest which the British press had in world affairs. Even a comprehensive examination of the foreign departments of the various newspapers does not necessarily reveal the extent to which the press kept abreast with developments and events happening abroad. One way of accomplishing this task, however, might be to compare and analyse the percentage of editorials which contemporary organs of opinion devoted to foreign news. Of course, such a survey, when restricted to a few papers and when intended to cover a short period of time, cannot claim to be thorough. Nevertheless, by taking a fairly wide cross-section of newspapers and periodicals and by examining the contents of their leader pages, one can make a reasonably discriminating evaluation of the interest of the contemporary British press in foreign affairs. The table below lists fourteen leading newspapers and periodicals of the

⁶¹ The increased sales figures of two of these journals reflect well the growth of the Socialist movement during this period. The Clarion made a steady increase from 40,000 copies sold a week in 1904 to 74,000 copies in 1906. Similarly, the Labour Leader went from 13,000 to 40,000 between 1904 and 1909. See W. Stewart, J. Keir Hardie: A Biography (London, 1921), pp. 285.; and L. Thompson, Robert Blatchford (London, 1951), p. 179.

day and compares their interest in foreign affairs for the first six months of 1904:⁶²

NEWSPAPER OR PERIODICAL	TOTAL NUMBER OF LEADING ARTICLES	LEADING ARTICLES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS	PERCENTAGE
<u>The Times</u> (Conservative)	460	196	42.6
<u>Economist</u> (Liberal)	87	37	42.5
<u>Pall Mall Gazette</u> (Con.)	155	63	40.6
<u>Spectator</u> (Con.)	130	51	39.2
<u>Daily Mail</u> (Con.)	319	113	35.4
<u>Daily Express</u> (Con.)	160	46	28.8
<u>Glasgow Herald</u> (Con.)	731	209	28.6
<u>Birmingham Daily Post</u> (Con.)	633	164	25.9
<u>Speaker</u> (Lib.)	72	17	23.6
<u>Scotsman</u> (Con.)	579	134	23.1
<u>Daily News</u> (Lib.)	819	186	22.7
<u>Westminster Gazette</u> (Lib.)	167	37	22.2
<u>Manchester Guardian</u> (Lib.)	617	136	22.0
<u>Daily Chronicle</u> (Lib.)	635	105	16.5
Total	5564	1494	26.9

The first remark one might make about the above table is that it tends to verify the pre-eminence of The Times in the discussion and the commentary of foreign affairs. The margin between that

⁶² Exactly what is meant by a 'leader-article on foreign affairs' (i.e., the third column from the right in the following table) is not easy to define, and in many cases a rather arbitrary decision was made about whether or not to include certain editorials in this category. Generally speaking, however, all leader-articles that dealt with British foreign policy or which commented on any events happening abroad, whether diplomatic, political, social, or even cultural, have been treated as if they fit this description. On the other hand, leader-articles on imperial matters, unless they happened to discuss Britain's relations with the Powers, have been excluded from this category. Likewise, leader-articles on those questions that do occasionally touch upon foreign affairs - such as those on defence estimates or trade figures - have been excluded, unless they actually involve a discussion of British foreign policy.

newspaper and other organs of opinion is not as wide as one might have imagined, perhaps, but the figures speak for themselves. With the possible exception of the Economist, whose completeness and authority in writing about world-wide financial matters made it a keen observer of events taking place abroad, The Times stood above all other competitors in this respect. But this is only the most obvious comparison to be made. There are others which are of no less interest. If for instance, one chooses to divide the fourteen organs of opinion along political lines and compare the percentage of leader-articles devoted to foreign affairs in the eight Conservative papers with the six Liberal papers, one arrives at the following results:

TYPE OF NEWSPAPER	TOTAL NUMBER OF LEADING ARTICLES	LEADING ARTICLES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS	PERCENTAGE
Conservative	3167	976	30.8
Liberal	2397	518	21.6

A similar division between the London and provincial press reads as follows:

London	3004	851	28.3
Provincial	2560	643	25.1

Of course, neither of these last two tables reveals anything conclusive; nevertheless, one can speculate upon the reasons for the results they give. If, as the figures seem to suggest, Conservative newspapers were somewhat more interested in foreign affairs than their Liberal counterparts, it is not because of any undue disregard for developments abroad on the part of the latter group. The Liberals did like to keep themselves well posted on events taking place outside their country, particularly should these events have an important

bearing on political and social problems at home. Rather, the difference can probably be attributed more to the attitude of the Conservative newspapers. Taken as a whole, the Conservative press did follow foreign developments very closely, if only because of its deep - in some cases extreme - sensitivity to the 'dangers' which these developments might have upon national security or upon the welfare of the Empire. Internal matters were discussed proportionately less often, possibly because the Tories felt that these were not as immediately important as the prospect of German hegemony on the Continent or Russian expansionism in Asia. The even wider discrepancy between the London and the provincial press is no less explicable. As has been pointed out before, London was the bottleneck of virtually all the news coming into the country. Many London newspapers, moreover, had direct access to the Foreign Office and to the staff of the major embassies. Thus it is hardly surprising that, taken together, they should devote a higher proportion of their editorials to foreign affairs than, for example, the Glasgow Herald or the Scotsman. Yet whenever the reasons for these results, one point remains clear: the newspapers and journals, regardless of their political persuasion or of the area of the country in which they circulated, all had a great deal to say about foreign affairs. Admittedly, throughout this six month period the Far East was in a state either of crisis or war - one factor which undoubtedly helped to raise the percentage of editorials devoted to foreign affairs in all the various organs of opinion. But even if there had been no conflict between Russia and Japan, it is unlikely that the press would have greatly reduced the

number of their editorials on this all-important subject. Great Britain had too much at stake overseas for her newspapers to ignore or overlook for long even the seemingly most insignificant foreign developments.

3. Parliament and the Civil Service

Hence, the field of foreign affairs was sufficiently covered by the contemporary press to merit an examination into a subject like British attitudes towards France and the Entente Cordiale. But such a study warrants our attention all the more when considered against the background of early twentieth century developments and the manner in which these developments came about. The years 1903-1908 belong very much to the period which diplomatic historians have long since come to call 'the era of secret diplomacy'. Not only were treaties and diplomatic arrangements often furtively concluded, but they were all too often executed with scarcely any popular supervision. Even in those countries where democracy was theoretically most advanced, the public enjoyed little control. In Britain, Parliament could debate and criticize foreign policy matters, but it was ~~debar~~ barred from vetoing or ratifying treaties unless these treaties involved the **cession** of territory or financial expenditure.⁶³ The most that dissident M.P.s or peers could hope to do was to influence indirectly the Government's policies, but the likelihood of even this happening was rather slim. Foreign affairs tended to rank low on the agenda of items to be discussed, with the result that parliamentary debates on this

63 Steiner, op. cit., p. 192 3n.

all-important realm of affairs were few and far between. Moreover, even when such debates did take place, they were hopelessly inadequate and posed little threat to the Government. After 1904, when the Liberals enthusiastically supported Lord Lansdowne's understanding with the French, the two major parties differed little in their approach to foreign affairs. Whatever criticisms or queries did arise usually came from Radical Liberal, Socialist, or right-wing imperialist circles. Faced with the combined opposition of the two front benches - whose whips, incidentally, exerted tremendous pressure on M.P.s to toe the official line - these groups had almost no chance of altering the course of British foreign policy.⁶⁴ But this was not all. If Parliament had little authority over the management of British foreign policy, then it had still less to say about the formulation and execution of it. These two areas were left almost entirely in the hands of the Cabinet and the Foreign Office. As the permanent officials of this latter institution were recruited almost exclusively from the upper classes, this meant that the fundamentals of the decision-making process of British foreign policy were consistently out of touch with popular sympathies and movements. Indeed, so remote was the Foreign Office from the general public that for many reformers of the period a widening of its social base and a revamping of its selection procedures became urgent necessities if Britain were to achieve a truly democratically-controlled foreign policy.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Max Beloff, Lucien Wolf and the Anglo-Russian Entente, 1907-1914 (London, 1951), p. 8.

⁶⁵ The need to reorganize the Foreign Office was argued most forcefully by Radicals and Socialists in Britain during the Great War. See, for example, Arthur Ponsonby's Democracy and Diplomacy - A Plea for Popular Control of Foreign Policy (London, 1915), p.67.

In view of these various restrictions placed upon the democracy in the control of foreign policy at this time in Britain, one question almost inevitably arises. Were the governing classes - the politicians, the diplomats, the civil servants - influenced at all by the more popular elements of British society in the formulation and execution of foreign policy? To answer in the negative would be to over-simplify the matter; for despite all appearances to the contrary, both the Cabinet and the Foreign Office did from time to time respond to pressures from below. Thus in 1903 the campaign waged in certain sections of the press and by a number of Tory back-benchers at Westminster did dissuade Lord Lansdowne from working side by side with the Germans on the Venezuelan and Baghdad Railway questions. Thus, too, the Foreign Office felt obliged to meet and inform journalists, M.P.s, and various pressure groups on a person-to-person basis. Although such meetings tended to be informal and haphazardly arranged,⁶⁶ they did at least afford both sides the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings

⁶⁶ There was at this time no press bureau in the Foreign Office. Instead, journalists and editors were privately received by senior men at the department, including the Foreign Secretary himself on occasion. During his tenure at the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey conferred periodically with the likes of Valentine Chirol of The Times and J.A. Spender of the Westminster Gazette but left the task of dealing with less influential newspapermen to his private secretary, William Tyrrell. Neither Grey nor Tyrrell was forced to speak to outsiders, of course, and both did so only at their own discretion. Such talks, moreover, were not granted to everyone. The Foreign Office excluded all but the most prominent journalists, and even some of these could not be certain of being accorded an interview. As Harold Spender, a leader-writer in the foreign department of the Daily News from 1912 to 1914, explained in his memoirs: 'the old Foreign Office did not scruple to use its distribution of news as a means of controlling newspapers. If a newspaper criticized a Foreign Secretary too severely, he had a very simple means of punishment - he closed the doors of the Foreign Office to that paper. That was a very severe blow. For the very secrecy of the Foreign Office made the entry all the more desirable'. See H. Spender, The Fire of Life, (London 1920) 115.

and exchange ideas and opinions. The link between the Foreign Office and the press, states Zara Steiner, was 'a two-way process'; while the former tried to influence the latter 'through private contacts or public pronouncements with varying degrees of success', the latter sought to advise the former, particularly on those occasions when the press had reason to believe that its correspondents were better informed than were the diplomats themselves.⁶⁷ In opening its doors to outsiders in this fashion, there was a hint of recognition on the part of the Foreign Office that the press had an important role to play in the moulding and shaping of public opinion.

⁶⁷ As a case in point, Dr Steiner cites the activities of G.E. Morrison, the Far Eastern correspondent of The Times, whose timely despatches at the turn of the century alerted the British Government to Russian encroachments in China long before did the despatches of the Government's official representatives in that quarter of the globe. See Steiner, op. cit., pp. 186, 188.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ENTENTE CORDIALE, 1903-1905

By the outset of 1903 Anglo-French relations were in a more satisfactory state than they had been for a considerable period of time. In a sense relations had never been as poor as they might have been, for even in difficult times Britain and France had always been able to identify with each other through their geographical proximity and cultural and political affinities. But in the early years of the twentieth century, conditions had been improving enough in other aspects to help draw the two countries closer together. Trade was steadily growing, and, at a time when Britain was beginning to share the French fear of Germany, there was an absence of any serious Anglo-French quarrels. The Fashoda crisis was by then nearly five years old, and older colonial controversies between the two Powers had become dormant. Even the mutual recriminations in the press of the two countries, which in the past had so often plagued their relations, slowly subsided with the passing of the Boer War and the Dreyfus affair. All that was required to convert this reasonably happy state of affairs into something more positive was an open gesture of friendliness on the part of one Power to the other, and this King Edward VII provided with his successful visit to Paris in the spring of that year.

In Britain, the press gave much publicity to the trip and emphasized its cordial nature. Special attention was paid to

the supposed impact of the monarchy on the course of diplomacy, and phrases such as 'the living factor of the Crown' and 'the genial tact of King Edward' were frequently used to describe how Edward VII had personally cemented this friendship. But at the same time newspapers were careful to point out that the visit had no motive other than to promote friendlier Anglo-French relations, which for many was only logical in view of all the similarities in the national way of life of the two countries. The Times, for example, wrote:

Certainly there is no nation between whom and ourselves such a sense of brotherhood seems more natural and attainable than the great neighbour to whom we are already bound by so many ties of common interest. French civilization and French thought have always exercised a profound influence upon our own development, nor can it be doubted that the constitutional liberties so long enjoyed by the people of this country have in turn profoundly modified the course of French political development.... There is no specific political purpose, no hidden arrière pensée, in the King's visit to Paris, nor will there be anything of the kind about the visit which we hope M. Loubet may be able to pay to London. 1

Even the possibility that a settlement of the major colonial disputes between the two Powers might result from the new Entente initially went unmentioned. Then in the early summer of 1903, several weeks after the royal trip, Eugène Etienne, the French deputy for the Oran and head of the parti colonial, and Sir Charles Dilke, the venerable Radical member for the Forest of Dean in the House of Commons, wrote articles for the National Review and Empire Review respectively in which they contended that Edward VII's visit provided the proper atmosphere for settling Anglo-French differences in Egypt, Morocco, Newfoundland, Siam, and the New Hebrides.² Although

1 The Times, 4 May 1903.

2 Eugène Etienne, 'The colonial controversies between France and England' National Review, 41 (July, 1903), 732-748a; and Sir Charles Dilke, 'An arrangement with France', Empire Review, V (June, 1903), 439-441.

Etienne and Dilke were not in full agreement as to what would constitute a fair deal for both Powers, their articles prepared public opinion for some political consequences arising out of the Entente.

1. The 1904 Convention: its terms and its critics.

Nevertheless, in Britain there was no serious public discussion of such a settlement until the two Governments reached a formal agreement on 8 April, 1904. This famous Convention was presented to the public in the form of three separate documents. They dealt with Egypt and Morocco, with France granting Britain a virtual free hand in the former and Britain giving the same to France in the latter; the surrender of French fishing rights off Newfoundland in exchange for British territory in West and Central Africa; and, lastly, a document settling various Anglo-French disputes in Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides. The nineteen-page declaration on Egypt and Morocco was not only the longest of the three treaties but the most important as well. In it Britain recognised that France had the right to penetrate Morocco for the purpose of civilising the country and subduing lawlessness. In return France promised that she would no longer protest against the British occupation of Egypt and agreed to support any necessary financial reforms there. The articles regarding Morocco contained several additional stipulations. France was required to guarantee the 'open door' and free trade there for at least thirty years; she had to pledge that no new fortifications would be erected on the Moroccan coast between Melilla and 'the right bank of the River Sebou'; and she promised to take into account the special interests of Spain in Morocco

in a later Franco-Spanish agreement. Both Powers made the important promise not to alter the political status quo in either of the two North African countries, and by the terms of Article IX they agreed to give one another diplomatic support in the event that an outside Power should challenge this portion of the Convention.

The second document settled what was by 1904 the oldest of all Anglo-French disputes - the exclusive right granted to French fishermen by the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 to bait and dry fish on Newfoundland shores. The 1904 Agreements ended this privilege, thereby placing British and Canadian fishermen on an equal footing with the French. As compensation, the British Government promised an unspecified financial indemnity to those Frenchmen affected by the Convention and gave the French various pieces of British territory in Africa. These included a slice of British Gambia which became part of an enlarged French Senegal; the addition of a sizeable tract of land in the Sokoto region of Northern Nigeria to the territory already held by France near Lake Chad; and the cession of the Iles de Los, a group of islands off the French Guinean port of Konakry. The third agreement did not involve the exchange of any territories and merely recognised on paper certain existing facts as they were. The two Governments agreed that the French and British spheres of influence in Siam lay respectively east and west of the mouth of the River Menam. In Article II Britain withdrew her protest against the French customs tariff and trade monopoly in Madagascar. And in Article III both Governments agreed to appoint a future Commission to settle the disputes of their nationals living

in the New Hebrides.³

The form in which the two Governments drew up the 1904 Convention is of some importance because it had considerable bearing on the way the press discussed the final terms. Most British newspapers could find some criticisms to make, however trivial, and these were generally conducted in the same context as the three treaties. What Britain gained in Egypt was usually compared to what she lost in Morocco; Newfoundland and West Africa were similarly mentioned together; and the arrangements involving Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides were again discussed separately. The newspapers and other organs of public opinion in Britain by no means always regarded the Anglo-French Agreements from the simple point of view of gain or loss. But on those occasions when they attempted to do so, the general conclusion was that Britain surrendered more than she gained.

This assessment particularly holds true of the Egypt-Morocco barter. There was considerable surprise that British diplomats could put the Egyptian and Moroccan questions on the same footing and settle them accordingly. Since 1882 Britain had in effect been in occupation of Egypt, reorganised its finances and government, and, as far as many were concerned, generally raised the standard of living there. All that she lacked was formal French recognition of her position.⁴ In contrast, Morocco was still open to the rivalries of the Powers, and French interests there, though growing by 1904, were far from paramount. Only recently, for example, had France begun

³ Accounts and Papers: State Papers, CIII (1905), Cd.2383-85.

⁴ Observer, 10 April 1904.

to compete with Britain in lending money to the Sultan. Moreover it was Britain, not France, who was still Morocco's leading trade customer.⁵ It appeared to much of the press, therefore, that Britain was making substantial concessions in Morocco merely in order to consolidate further the already strong position she enjoyed in Egypt.⁶

The criticisms directed against other parts of the Convention were not so widespread. They were, in fact, largely raised by two newspapers, the Morning Post and the Observer, whose concern for the 'regrettable absence of mutuality about the concessions made in Morocco' led them to scrutinize every detail of the treaty. They concluded that the transfer from British to French hands of several thousand square miles of African territory in addition to the large indemnity to French fishermen was too high a price to pay for France's renunciation of the 'Treaty Shore'.⁷ And while both papers were reasonably satisfied with the provisions pertaining to Siam, neither was happy with Britain's recognition of the French tariff in Madagascar or with the exclusion of Australia from the proposed Commission on the New Hebrides question.⁸

⁵ Scotsman, 9 April 1904.

⁶ Daily Graphic, 23 March 1904; also Aberdeen Free Press, 13 April 1904; and Economist, 16 April 1904.

⁷ In fact, the ceded portions of Gambia and Nigeria were from the British point of view quite worthless. They were unproductive and of little strategic importance. France desired them only because they provided better access to her trading posts in the interior of Africa. However, the Iles de Los, because they contained a fine natural harbour and were located off French Guinea, would have been of some strategic value in the event of an Anglo-French war.

⁸ Morning Post, 9 April, 1904; also Observer, loc.cit. The dispute between the two Powers in the New Hebrides was a complicated one involving land claims and jurisdiction. Neither French nationals nor British subjects would accept each other's rule, with the result that the conflicting claims which had arisen about property went unsettled. Australia over the years had meanwhile built up a growing trade with the islands and had particular reason to believe that French plans to erect

Moreover the 1904 Convention had its shortcomings when taken in its entirety. Despite the ambitious attempt to settle all the outstanding colonial differences between the two countries, it fell short of being comprehensive. There still remained several minor disputes involving the complaints of private British firms which had encountered unfair practices from their French competitors abroad. The most serious of these occurred in the French Congo, where since 1899 the so-called régime concessionnaire enabled French capitalists to seal off large portions of the colony and claim as theirs both native labour and the natural wealth. In response to public concern about France's contravention of the Berlin Act of 1885, which created a free-trade zone in the Congo basin, and the exploitation of native Africans, the British Government were obliged in 1903 to ask the French Government if the Congo question could be included on the agenda of items to be settled.⁹ But the latter declined on the ground that it was helpless to coerce local French officials, who were responsible for the situation.¹⁰ The fact that the concessions system was allowed

fortifications and convert the New Hebrides into a penal colony would damage her interests there. She therefore wanted a say in any settlement. But in October 1906 a purely Anglo-French solution was reached, whereby a British and French High Commissioner were appointed with authority over their own nationals and the natives only. A mixed Tribunal was created with the King of Spain choosing the President of the Court to handle the disputed land claims. Both countries promised not to establish penal settlements or erect fortifications. See Accounts and Papers: State Papers, XCIX (1908), Cd. 3300.

⁹ See Lansdowne's letter to Monson, the British Ambassador in Paris, in which the Foreign Secretary gives some details of the pressures he was subjected to to raise the Congo question to the French. Lansdowne to Monson, 7 July 1903, F(oreign) O(ffice) 27/3616.

¹⁰ This was the explanation given to the Commons by Earl Percy, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in reply to questions raised earlier by Lancashire MPs on behalf of Liverpool firms as to why the matter had been excluded from the Convention. Percy's statement was also directed to Sir Charles Dilke, whose questions had shown more interest in the plight of the Africans. Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, vol. CLI (3 August, 1905), 146.

to continue in the French Congo was seized upon by the Morning Post as a major flaw in the Agreements. For it was convinced that, if left unattended, this 'intolerable and humiliating' situation would do serious harm to Anglo-French relations.¹¹

A more recurrent criticism dealt with the almost blithe manner in which Britain and France parcelled out territory and concessions to each other. In Egypt, Morocco, Newfoundland, and Siam the two Powers effected changes with little or no consultation of native opinion. Not unexpectedly, left-wing journals like the Clarion regarded such considerations as one of the many vices of colonial politics,¹² but, as will be seen, their annoyance was overshadowed by the belief that the Entente heralded a more important peace-keeping arrangement in the world. Others took note of the possible consequences. In a book written to rouse public opinion against the coming settlement, Mousa Aflalo, an Anglo-Moroccan businessman,¹³ warned British investors that the by-passing of the Sultan in this arrangement could only serve to incite further the already existent native hostility to foreign influence. He suggested that Britain and France assume an 'associated control' over the

11 Morning Post, 19 November, 1904.

12 Clarion, 15 April, 1904.

13 Aflalo's family background and the position he held at the time of the signing of the 1904 Convention are somewhat obscure. It is known, however, that he worked in England as unofficial agent for the late Grant Vizier, Mulai-El-Hassan and that he held this post for about a decade. After falling from favour at Court circles in Fez with the accession of a new Sultan, Abdul Aziz, Aflalo appears to have become involved with various British financial groups, and in early 1903 he became the London Agent of Legation Bankers, a financial syndicate whose avowed purpose was to prevent Morocco falling into complete financial dependence on France by issuing loans to the Moorish Government at low interest rates. See the letter of Sir Arthur Nicolson, British Minister at Fez, to Lord Lansdowne, 30 September 1903 F(oreign) O(ffice) 99/431.

country in order to inhibit an uprising. The idea never gained much support, however, as the book was not published until the summer of 1904, too late to have much impact on the British public, which, if it was worried at all, paid more attention to the possible repercussions in Europe rather than in North Africa.¹⁴ There was considerable fear that Spain or Germany might demand territorial compensation to counter-balance the French gain, in which case Britain might be expected to pay the difference with one of her colonies.¹⁵ Certainly Lord Rosebery's chief complaint against the Agreements was that they would have an adverse effect upon other major Powers. On 10 June 1904, he told a large gathering of Liberal League members at the Queen's Hall, London, that 'this Agreement is much more likely to lead to complication than to peace'.¹⁶ Unfortunately for Rosebery, he did not elaborate upon this remark. In a letter written to Sir Edward Grey in the summer of 1905 at the height of the Moroccan crisis, he indicated that he meant by this that the French Entente would inevitably lead Britain into a clash with Germany.¹⁷ But at the time his vagueness was treated in the press as an unfortunate indiscretion. And Rosebery, despite the reputation he hitherto had as the leading Liberal spokesman on foreign affairs, saw, like Aflalo, his warnings go unheeded.

14 Aflalo also contended that an Anglo-French condominium would spare both countries the burden of excessive financial investment, while a British presence in Morocco would guarantee the security of Gibraltar. Mousa Aflalo, The Truth about Morocco (London, 1904), pp. 26-28.

15 Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, CXXXV (1 June 1904), 555.

16 The Times, 11 June 1904.

17 R. R. James, Rosebery (London, 1963), p.449.

Apart from citing the possible side-effects that the Convention could have in Europe or Morocco, the press in Britain was blind to few of the treaty's imperfections and made little attempt, when reviewing the terms, to hide their belief that materially speaking France fared better than did Britain.¹⁸ Yet most newspapers managed to give their whole-hearted support to the Entente without much contradiction. A good deal of emphasis was placed on the specific advantages of the new arrangement for Britain: the final and permanent delimitation of the growing French sphere of influence in Siam; the renunciation of French claims in Newfoundland and Egypt, where Britain would now be able to pursue unhindered her own programme of administrative reforms; and the satisfaction of seeing the French perform the unenviable service of establishing law and order in Morocco without compromising Britain's strategic and vested financial interests there.¹⁹ But primarily it was the tonic given to the relations of the two countries and the belief that much had been done to reduce international tension that induced public opinion to look upon the Agreements so favourably. It was immediately recognized, for example, that the Russo-Japanese war would almost certainly be localized to the Far East; for neither Britain nor France would take an active part in the war without considering first the damaging effect such a move would have on the Entente.²⁰ And, as the Agreements were thought to

¹⁸ The Times alone of the influential dailies failed to see how anything better could have been extracted from the French and justified the substantial British concessions as having been made 'on the sound understanding that in those cases where French interests were unquestionably superior British interests should give way, ...'. The Times, 11 April 1904.

¹⁹ Westminster Gazette, 11 April 1904; also Glasgow Herald, 13 April 1904; Daily Graphic, 9 April 1904; and Economist, loc. cit.

²⁰ Edward Dicey, 'Last Month, II' Nineteenth Century and After, LV (May, 1904), 876.

be little more than a liquidation of colonial differences, the diplomatic and military status quo in Europe would remain unchanged. They were not directed against any member of the Triple Alliance, nor were they meant to detach Russia from France. Indeed, relations with St. Petersburg might some day be improved now that Britain and Russia had a common friend in France.²¹ Their greatest achievement, however, was that they guaranteed the goodwill of a nation whose democratic institutions and inherent liberalism so closely resembled Britain's. Another Anglo-French war was now unthinkable. Viewed from this angle, French friendship had been purchased at a cheap price.²²

The quickness with which all major political groups supported the Government's treaty gave the impression that the Entente had the genuine approval of the entire nation. In Parliament, the Liberals engaged in a few, almost perfunctory, criticisms of the terms. Those with strong Free Trade views pointed out the Government's apparent disregard for British interests abroad: the thirty year time-limit to the Open Door in Morocco; the continued existence of the concessions system in the French Congo; British recognition of the French tariff in Madagascar; and the inevitable loss of British trade in Siam due to the enlarged French sphere of influence, were all greeted with reservations.²³ But important Liberals like Campbell-Bannerman and Grey felt that securing French goodwill

²¹ Westminster Gazette, 9 April, 1904. But the possibility that improved Anglo-Russian relations through France might work against German interests was generally overlooked at this time.

²² Scotsman, loc. cit.; also St. James's Gazette, 9 April 1904; and Observer, 5 June 1904. The conversion of the Observer after nearly two months of opposition to the treaty illustrates the appeal of this argument.

²³ Hansard, op. cit., 540-43, 549-559 passim, 566.

70.
was more important than these considerations, and the debates on the Agreements went without a division.²⁴

The Liberals, in fact, seemed to have additional reasons for welcoming this turn of events. In a recent study of left-wing attitudes to pre-World War I diplomacy, it has been pointed out that British Radicals 'gave their own twist to the Convention'. Steeped in the tradition of Gladstone and Cobden, they felt that they had a special affinity with an agreement that not only settled colonial disputes with a fellow-liberal nation but also signalled the wane of imperialist rivalries as a major factor in foreign affairs. They maintained that the Entente inaugurated a new era in which a succession of bi-lateral agreements settling the differences of all the major Powers would eventually lead to international harmony and co-operation.²⁵ As

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said, the Entente was 'a model for arrangements with other countries',²⁶ and the British Left as a whole saw no reason why it could not be a prelude to an equally important Anglo-German entente. This hope persisted long after it became apparent to everyone else that an understanding with Berlin was out of the question. Even as late as the summer of 1905 in the midst of the first Moroccan crisis the Labour Leader was writing:

The democratic movements of both France and Great Britain should join to approach the same movements in Germany, so as to show to the world that our friendship with France is not a move in our game of enmity against Germany, but the first stage of a united, peaceful, disarmed, and, let us say boldly, republican and Socialist Europe. 27

24 Ibid., 517 and 566.

25 Howard S. Weinroth, 'The British Radicals and the balance of power, 1902-1914' Historical Journal, XIII, 4 (1970), 657-8.

26 Hansard, op. cit., 567.

27 Labour Leader, 25 August 1905.

The word 'disarmed' gives an indication of what the British Left expected the first tangible result of the friendlier relations with France would be. Virtually all those of progressive opinions in Britain - Liberals, Radicals, and Socialists alike - thought that the armaments race among the leading Powers had been getting out of hand to the point of imposing heavy burdens on the average taxpayer. Anglo-French enmity had always been used to justify such expenditures, and now that the bad air between the two countries had been cleared, a reduction in spending was in order. The Manchester Guardian spoke bravely of 'an alliance between the two democracies against the common enemy, militarism',²⁸ and the Daily News demanded an 'instant arrest of armaments'.²⁹ But apart from trumpeting these appeals there was no suggestion as to how such ideas could be implemented. The Westminster Gazette advocated in 1903 that in addition to a settlement of colonial disputes Britain and France might make naval and military estimates 'a regular subject of diplomacy before they are carried out'.³⁰ And two years later a committee of the Cobden Club under the chairmanship of G. Shaw-Lefevre published a book entitled The Burden of Armaments: a Plea for Retrenchment in which it was argued that, in the light of the Entente Cordiale, Britain could afford to take the first step and reduce those forces which she hitherto had held poised against France.³¹ But at best these remained hopes; for there

28 Manchester Guardian, 2 May 1903.

29 Daily News, 2 June 1904.

30 Westminster Gazette, 6 July 1903.

31 G. Shaw-Lefevre, et. al., The Burden of Armaments: a Plea for Retrenchment (London: 1905), p.172. The Committee - the remainder of which consisted of well-known radicals such as Lord Welby, Sir Algernon West, Sir Spencer Walpole, F.W. Hirst, J.A. Murray Macdonald, G.H. Ferris, H.M. Williams, and T. Fisher-Unwin - also took note of the annihilation of the Russian fleet in the Far East in the spring of 1905 as an additional reason for reducing naval expenditure.

was no way the Liberals could effect such changes when out of power. And even when in power, there was no means of coercing any foreign power to follow suit.³² Nevertheless, the thought of such economies added to their approval of the Convention.

In view of the general enthusiasm expressed in virtually all quarters of public opinion, it is somewhat ironical that Lansdowne encountered his most persistent attacks from a leading Conservative paper, the Morning Post. Explanations of its antipathy to the Entente have traditionally been based on the paper's High Tory reputation. The historian Wilfred Hindle has written that as regards the French Entente the Morning Post had conflicting sentiments between its natural liking for 'continental friendships' and its own 'imperialistic jealousies' in which the former was bound to lose.³³ As has been seen, the Morning Post was opposed to virtually all of the concessions Britain made in the Agreements.³⁴ Yet its underlying disapproval of the Entente was based on something more than the simple judgment that Anglo-French colonial disputes had not been settled

32 Nor could Radicals, Socialists, and pacifists in general agree amongst themselves about the motives for disarmament and how far it should be carried out even after the advent of a Liberal Government to power in 1906. For a perceptive and illuminating discussion on these points, see H. Weinroth, 'Left-wing opposition to Naval Armaments in Britain before 1914', Journal of Contemporary History, VI, 4(1971), pp. 93-120; also A.J.A. Morris, Radicalism against War (London, 1972), pp. 336, 347.

33 Wilfred Hindle, The Morning Post, 1772-1937 (London, 1937), p.230.

34 This is not to say that the paper had a special dislike for France. According to the French Chargé d'Affaires at the London Embassy, M. Geoffray, the Morning Post's proprietor, Lord Glenesk, was a well-known Francophile. Geoffray to Delcassé, D(ocuments) D(iplomatiques) F(rancais), série 2, V, 22. And despite its extensive criticisms of the final terms, it was always careful to value good relations with France. 'It is because we are anxious for sincere goodwill and co-operation between the two Powers', ran its editorial of 11 April, 1904, 'that we regret an agreement which leaves most of the questions only half settled'.

fairly. The Morning Post believed in keeping matters in perspective. Its attitude to treaties and alliances was not only determined by their content but also by how favourably or how adversely they affected what it considered to be Britain's proper and traditional role in European affairs - the maintenance of the balance of power. Certain arrangements could be arrived at, but only if they did not upset this balance. Thus the 1902 Japanese alliance was acceptable because it did not produce any adverse effects in Europe. But a written settlement with the French was altogether different. For in its 'desperate hurry to make friends with someone' the Government had associated itself with one of the two major alliance systems in Europe and appeared to be abandoning Britain's traditional role.³⁵ The Morning Post never went so far as to say that Germany was threatened with war by this situation, but until June 1905 it did believe in an Anglo-French collusion against her. It was only after Germany continued in her demands for a conference of the Powers to settle the Moroccan question even after she had forced the retirement of the French foreign minister Delcassé that the Morning Post began to reassess the Entente. Whereas hitherto an alignment with France was thought to be upsetting the equilibrium, it was now - especially in view of the Russian collapse in the Far East - regarded as a substitute for the weakened Dual Alliance to preserve the balance of power in the face of German aggressiveness.³⁶

The Morning Post's views on the Entente and the 'German problem' contrasted especially with those of much of the Conservative press. In the early stages most right-wing organs took the developing

35 Morning Post, 15 April 1904. *

36 Ibid., 19 June 1905. *

rapprochement and the subsequent 1904 Convention at face value. Unlike the Liberals and the Socialists, they did not see it as a stepping-stone to similar agreements with other major Powers, although they did believe that in liquidating colonial differences Britain and France were removing 'sources of friction which at any time might endanger the peace of the world'.³⁷ Thus emphasizing its pacific purposes, Conservative newspapers were not likely to see the Entente harbouring evil designs against other Powers. There were, however, a handful of organs - notably The Times, the Spectator, and Leo Maxse's ultra-chauvinist monthly, the National Review - in whose opinion the Anglo-French Entente represented not just an expression of friendly feeling but also an understanding on the part of both Powers that they had a common foreign policy objective in the containment of Germany.³⁸ For them, the Entente re-established the independence of British foreign policy, which in their eyes had become much too subservient to Germany's.³⁹ When the Anglo-French Agreements were finally consummated, The Times warned Berlin:

The days have gone by when the Germans could assume with some shadow of plausibility that in the larger questions of international politics Great Britain must follow in the wake of the Triple Alliance, and that the attitude of France might be ignored...⁴⁰

Similarly, the National Review spoke with characteristic abrasiveness of 'the emancipation of England from the German yoke...'.⁴¹

³⁷ Scotsman, 9 April 1904.

³⁸ National Review, 41 (June, 1903), 521; also Spectator, 4 July and 5 December 1903. At first The Times did not subscribe to such views and insisted that the Entente was not directed against any Power, including Germany and Russia. See The Times, 9 July 1903.

³⁹ Only recently Lansdowne had been under attack in right-wing journals for not taking British interests sufficiently into account when dealing with the Germans in settling the Venezuelan dispute and the Baghdad Railway negotiations.

⁴⁰ The Times, 12 April 1904.

⁴¹ National Review, 43 (May, 1904), 349-50.

But these were only reminders of the diplomatic rather than the military implications of the Entente. As yet no one had advocated an Anglo-French alliance against Germany. Indeed, the present arrangement seemed better; for Britain and France could concentrate on checking German expansion without formal commitment to each other, except as was specified in the Egypt-Morocco provisions of the 1904 Convention.⁴²

2. France and her colonies: a prelude to the 1905 crisis

The extent of the British commitment to France was not to become fully known until the following spring with the eruption of the first Moroccan crisis. The reaction in Britain to this crisis cannot be understood without first examining her attitude towards events in Morocco prior to and immediately after the 1904 settlement. Before 1904 Britain was in the anomalous position of having to support often the expansionist policies of her chief competitor there. For although Britain and France had a longstanding trade rivalry in Morocco and were vying for influence at the court of the Sultan Abdul Aziz, both had a stronger interest in seeing that the country did not fall into the hands of tribal leaders like Bu Hamara or Mulai Ahmed ar-Raisuli, whose xenophobic rebellions were directed against the Europeans as much as they were against the Sultan. The total disregard of these tribes for the Algerian border coupled with the presence of a large number of troops she had in North Africa gave France both the excuse and the means to begin her military occupation of Morocco. In June 1903,

⁴² Calchas (J.L. Garvin), 'The bankruptcy of Bismarckian diplomacy', Fortnightly Review, 75 (Jan.-June, 1904), 767-68.

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Jonnart, the Governor-General of Algeria, ordered the first major expedition across the border to quell disturbances in the Moroccan border town of Figuig. Prior to the 1904 Convention, reactions in Britain to this and later efforts on the part of the French to end the uprisings were invariably mixed. No one doubted that France was acting out of self-interest; the question seemed to be to what extent the expansionist motivation was leading her to intervene. Some thought that France was doing so merely in order to safeguard the passage of trade caravans or make the Algerian border more secure,⁴³ particularly as the overthrow of the Sultan might start a general uprising in France's other North African possessions.⁴⁴ Others suspected that Jonnart's punitive expedition was a cover for plans to absorb all of Morocco at Britain's expense.⁴⁵ The consensus of opinion was that France should send a temporary expedition involving, as the Pall Mall Gazette put it, 'as little bloodshed as possible, as thick a velvet glove as may be'. Such a course of action might be ineffective in the long run; nevertheless it was preferable to a permanent occupation, which would unite the resistance of the various tribes and possibly provoke a crisis among the Powers.⁴⁶

After the 1904 Convention, the British press made a remarkable shift of opinion on this question and, with the notable exception of the Morning Post, it fully endorsed Delcassé's programme of pénétration pacifique as the best means

43 The Times, 3 June 1903; also St. James's Gazette, 2 June 1903; and Daily News, 2 June 1903.

44 Economist, 26 September 1903.

45 Observer, 7 June 1903; also Aberdeen Journal, 4 June 1903.

46 Pall Mall Gazette, 4 June 1903.

of establishing order in Morocco. Whereas hitherto a French occupation had been deemed unwise, it was now accepted without question and even urged on the grounds that the Convention incurred special moral obligations on France to intervene.⁴⁷ The Entente suddenly bestowed on France the most altruistic task of 'civilising' Morocco on behalf of all the Powers. Her new role was clearly defined by The Times:

France has been placed by the Anglo-French Convention in a position of unchallenged predominance in North-Western Africa, and Europe will look to her to find means of putting an end to the state of affairs which endangers valuable lives, renders commerce precarious, and makes economic development of the country impossible. 48

There was no need for any nation to fear that the French would abuse this privilege and turn Morocco into a vassal state. For the 1904 Agreements contained ample guarantees that the French would respect the rights of others, and it was assumed that if Britain, with her 'considerable' strategic and commercial interests in the area, found these guarantees satisfactory, then any third Power would do so as well.⁴⁹

Few people in Britain had any illusions about the difficulty of the task which the French were about to undertake in Morocco. Nevertheless, as time passed British opinion became increasingly hopeful about the chances France had of successfully subduing the rebellious tribes. It was an optimism based largely on the reassessment the British had been making of the French as a colonising nation. Traditionally

47 In **contrast** to its earlier cautionary advice, the Pall Mall Gazette was now criticizing the French for not acting drastically enough in their military operations against the tribes. See Pall Mall Gazette, 4 July 1904.

48 The Times, 3 December 1904.

49 Daily Telegraph, 9 April 1904.

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they had been regarded with contempt in Britain as half-hearted imperialists, reluctant to leave home, and, once abroad, too lethargic to develop profitably the material resources of the country. Their inability to export colonists and sufficient capital had still not been overcome, but by the end of the nineteenth century France was introducing a series of administrative reforms, the benefits of which were beginning to be reaped by this time. The trade monopoly which the French were securing in West Africa, for example, was attributed to their systematic construction of railway networks in conjunction with navigable rivers. By 1903, the French had managed to link the Senegal with the Atlantic via the River Niger in this manner, and if everything went according to plan, they would soon be competing with Britain for the commercial and political control of the Western Soudan.⁵⁰ What made this extension of French influence over such a vast area possible was the regroupment of all the West African possessions into a single administrative unit under the direction of one Governor-General, who could devote his time and energies to several colonies at once, thereby getting an overall view of how communications should be established.⁵¹ Likewise in Indo-China the French used administrative changes to further internal development.⁵²

⁵⁰ Scotsman, 30 September 1903.

⁵¹ Morning Post, 7 April 1905.

⁵² In this instance, there was no need for regroupment; for Indo-China was already one colony. Rather, what was required was tighter fiscal control over the various territories within Indo-China, and this the Governor-General Doumer achieved in 1898 by introducing a general budget for all of Indo-China, using the money saved for the construction of public works. Alleyne Ireland, The Far Eastern Tropics (London 1905), pp. 150, 153-54. Ireland, a British subject, made these observations while on a tour of the Far East in 1901 as Colonial Commissioner of the University of Chicago. The figures he gives in his book about trade and finances in Indo-China should be treated with caution, however, as they are based on uncited French sources.

France's improved efficiency in the management of these and other colonies made it fairly certain in the opinion of the British press that she could turn Morocco into 'a prosperous country with stable Government...'.⁵³ All the more reason, therefore, to give support to Delcassé's plans for the country, which envisioned administrative reforms as well as the establishment of law and order. Thus Germany's failure to do^{so} in the spring of 1905 was regarded in Britain not only as a challenge to the Entente but also as an unfortunate set-back to the course of progress and civilization.

53 The Times, 30 August 1904.

CHAPTER III

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ENTENTE CORDIALE, 1905-1907

As far as most of the British press was concerned, the year 1905 began well for Anglo-French relations. The colonial Convention signed in the previous April continued to be the focal point in the affairs of the two countries, and its terms still went unchallenged by any third Powers. Even when Germany did put the Entente to the test with the sudden visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Tangier on 31 March 1905, the newspapers did not seem to think that the relationship between the two Western Powers would suffer greatly. Indeed, if anything, they were inclined to argue that Germany's action had helped to bring Britain and France closer together. But if the first Moroccan crisis forged stronger links between London and Paris, its aftermath left a sense of uneasiness and mutual suspicion in both capitals. For although the two Powers joined hands in opposing 'Bismarckism' in the spring and summer of 1905, each soon began to suspect that it was being embroiled in a diplomatic conflict with the Wilhelmstrasse in order to advance the colonial objectives of the other in North Africa. Moreover, it was later discovered in Britain that the friendlier feelings which had been the guiding spirit of the Entente Cordiale applied only to those areas covered by the 1904 Convention. In other parts of the world, most notably, in Abyssinia and in the Congo basin, the Quai d'Orsay pursued its own programme of overseas expansion at Britain's expense with the same ruthlessness

and determination that characterized French imperialism throughout the late nineteenth century.

1. The Tangier imbroglio

From the outset of the Moroccan episode of 1905, the British press was fully aware that the Kaiser's visit to Tangier portended something more than a simple reaffirmation of German commercial rights in the country. German economic interests in Morocco were, argued the newspapers, 'relatively trifling'; but even if they had been substantial, the press felt that the terms of the 1904 Convention had made it abundantly clear to all third Powers that the Open Door would be guaranteed. Indeed, had Germany any qualms about the proper safeguarding of her commercial interests, she should have spoken up about them sooner than this - notably a year earlier when the Agreements were first published.¹ It was thought that clues to the real German motives could be detected in the timing of the visit, which coincided both with the negotiations the French were engaged in with the Sultan Abdul Aziz concerning the financial reorganisation of the country² and with the collapse of Russia in the Far East.³ Intervention at this moment would, it was thought, be highly propitious from the German point of view for two reasons: it would lead to some sort of territorial compensation from the French, who feared that a disruption of the negotiations would result in a large-scale rebellion by 'reactionary' tribesmen;⁴ while it afforded Germany the opportunity to test and break the Anglo-French Entente without fear of a two-front war.⁵

1 The Times, 31 March 1905; also Pall Mall Gazette, 1 April 1905; and Daily News, 6 April 1905.

2 Scotsman, 30 March 1905.

3 Daily News, loc. cit.

4 Spectator, 1 April 1905; and Glasgow Herald, 1 April 1905.

5 Spectator, loc. cit.; also Daily Graphic, 31 March 1905.

There was little doubt in Britain that the Germans would fail to achieve either objective. Although she might be able to foment trouble in Morocco, Germany was not in a position to prevent French forces in neighbouring Algeria crossing the border and re-establishing law and order.⁶ The only tactic which she might employ with success would be to threaten war in Europe, in which event Germany knew as well as anyone that 'the sovereignty of Morocco would be quite an inadequate prize'.⁷ In any case if such was the German plan, the French were meeting the psychological test of strength with complete self-possession and showed no signs of capitulating. Delcassé was praised for having answered Bulow's charges against the Entente with tact and moderation; his reply in the French Chamber was a quiet reaffirmation of France's 'right' to carry out her pénétration pacifique of the country.⁸ More impressive still was the fact that this level-headed response was seemingly not confined to leading members of the French Government. The Times congratulated the French press for having retained 'a cool head and calm temper' in face of the German challenge.⁹ Nor were the French people exerting any pressure on their Government to over-react to the situation. 'The French, in fact,' the Spectator commented, 'were as placid and as firm as Teutons and Englishmen suppose themselves to be'.¹⁰

If the press seemed reasonably assured that the French penetration of Morocco would continue unhindered, it was even

6 Glasgow Herald, 2 April 1905; also Speaker, 8 April 1905.

7 Economist, 1 April 1905.

8 Spectator, 8 April 1905.

9 The Times, 28 March 1905.

10 Spectator, loc. cit.

more confident that the Entente would weather the storm in tact. The newspapers made it clear from the start of the crisis that British policy would be to adhere to Article IX of the Egypt-Morocco declaration, in which Britain promised France diplomatic support in Morocco.¹¹ No one thought that Britain would be required to offer more assistance than this; for Germany was not likely to force a war. Nevertheless, certain right-wing organs warned that if the situation did deteriorate France would not be left in the lurch. Consistent with its pro-French views, the Spectator wrote that if Germany 'were deliberately to provoke a war with France over a matter arising out of the Anglo-French Agreement, the British people would be by no means content to remain indifferent to the contest, or allow a Power that has of late shown herself so friendly as France to be overwhelmed'.¹² Recent events such as the announcement in London of the coming exchange visits between the British and French fleets and the sudden meeting of French President Loubet and King Edward VII at Pierrefitte while the latter was on his way to a holiday in the South of France were interpreted as demonstrations of Anglo-French solidarity.¹³ The Entente was not going to be broken up by threats; on the contrary, the sheer 'abrasiveness' of German diplomacy was welding Britain and France closer together. As the Pall Mall Gazette noted on 1 April: 'The German Sovereign could hardly have taken more effectual steps to consolidate the friendship and community of interests which happily exist between France and England'.

11 The Times, 31 March 1905.

12 Spectator, 1 April 1905.

13 Pall Mall Gazette, 1 April and 6 April 1905.

These impressions were somewhat shaken on 6 June 1905, when Delcassé's forced retirement from the Quai d'Orsay exposed French nervousness and the length to which Germany was prepared to go to secure her aims. Lansdowne seemed to think the British public regarded Delcassé's fall as a supreme act of cowardice on the part of the French and concluded a letter to the British Ambassador in Paris with the remark: 'Of course the result is that the "entente" is quoted at a much lower price than it was a fortnight ago'.¹⁴ In fact, newspapers in June 1905 expressed regret rather than anger at the French decision. Any ill-feeling that appeared in print was not directed at France, but rather at Germany, whose bullying was thought to endanger peace.¹⁵ Delcassé's dismissal, so they maintained, was due more to his association in the minds of the French public with the increasingly unpopular Dual Alliance than to his diplomatic wrangle with Berlin.¹⁶ But if the newspapers made such statements outwardly, inwardly they felt otherwise. Thus Valentine Chirol, Foreign editor of The Times, was not at all assured about the course of French foreign policy. He understood Delcassé's dismissal to mean a French surrender to the 'big stick' and privately suspected that Rouvier, the new French foreign minister, was conniving with the Germans behind British backs.¹⁷

14 Lansdowne to Sir Francis Bertie, 12 June 1905, F(oreign) O(ffice) 800/127.
 15 See, for example, the Morning Post, 19 June 1905.
 16 Daily Express, 7 June 1905; also Birmingham Daily Post, 14 June 1905. The ascribing of Delcassé's fall to Franco-Russian relations rather than to events in Morocco was part of a widespread belief in the British press at this time that the Dual Alliance was a waning force in European politics. For further information on this point, see Chapter IX of this thesis.
 17 Chirol to William Lavino, 19 June 1905. Quoted in The History of The Times, vol III: The Twentieth Century Test, 1884-1912, p. 420. Lavino was the Paris correspondent of The Times.

Whatever the misgivings they had in private about this episode, the newspapers continued not only to support but to praise the manner in which the French were handling the crisis. Originally opposed to the idea of a conference of the Powers to deal with the Moroccan question as little more than a German ploy to gain a foothold in North Africa, the press now quickly seconded Rouvier's decision to accede to German demands on this point, citing his success in getting Berlin to recognize beforehand France's special position in Morocco and the need to implement the broad outlines of the 1904 Agreement.¹⁸ Indeed, having been consoled with these guarantees, British newspapers suddenly became anxious that a conference should convene as soon as possible lest the situation in Morocco take a turn for the worse. To delay a conference, they argued, would be to create the impression that Europe was still disunited on the Moroccan question and possibly induce the tribes to further rebellions. Worse still, it might afford the Germans an opportunity to strengthen their bargaining position before the talks actually began.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, therefore, the delay that did ensue in convening a conference was attributed primarily to Germany's

¹⁸ Sunday Times, 2 July 1905; also The Times, 11 July 1905.

¹⁹ The Times 31 August 1905. In particular, the newspapers were afraid that German bankers might conclude a £500,000 loan which they had been negotiating with the Sultan since the early summer of 1905. Should the loan be issued, these newspapers argued, Germany would be able to attend the conference claiming that she had important financial interests in Morocco, which France's policies were threatening to destroy. See Pall Mall Gazette, 29 July 1905; also Westminster Gazette, 16 August 1905.

'unreasonable demands' when negotiating the items to be discussed on the agenda. By contrast, French policy throughout the late months of 1905 was characterised as an admirable blend of 'patience' and self-restraint' on the one hand with firmness on the other. The French, it was said, were trying to be conciliatory without sacrificing national interests or honour.²⁰

Although the newspapers generally supported the French in their efforts to subjugate Morocco, this is not to say that everyone in Britain supported their policies or entirely opposed the idea of German intervention in the matter. On the contrary, there always had been lingering doubts in some quarters of British public opinion about the wisdom of allowing France to penetrate Morocco singlehandedly, and by 1905 these doubts were being voiced more and more openly by the Morocco correspondent of The Times, Walter B. Harris. Harris had been working in this capacity for The Times since 1887 and thus had a profound knowledge of Morocco. Not only was he intimately acquainted with the tribesmen, their language, and their customs, but he also had connections at the court of Abdul Aziz. Indeed, by 1901 he had reputedly become, along with Sir Harry MacLean, the Commander-in-Chief of the Sultan's army, the best informed Westerner about events in Morocco. He was also thought to have been 'emotionally inclined to champion Arab independence',²¹ though his sympathies for this cause are a little suspect and seem to reflect a concern more for the well-being of his friend the Sultan than any strong interest

20 The Times, 18 August and 9 October 1905; also Scotsman, 18 August 1905; and Daily Telegraph, 18 December 1905.
 21 This at any rate was the assessment of The Times's official biographers. See The History of The Times, III, 410.

in the nationalist sentiments of the Muslims in general in North Africa. Yet whatever his views on the subject, Harris keenly followed the diplomatic events leading up to the 1904 Convention. Initially, Harris supported France's efforts to penetrate the country, arguing that 'geographically, politically, and morally, Morocco forms an extension of her African possessions';²² he disputed the notion that the Convention spelt trouble for Britain's commercial interests there; but at the same time he recognized that the Agreement weakened the Sultan's power, and he reproached the British Government for having played Abdul Aziz 'a shabby trick'.²³ After the Convention had been signed, he reiterated this theme for weeks on end, convinced that Delcassé's policy of pénétration pacifique would stabilize Morocco. But when it became apparent that France's 'civilizing' mission was producing more chaos instead of less, Harris reconsidered his views: he questioned the effectiveness of pénétration pacifique as a means of maintaining law and order; he condemned France's unwillingness to respond more forcibly to the disturbances; and he called upon other European Powers to intervene to ensure that the Sultan retained his rule over the country.²⁴ As for the welfare of British commercial interests in Morocco, Harris now began to note that the French 'have annexed to some of their demands monopolies which are contrary to the spirit - if not to the letter - of our agreement with them'.²⁵ Hence, when the Kaiser did intervene

22 Walter B. Harris, 'England, France, and Morocco' National Review, XL (November, 1903), 396-397.

23 Harris to his mother, 14 April 1904, The Walter B. Harris File, 1887-1911, in The Times Archives.

24 See, for example, the letter of Harris to Chirol, 16 June 1904. Envelope marked '1894-1906' in the Harris File.

25 Harris to Chirol, 21 March 1905, The Times Archives.

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by landing at Tangier on 31 March 1905, Harris not only rejoiced but promised the Germans his co-operation. Throughout the spring of 1905 he told Kühnemann, the German Minister at Fez, that he would do his best to enlist British support for Berlin's request for a conference of the Powers to deal with Moroccan question.²⁶

Given his reputation as something of an expert on Moroccan affairs, Harris might well have made a significant impact on public opinion in Britain had not his comments provoked such a strong reaction at Printing House Square. Valentine Chirol for one did not approve of Harris's words and actions, and when the time came to publish the latter's despatches in the foreign pages of the paper, he took steps to bring them in line with the editorial policy of The Times. At the time of an infamous kidnapping incident in May 1904, for example, the Foreign editor of The Times told Harris that he found his despatches criticizing the French 'a little vehement' and toned them down so as to make it appear that Harris had not given 'too personal a role' to his remarks.²⁷ Later, when Harris's despatches against the French became increasingly vehement, Chirol and others highly placed on the staff of The Times reacted even more harshly. Thus on the eve of the Kaiser's trip to Tangier, G. Moberly Bell, the managing director of the paper, instructed Harris to limit his article about the visit to only three hundred words. Wilhelm's visit, wrote Bell, was one which 'we can hardly ignore altogether' but

²⁶ History of The Times, III, 411.

²⁷ Chirol to Harris, 25 May 1904. The Times F(oreign) L(etter) B(ook), vol. IV, 882f, The Times Archives.

it was a visit which 'is only offensive to good taste...'.²⁸ Whether or not Bell and Chirol ordered Harris to limit his articles in a similar fashion during the ensuing crisis is difficult to say. What is known, however, is that large gaps in the news from Morocco appeared in the foreign pages of The Times throughout the spring and summer of 1905, gaps which, as even the official historian of that newspaper concludes, 'encourage the guess that many despatches were probably suppressed altogether'.²⁹

Nor is it absolutely clear why The Times should be so sensitive about criticizing the French in Morocco, though a letter of Valentine Chirol to Harris, written on the eve of the Kaiser's visit, is revealing:

I telegraphed you last week asking you to bear in mind that the policy of The Times is to support the French in Morocco. I was rather alarmed at the tone of some of your messages and at the construction, not altogether unnaturally, placed upon them in Paris. The French may not have acted in every way wisely, and they will probably commit many blunders before they have done, but that is their business, not ours. What we have to recollect is that our attitude towards them in Morocco will be the touchstone, as far as they are concerned, of the Anglo-French rapprochement, and we cannot allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon our loyalty to the Agreement. The French in Egypt have accepted their diminutio capitis with such complete loyalty and good grace that our people in Morocco ought to show themselves equal to a similar sacrifice of their old prejudices and prepossessions. 30

In other words, the freedom of the Moroccans and the welfare of British interests in Morocco were less important than the balance of power in Europe. The solidarity of the Anglo-French Entente had to take precedence, even though its implementation

²⁸ Quoted in History of The Times, III, 412.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 414.

³⁰ Chirol to Harris, 27 March 1905. The Times F.L.B., V, 56-57ff. The Times Archives.

was producing dire results in North Africa. Admittedly, contemporary attitudes to imperialism, particularly in Conservative newspapers like The Times, were such that the nationalist sentiments of the Moroccans could easily be brushed aside without much compunction. Moreover, Harris was an exaggerator of the first order whose periodic distortions of the truth lost him the confidence of certain high-ranking officials.³¹ Nevertheless, not everything he said was lies, and it is significant that other members of the British colony in Morocco who were far more sympathetic to the ultimate aims of pénétration pacifique than The Times correspondent held similar views. To J.E. Budgett-Meakin, a former editor of The Times of Morocco and one of the least partial observers of events in that country, the only 'outward evidences of the new position' in 1905 were 'the over-running of the ports, especially of Tangier, by Frenchmen of an undesirable class, and by an attempt to establish a French colony at the closed port of Mehediya by doubtful means, to say nothing of the increased smuggling of arms'.³² One is inclined to think, therefore, that as a policy, advanced almost daily on the editorial pages of The Times, the stubborn refusal to place the understanding with France at anything but a premium could only result in controversy and embarrassment - controversy because it exposed The Times to charges of wilfully abandoning

³¹ See, for instance, Zara Steiner's The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, (London, 1969), p.188n.

³² J.E. Budgett-Meakin, Life in Morocco and Glimpses Beyond, (London, 1905), p.300.

the cause of free trade and the open door in Morocco; embarrassment because it eventually forced Harris to write in other journals, thereby revealing to all that his despatches in The Times did not reflect his sentiments accurately.³³

But while Harris and his superiors were disagreeing about the course of action to be taken in Morocco, a new development arose which for the moment made any more quarrelling on their part pointless: France and Germany agreed to settle their differences at the small Spanish town of Algeciras. It now appeared that the Powers would decide for once and for all how far the French should proceed with their penetration of the country.

2. Algeciras and some subsequent disillusionment in Anglo-French relations.

The convening of the Algeciras Conference on 16 January 1906 meant different things to different people in Britain. To Conservatives and some right-wing Liberals it implied German acceptance of the Entente Cordiale, and it gave Britain and France the opportunity to demonstrate to the world the strength of their friendship. To Radical Liberals and Socialists, on the other hand, it promised to usher in a new chapter in the diplomatic relations of the Great Powers, particularly between Britain and Germany. Still others, most conspicuously the Glasgow Herald, regarded the Algeciras Conference as a favourable occasion to press for the removal of the clause in

33 See, for example, Harris's article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine entitled 'The Morocco crisis' (August, 1905), in which he berated Delcassé and his policies and argued that it was 'England's loyalty to France' that 'blinded public opinion to some extent to the question at issue, and still more so to the manner in which the existing crisis has come about'. (p.293).

the 1904 Convention which imposed a thirty year time-limit to the Open Door in Morocco. If such a step is taken, this pro-Free Trade Scottish newspaper wrote, 'everybody will be pleased except those Frenchmen who really aim at the exclusive exploitation' of the country.³⁴ Yet however varied the hopes and aspirations in Britain about the Conference, public opinion seemed to be united on one point: it constituted the best chance of averting a collision between the Powers. In fact, some organs of opinion like the Scotsman went so far as to say that 'even should the Conference break up without solving the questions ... in dispute, it by no means follows that war would become certain'.³⁵

This, too, seemed to be the attitude of the new Liberal Government, although the Liberal leaders gave no indication of what their policy would be if the Conference did come to an early end. If past statements were anything to go by, the party leadership seemed to be divided into two camps on such subjects as the Entente and Anglo-German relations. Thus in the heat of the 1905-6 election campaign, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman delivered a speech at the Albert Hall in London stressing the differences between Tory and Liberal on foreign policy matters in general and promising that his Government would seek to extend the Entente Cordiale to incorporate Germany.³⁶ Two months earlier, however, Sir Edward Grey told a group of City Liberals that, once in office, the party would continue Lord Lansdowne's policies in the field of foreign affairs and

³⁴ Glasgow Herald, 12 March 1906.

³⁵ Scotsman, 2 February 1906.

³⁶ Manchester Guardian, 28 December 1905. X

would lead Britain into a rapprochement with Germany only if it was certain that such an understanding would do no harm to the nation's good relations with France.³⁷ Amidst such conflicting remarks, it is perfectly understandable that newspapers and journals should each place their own construction upon the implications of the Algeiras Conference for Anglo-French and Anglo-German relations. Indeed, in this context there was a tendency throughout the first few months of 1906 for the press to discuss the Moroccan question only in wider diplomatic aspects. Its more technical side such as the policing of Moroccan ports and the re-organisation of the Sultan's finances attracted less attention, perhaps because these questions did not appear to have such a crucial bearing on Britain's national interests. As The Times put it: 'It is the European, not the Moorish, significance of the Conference that is uppermost in all minds.... Europe is more than Morocco, and...all the countries concerned are bound to ask themselves how the Conference has affected their mutual relations'.³⁸

This belief that the Moroccan question need be discussed primarily in terms of its more international dimensions lost some currency in Britain as events in Morocco itself began to

³⁷ See The Times, 21 October 1905, p.5. Neither Britain's relations with France and Germany nor foreign policy questions in general constituted much of a bone of contention between the two major parties during the 1905-6 election campaign. Nevertheless, there was a tendency in certain Conservative newspapers to claim credit on behalf of their party for the Entente with France. It was to offset this claim and to combat Tory-inspired rumours that the Liberals would scrap the 1904 understanding in favour of another with Germany that men like Grey and Campbell-Bannerman had from time to time to make such speeches. See Grey to J.A. Spender, 19 October 1905, in the J.A. Spender Papers, British Museum Add MSS 46,389.

³⁸ The Times, 9 April 1906.

take a turn for the worse. As a people, the Moroccans had never been too happy at the prospect of European intervention in their country, and now that the Acte Générale of the Algeciras Conference had more or less formalized this intervention, their disapproval turned into anger. In 1906-7 there occurred in Morocco a series of anti-foreign incidents which in effect hindered any plans the French had for penetrating the country peacefully: the murder of a French merchant at Tangier in June 1906; the raiding and pillaging of European property at Casablanca and Mogador three months later; the death of Dr Mauchamp, head of a French 'scientific expedition', by a stone-throwing mob at Marrakesh in March 1907; and the murder of eight Europeans, including the resident French Consul at Casablanca in August of that year. Nor were these outbursts confined to a few large towns. The Glasgow Herald pointed out how far the various rebellious tribesmen, never really subjugated by the French, had now gained control over widespread regions of the country: Raisuli, the tribal leader who most persistently opposed France's expansion, was in virtual possession of Tangier; Mulai Hafid, half-brother of the Sultan and Pretender to the throne, was more active than ever in the South; marauding groups continued to create havoc and confusion along the Algerian border; while nomadic hill tribes remained unsubdued on the northern and western coasts. Indeed, to the Herald it seemed that the only tranquil area of Morocco was in the vicinity of Fez, and even there the French only shakily maintained their authority.³⁹

How did events in Morocco manage to get so far out of control? Two differing answers were in turn put forth in

39 Glasgow Herald, 10 November 1906.

Britain on this question. Initially, the general feeling had been that the prevailing chaos and disorders could be traced directly to the compromise reached at Algeciras in April 1906. For had not the Conference 'internationalized' Morocco in the sense of forbidding any one Power to intervene militarily in that country without the consent of the others, France, the newspapers argued, would have long ago been able to re-establish law and order.⁴⁰ As it was, the French could only 'flutter on the margins of Moorish territory' or else risk creating fresh antagonism with Germany if they went further.⁴¹ But as time passed and as the French continued to make feeble, almost half-hearted, responses to the disturbances, some began to wonder whether or not the troubles could be attributed entirely to the diplomatic machinery set up by the Powers. If newspapers like the Scotsman fell short of accusing France of shirking responsibilities in Morocco, they did point out that she was reluctant to act because this would give her 'all the labour', while 'the spoils would be shared by the Powers signatory to the Algeciras Conference'.⁴² The Manchester Guardian more or less hit upon the same explanation when it speculated why the French had occupied part of Morocco after the murder of Dr Mauchamp but had only sent warships to the Mediterranean during the Casablanca riots. The former concerned France alone, wrote the Guardian, but the latter involved working on behalf of European lives and property in general.⁴³ Even The Times, normally one of the staunchest

40 Pall Mall Gazette, 25 March 1907; also Scotsman, 6 July 1907; Morning Post, 3 August 1907; and Glasgow Herald, loc. cit.

41 Spectator, 25 May 1907.

42 Scotsman, 20 August 1907. X

43 Manchester Guardian, 2 and 10 August 1907.

defenders of the policy of pénétration pacifique in Britain, indulged in criticisms of the French now and again for their reluctance to act in North Africa. In the late summer of 1906, the paper rebuked the Chamber of Deputies for having risen in July for the summer recess without ratifying the Acte Générale of Algeciras. Such a move, The Times complained, was tantamount to leaving Moroccan ports unpoliced and exposed to raids.⁴⁴ These remarks did not necessarily herald a shift in British newspaper opinion away from France and towards Germany on the Moroccan question, but they indicate that the press was not totally biased in its understanding of the problem.

As Morocco drifted more and more into a state of anarchy, the newspapers paused for a moment to consider the reasons for France's presence in that country. The need to restore law and order, protect European lives and property, and safeguard the Algerian frontier from raiding tribesmen, were all regarded as obvious factors in Delcassé's original decision to penetrate and 'civilize' the country. But the desire to establish a protectorate there and secure a firm grip on Moroccan finances confounded some people in Britain, particularly the more left-wing students of imperialism. Indeed, for this group France's endeavours to gain a permanent foothold in Morocco seemed to be almost wholly without logic. The Nation explained why this appeared to be the case. Surveying the entire range

44 The Times, 19 September 1906.

of economic factors and internal stimuli which it thought prompted most European nations to assimilate the 'backward' regions of the world, and applying these factors and stimuli as criteria to judge France's need to expand into North Africa, this Radical weekly wrote:

France may in the end be forced to assume some direct responsibility for the government of Morocco. But the two chief motives which govern the expansion of other nations are in her case absent. She has no teeming population which must seek an outlet beyond the seas, no landless peasantry in search of fields to till, no eager brood of younger sons in quest of careers and opportunities....Nor does the need of acquiring fresh markets appear to her so vital as it is to the Germans and ourselves. Her natural industrial development does not fit her to compete with England and Germany for the custom of a primitive market. The riches of France depend not on the export of vast quantities of the exigencies of life, but rather on a small but skilful production of its luxuries. She has neither the raw materials, nor the mineral resources, nor the sea-trade which fit her to be a manufacturer on a large scale of cheap and elementary wares...Her natural clients are not the primitive races to which Liverpool and Hamburg export so largely, but the older peoples, the more refined communities...The acquisition of a raw tract of African desert and mountain, peopled by a race which has as yet no elegant needs, cannot be for France a capital object of her economic policy. 45

Presumably, then, there was a less apparent reason for the Quai d'Orsay's pénétration pacifique of the country. If the Nation and other left-wing organs of opinion remained baffled by this problem, the Manchester Guardian was quick to offer an explanation. Behind the whole affair, it said, were not any internal pressures inherent in the French economy but simply the territorial ambitions of an ultra-patriotic Colonial party working in conjunction with money-grabbing financiers and individual speculators. It was these people who had first urged the French Government to penetrate the country; it was they who had hoped to corner all of Morocco's trade for

themselves; and it was because of their recently established interests and investments in Morocco that France's 'zealous men on the spot' - the political intriguers and the 'fanatical colonels' - had threatened a formal conquest of the country and risked endangering the peace of Europe.⁴⁶ Of course, there was nothing really new in these statements. Already J.A. Hobson in his major work on imperialism had traced the origins of that phenomenon to greedy individuals who exported capital in the hope of gaining a profitable investment overseas.⁴⁷ But much more than Hobson, the Manchester Guardian thought that the need for markets and raw materials abroad genuinely figured in the rise of the New Imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, it seemed to be drawing a fine moral distinction between this type of expansionism and the more speculative variety practised by France in North Africa. While not exactly approving of the former, the Manchester Guardian could apparently accept it, provided it kept the doors open to free trade and did not create friction among the Powers. The latter, however, was clearly objectionable; for its fulfillment would 'infallibly mean the loss of another neutral market'. No wonder, then, that by 1905 the Guardian was speaking out so strongly against Delcassé's policies. There was little doubt in its mind that, if carried out, they would eventually squeeze British traders and investors out of Morocco altogether, despite the existence of a thirty year free trade clause in the 1904 Convention. Indeed, it was for this reason that the paper openly welcomed German intervention into the matter. 'The

⁴⁶ Manchester Guardian, 9 August 1905; also 28 March and 19 April 1907.

⁴⁷ See the chapter entitled 'Economic parasites of imperialism' in his Imperialism: A Study (London, 1905), pp. 42-56, for details of Hobson's views on this point.

Kaiser', commented C.P. Scott one week after the Tangier visit, 'is acting in the spirit of the Agreement, not against it. His methods are open to criticism, but the substance of his policy, so far at any rate, is sound'.⁴⁸

Apart from the Manchester Guardian, there were others in Britain who voiced complaints about France's colonial policies during these years. Ever since the signing of the 1904 Agreements, there always had been a latent fear in some sections of British public opinion that the French might one day renege on the friendly spirit of the Entente Cordiale by advancing their own commercial and financial interests abroad to the detriment of British traders and investors. After all, prior to 1904 the French had engaged in unscrupulous commercial practices in the Congo and elsewhere with scant regard for British capitalists, not to mention the native population. It was quite conceivable, therefore, that they might continue these practices, despite the existence of a written colonial settlement with Britain. And, indeed, between 1905 and 1907 the French proceeded to do just that. Not only did they continue to seal off in the fashion of the Belgians much of the Congo basin from all outsiders, but in 1905-6 French capitalists went ahead with the laying of an extended railway system in Abyssinia which in the minds of some of their British and Italian competitors there was the first step in the

48 Manchester Guardian, 8 April 1905. Despite early reservations about the thirty year time-limit clause of the 1904 Convention, the Manchester Guardian did not fully condemn Delcassé till June 1905. Howard Weinroth is probably right when he attributes this change in outlook on the part of the Guardian to the French foreign minister's fall from power and 'the mounting attack of the French left upon him for arousing German anxieties of isolation'. See Howard S. Weinroth, 'The British Radicals and the balance of power, 1902-1914', Historical Journal, XIII, 4 (1970), 659.

colonization of Ethiopia.⁴⁹

In Britain, a number of people were quick to criticize the French for their behaviour overseas. Conservative newspapers, always sensitive to imperial issues, were among the first to speak out. Upon learning of French pressures on the British Government to support the railway venture in Abyssinia 'on pain of injuring, if not, indeed, destroying the good understanding between the two countries',⁵⁰ the Scotsman wrote that France 'cannot advance without danger to herself and to others'.⁵¹ Earlier, the Morning Post made a similar warning, only in somewhat less uncertain terms. The French, it said, 'should definitely abandon the idea that it (the Entente) can be used as an instrument for political aggrandisement'.⁵² Oddly enough, British businessmen and the imperialist press had little to say about the Congo question. Instead, the protests that were made in Britain about French malpractices there came primarily from humanitarians who were interested in the plight of the Africans. Spearheading the campaign against the French in the Congo was E.D. Morel, a man born in France and well acquainted with French colonial administrators. Morel first became interested in the Congo question when working in the

49 In 1894, the largely French-owned *Compagnie Impériale d'Éthiopie* secured a concession from Emperor Menelik II to construct a railway line from Jibuti to Dire Dawa in eastern Abyssinia. In 1905, the French began to extend this line from Dire Dawa to Adis Ababa, a move which T. Lennox Gilmour, then a Managing Director of the Mozambique Company in London, labelled as an attempt to make Abyssinia become 'a French colony in all but name'. The extension of the railway line, Gilmour was certain, would, if completed, give France political and commercial predominance throughout all of Abyssinia. See T. Lennox Gilmour, Abyssinia: The Ethiopian Railway and the Powers (London, 1906), pp. 8-9.

50 Ibid., p.55.

51 Scotsman, 4 January 1906.

52 Morning Post, 28 November 1905.

1890s for Messrs. Elder Dempster and Company, a Lancashire shipping firm which operated steamers between Liverpool and the West African coast. The tales of Belgian and French atrocities which he heard while employed for the firm prompted him to resign in 1901 in the hope of exposing the capitalists; and in March 1904, he founded and became secretary of the Congo Reform Association, an organization designed solely to rouse British public opinion on behalf of the African population.⁵³ Initially, Morel concentrated on mobilizing public feeling against the Belgian King Leopold II for his policies in the Congo Free State, believing that the French could be induced to alter their ways in their part of the Congo as a result of the Entente Cordiale.⁵⁴ But when it became apparent that the 1904 Convention was not having any effect upon the French Government in this direction, Morel and his fellow members of the Congo Reform Movement reconsidered their outlook: public hostility was to be stirred up against the French as well as the Belgians; while the 1904 understanding was now to be regarded as a virtually useless instrument of diplomacy which could be readily discarded by the British Government and people in favour of a similar arrangement with another Power that was more willing to help the Africans. The security of France's position in Morocco depends upon Britain,

⁵³ Also members of the Congo Reform Association were Sir Charles Dilke, the Radical M.P. for Forest of Dean, H.R. Fox-Bourne, secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, William A. Cadbury of the cocoa firm, John Holt, owner of a prominent Liverpool shipping company, and the writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. See W.R. Louis and J. Stengers (editors), E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement (Oxford, 1968), pp. ix, x, 5.

⁵⁴ C.A. Cline, 'E.D. Morel and the crusade against the Foreign Office', Journal of Modern History, 39, no. 2, (June, 1967), 129.

Morel once wrote a friend, 'and the situation on the international chess-board is such that the Anglo-French alliance is her sheet anchor....At the present moment the Entente cordiale is the order of the day; but international politics are constantly fluctuating'.⁵⁵ Yet although Morel was equally, if not more, provoked at the French than were either the Scotsman or the Morning Post, his efforts, unlike theirs, came to naught. Whereas the Foreign Office responded to newspaper pressures by coming to an agreement with the French over Abyssinia,⁵⁶ neither it nor many leading newspapers like The Times would denounce the French in the Congo for fear of damaging the Entente.⁵⁷ The result, of course, was that much of the British public knew little or nothing about the atrocities in the French Congo; and Morel, like Walter B. Harris in Morocco, remained something of a lone voice in the wilderness during these years.

The most persistent criticism of the French at this time, however, was that made by many Liberals with regard to the

⁵⁵ Morel to Colonel E.D. Blake, 9 January 1907, in the E.D. Morel Papers. Box labelled 'F (8): Foreign Office, 1903-1913', British Library of Political and Economic Science.

⁵⁶ On 13 December 1906, Britain, France, and Italy signed an agreement in London in which it was stated that France could proceed with her extension of the railway line in Abyssinia, provided that British and Italian nationals 'would enjoy in all matters of trade and transit absolute equality of treatment on the railway and in the port of Jibuti' and provided that British and Italian representatives were appointed to the Board of the French railway company. See Accounts and Papers: State Papers, XCIX (1907) Cd. 3298.

⁵⁷ A letter of Valentine Chirol, Foreign editor of The Times, to Morel dated 9 August 1906 is fairly typical. 'With regard to the French Congo I see the force of your argument', wrote Chirol, 'but I confess I am rather doubtful as to the expediency of dispersing your fire, especially as there is the added danger of reviving French prejudices which the Congo people have only too successfully exploited in the past for their own advantage'. See the E.D. Morel Papers, box marked 'F. (8): Sir Valentine Chirol file, 1906-1912'.

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role of French diplomacy in Europe. Since the earliest days of the rapprochement with France the Liberals had been anxious to see the friendlier feelings between the two Western Powers extended to include other nations as well, particularly Germany. When this development failed to materialise, the Liberals, though admittedly only some of them, were at first inclined to lay the blame on the Right in their own country. Thus in the spring of 1905, they accused the 'English Tory press' of adding unnecessary fuel to the tensions of the Moroccan crisis. It was the unabated anti-Teutonic invective of these newspapers, they claimed, that not only exacerbated Anglo-German relations but also frightened many Frenchmen into thinking that Delcassé should be dismissed because his policies were being used by the British press 'as a cover for attacking Germany'.⁵⁸ But a number of Liberals soon began to change their minds somewhat in the light of the disapproval expressed in some French newspapers at Anglo-German attempts to seek a reconciliation. During the general election campaign of 1905, for example, a number of French newspapers expressed alarm at Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's foreign policy speeches, many of which promised improved relations with Berlin under a Liberal Government.⁵⁹ In 1906, when Anglo-German relations did begin to improve with a series of exchange visits held at the grass-roots level, many French newspapers warned that an understanding between London and Berlin could only come at the

⁵⁸ Manchester Guardian, 22 April 1905; also Westminster Gazette, 9 May, 1 and 7 June 1905; and H.W. Massingham's column 'Persons and politics' in the Speaker, 10 June 1905.

⁵⁹ In particular, it was the afore-mentioned foreign policy speech which Campbell-Bannerman delivered at the Albert Hall in late December 1905 that caused the greatest stir in France. See Glasgow Herald, 26 December 1905. X

expense of the existing good relations between London and Paris.⁶⁰ And in 1907, the officially-inspired Temps, angered by Campbell-Bannerman's proposals for a drastic limitation of armaments at the forthcoming Hague Conference, accused the British Prime Minister of naiveté and implied that his suggestions were based upon an excessive trust in the goodwill of Germany.⁶¹ To these and other remarks in the French press the reaction was swift in Britain. One of the most indignant newspapers was the Glasgow Herald. 'We have made friends with France and are prepared to assume all the responsibilities which friendship and specific agreements lay upon us', went its leader-article of 27 October 1905. 'But we must demur to this perpetual invention of horrible anti-German tales, the chief end of which is to persuade the world, and this country in particular, that Germany is the blackguard of Europe'. Nor was this sense of irritation at the French confined to newspapers like the Herald. Grey himself, states the Liberal Foreign Secretary's latest biographer, 'felt their touchiness was extreme'.⁶²

60 Towards the end of 1905, Lord Avebury and Lord Courtney, two pacifically inclined Liberal peers, founded the Anglo-German Friendship Committee to promote better relations between the two countries by fostering exchange visits for various trade union, religious, and civic delegations. By the spring of 1906 these visits were in full swing, despite the deplorable impression they were creating in right-wing circles in France. See Weinroth, *op. cit.*, pp. 661-662.

61 The outburst on this occasion was prompted by an article of Campbell-Bannerman in the new Radical weekly the Nation entitled 'The Hague Conference and the limitation of armaments'. In this article, the Prime Minister proposed that Britain set an example for all nations involved in the arms race by making substantial reductions in naval expenditure. (See Nation, 2 March 1907.) The Temps, however, challenged the facts and figures which Campbell-Bannerman used to support his arguments and concluded that the article achieved nothing, apart from revealing 'the extent of the imprudent confidence to which the responsible head of the British Government gives way'. (Quoted in The Times, 4 March 1907, p. 5.)

62 Keith Robbins, Sir Edward Grey: A Biography (London, 1971), p. 155.

But although the indignation at the French was becoming fairly widespread in Britain during these years and for a host of reasons, this is not to say that the press and the public at large were on the verge of demanding a dissolution of the Entente Cordiale. Admittedly, there was by the summer of 1907 much less euphoria about the friendship with France than there had been in the earlier days of the rapprochement. However harmless it was originally thought to have been in some circles of British public opinion, this was soon forgotten with the eruption of the first Moroccan crisis, and almost to a man British journalists ceased to speak of the Entente after 1905 as an instrument that would inevitably promote world peace. But at the same time British assurances of goodwill towards France both at official and at popular levels were as firm as ever, and hardly anyone suggested that the recent understanding be laid to rest. Undoubtedly the selectivity and care which a great many newspapers exercised when reporting the news helped the Entente to retain a reasonable degree of popularity. By falsely ascribing to French diplomacy certain qualities which it did not have, as happened during the Tangier crisis, and by deliberately ignoring or suppressing certain information about French policies abroad, as happened time and again between 1905 and 1907, some newspapers, particularly The Times, were in effect projecting an unduly favourable image of France and the Entente Cordiale. This was a fact which men like Walter B. Harris and E.D. Morel were only too quick to discover.

Yet even if The Times and other newspapers had acted otherwise and revealed as much as they knew about the course of

events in Morocco and elsewhere, it is still open to debate whether or not the result would have been a public uproar culminating in the end of the Anglo-French Entente. In Britain, there were too many people who supported the Entente for too many reasons for this to happen. True, the reasons advanced were not only varied but often at cross-purposes. Thus Conservatives backed the Entente because for them it was a prop upon which Britain could shore up her flagging Empire and concentrate instead on staving off the German challenge in Europe; while Liberals welcomed it because they believed that it signalled the wane of imperialist rivalries and marked a new era in international relations in which all the major Powers, including Britain, France, and Germany, would eventually come to terms and settle their differences. If in the case of the Liberals, particularly the Radicals, the Entente had yet to fulfil its pacific mission, it was only because some misguided men in the foreign offices in London and Paris along with a few of the newspapers in both countries were attempting to convert the understanding into something akin to a military alliance. The solution then, as they saw it, was not to destroy the Entente but to put it safely into the hands of the two peoples. This explains the subsequent campaign by left-wing newspapers not only for the dismissal of Sir Edward Grey and an end of his policies but also for the complete democratization of the Foreign Office. This also explains why foreign policy dissidents in Britain were at pains to single out the Quai d'Orsay rather than the French people as the source of many of the short-comings connected with the Entente in Morocco and

elsewhere; between the two, emphasized the Manchester Guardian, 'there is a great deal of difference'.⁶³ Equally important, it seemed plausible to a number of people in Britain - Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, and Socialists alike, - that for the French, too, the Entente Cordiale had not lived up to expectations. 'There is no definite change of opinion, but there is a change of feeling...', wrote W.L. Courtney, editor of the Fortnightly Review. 'A large number of the French people begin to feel that they have been used - that we have Egypt, that they have not got Morocco, and that the entente cordiale cannot help them to secure it....In France and elsewhere human nature ought not to be human nature; but it is'.⁶⁴ By constantly drawing attention to this point and by hastily passing over any difficulties between the two Powers, the newspapers were more than able to offset any criticisms levelled at France and the Entente during these years.

⁶³ Manchester Guardian, 3 May 1907.

⁶⁴ See Courtney's unsigned column in the Fortnightly Review, LXXXII (September, 1907), entitled 'Foreign affairs: a chronique', pp. 508-509.

CHAPTER IV

BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC FRENCH POLITICS, 1903-1907

It perhaps almost goes without saying that, even during the most ordinary of times when there was comparatively little diplomatic activity between London and Paris, the British as a whole took a reasonably strong interest in what was happening in France. Nor were they wrong to do so. After all, France was an important nation in Europe, a Great Power at close geographical proximity to Britain and one whose political ideals and sentiments had a tradition of influencing her neighbours. In the light of the Entente Cordiale, however, this interest in French political, cultural, and social life underwent something of a transformation. Not only did the various organs of British public opinion report the news from France in more detail and with greater enthusiasm, they also presented it in such a fashion as to convey certain impressions to their readers that did not necessarily square with the facts. In particular, the newspapers and periodicals of the day were virtually unanimous in proclaiming the stability of the Third Republic at a time when political and social tensions were rife in France. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine why the press chose to pursue this and other dubious themes, as well as to find out the reactions in Britain to day-to-day events in France.

1. The question of the instability of the Third Republic

Taken in its entirety, public opinion had been in two minds about the Third Republic around the turn of the century. On the one hand, there were those who looked upon the political institutions of France as being basically progressive and

largely fulfilling the democratic ideals of the 1789 Revolution. For them, there was no more favourable contrast between French liberalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the more autocratic, if not despotic, spirit of government that prevailed at Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. Indeed, in the eyes of some, France was a bulwark against reaction and oppression on the Continent. At the same time, however, there were others who felt that the Third Republic was almost too democratic in its principles and hence apt to be volatile and untrustworthy. Those who thought along these lines pointed out that France was the only major country in Europe not to be headed by a monarch or an emperor. This, they averred, made French government even more alien to the British mind than the backward régimes in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. The exponents of this point of view were, of course, few in number and came primarily from the aristocratic wing of the Conservative party; nevertheless they had all too frequently occupied the positions of power and influence in Britain in recent years. In the late nineteenth century, their chief spokesman had been Lord Salisbury, who during his four tenures as Prime Minister opposed a formal understanding with France for several reasons, not the least of which was his belief that the elected governments of the Third Republic were too short-lived and too vulnerable to the whims and caprices of the public will to come to terms with on a long-term basis.¹

Whether or not Salisbury's notions about France lingered on in high circles in Britain after his death is difficult to say. Certainly the press behaved as if they did. Time and

¹ Christopher M. Andrew, Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale (London, 1968), pp.214-215.

again British newspapers and periodicals devoted editorials and special articles to refuting the late premier's line of thinking by arguing that recent events had shown France to be a stable country, even by British standards. According to the Birmingham Daily Post, for instance, the internal disorders, 'which had made France a byword among the nations' were gone, and the task of 'advancing the Republic towards consolidation and solidarity' was now finished. 'Practically speaking...', this newspaper continued,

France has enjoyed five and a half years of settled government and the result is seen in greater stability in domestic affairs and increased international prestige. Such a record compares by no means unfavourably with our own political experience, bearing in mind the fact that the Constitutional systems of the two countries are not equally conducive to long-lived Administrations....In France the upholders of the Republic have to meet an Opposition, not, as in this country, composed of one or two parties, but embracing numerous and most diverse elements.²

Britain, it concluded, had entered into diplomatic partnership with a steady and thoroughly reliable neighbour.

No doubt there was much to be said for these statements of the Post in early 1905. By this time only two premiers, Waldeck-Rousseau and Emile Combes, had been governing the country for a period lasting longer than five years. As both men had more or less striven towards the same goals, the succession of the one to the other at this time was widely understood to have rendered a certain continuity to France's domestic policies, just as Delcassé's seven year tenure at the Quai d'Orsay over the same period of time was thought to have steadied and given a greater sense of purpose to French foreign policy. Meanwhile, Loubet was well into his sixth year

²Birmingham Daily Post, 19 January 1905.

as President of the Republic. Yet despite these encouraging signs, not everything was running as smoothly in France as was being suggested. For one thing, expressions of political discontent were becoming increasingly audible in the Chamber of Deputies. In the main this was due to Combes's anti-clerical policies, which alienated not only the Nationalists and the various parties of the Right but also the Socialists and the Radical groups in the legislature, for whom the premier's excessive efforts to curtail the power and influence of the Church were coming at the expense of more pressing reforms concerning old age pensions, a graduated income tax, and a reduction of military service from three to two years. Moreover, the intrigues and political infighting that had bedevilled earlier ministries of the Third Republic were by the end of 1904 beginning to undermine Combes's authority in the Chamber. Prominent cabinet ministers were quietly working behind the prime minister's back to further their own future.³ By January 1905 the combination of these two factors had forced Combes from power; in March 1906 his successor Rouvier retired for similar reasons; and in October 1906 Rouvier's successor, Sarrien, stepped down from office in favour of Clemenceau. In the meantime, Théophile Delcassé, the French foreign minister and a chief architect of the Entente Cordiale, had been dismissed from office because his Moroccan policies had led other members of the French cabinet into thinking that war with Germany was close at hand.

If the newspapers and journals in Britain did not overlook these developments, they did argue that, despite the rapid turnover of Governments in France, nothing had really changed.

³ Interestingly, Emile Combes in his memoirs acknowledged that parliamentary intrigues played an important part in his downfall but denied that his successor was involved to any great extent. See Combes, Mon Ministère: Mémoires, 1902-1905 (Paris, 1956), pp. 260-261.

The Manchester Guardian was one of the first organs of opinion to explain to its readers why it thought this to be the case. Writing at the time of M. Combes's retirement in January 1905, this newspaper argued that the 'insignificance' of the event could best be understood when one recalled the differences between the British and French parliamentary systems. In France, 'the doctrine of the cohesion of the Cabinet' never had quite the same force that it possessed in Britain. Instead, in French government there existed the 'group system' in which largely the same cabinet members continued to work together under a succession of premiers without altering the ministerial programme. As for the comparatively short life of most French Governments, the Guardian attributed this to 'a natural jealousy of the Executive and of the large administrative powers possessed by the ministries' which 'had made the Legislature very ready to resort to the expedient of tripping up a Ministry on an interpellation'. 'Therefore', it concluded, 'while M. Combes must go, his colleagues, or the majority of them, will remain'.⁴

At the time of Rouvier's fall from power, the Westminster Gazette said more or less the same thing, albeit in a somewhat less complicated fashion, when it wrote on 8 March 1906: 'the case is by no means so bad as we might suppose from the analogy of our own Governments. The defeat of a Ministry signifies more often a change of personnel than of policy'. Indeed, as far as the Economist was concerned, this sudden spate of short-lived Ministries only went to show the degree of unanimity of opinion and the common sense of purpose that existed among high-ranking French politicians. The group system, it argued,

⁴ Manchester Guardian, 17 January 1905.

makes every successful Minister in turn the victim of some unforeseen combination. The more homogeneous French policy becomes - and at present it is very homogeneous - the less important it seems to be thought by what Ministers it is carried out. The moment of success is apparently the moment when the man who has achieved it is destined to see himself abandoned by the very men who have helped him on the road. ⁵

In making such statements, the Economist and others were obviously trying to put the best face possible on a phenomenon which at times must have been a trifle perplexing to the casual observer of French politics. In particular, they were trying to assure their readers that the fall of a Ministry in Paris implied no serious breach of continuity in French foreign policy. 'Certainly the Anglo-French understanding will not suffer...from a change of Government in France', wrote the Daily Chronicle at the time of Clemenceau's replacement of Sarrien in October 1906, 'any more than it has done so from a change of Government in England'. ⁶ But although British newspapers and journals advanced these arguments as often as possible, not everyone was inclined to agree. Thus the Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne refused to regard these ministerial reshuffles in France as unimportant and privately expressed the belief that they bore out the warnings of the late Lord Salisbury against a French entente. ⁷

⁵ Economist, 12 March 1906.

⁶ Daily Chronicle, 20 October 1906.

⁷ 'The instability of French Governments is much to be regretted', wrote Lansdowne to his ambassador in Paris in the aftermath of the French cabinet shake-up during the Tangier crisis, 'and affords an argument to those who do not believe in the possibility of an enduring understanding with France. The machine worked (or seemed to work) so smoothly while it was run by Delcassé and Cambon, that one was apt to forget this danger'. See Lansdowne to Sir Francis Bertie in the Lansdowne Papers, F(oreign) O(ffice) 800/127.

2. Reactionaries in decline

Much more indicative in the opinion of many people in Britain of France's internal stability was the fate being suffered by the reactionaries and the anti-republican forces of the Right at this time. As far as a good number of Britons were concerned, the ability of the various French Governments of these years to meet and overcome the challenge posed by the Nationalists and the various royalist groups showed far better than any detailed arguments about the nature of the French political system that all augured well for the Third Republic. On several occasions since 1870 had the forces of reaction - Bourbonist, Orleanist, Bonapartist, and Boulangist alike - threatened to destroy the existing social and political set-up in France. In the 1890s, the forces of the far Right had come close to wresting control of the Army from the Government. Of the failure of right-wing groups to achieve this and other ends little need be said here, except to mention that in the eyes of the bulk of the British press a repetition of such events was most unlikely. For the newspapers, the gradual vindication of Dreyfus and the resounding victory of the parties of the Bloc in the general election of 1902 were sufficient proof that this was the case. The Times, writing on the heels of President Loubet's State visit to London in 1903, proclaimed that the passions 'generated during the Panama crisis and the Dreyfus controversy ~~are~~ **are** dead or dying, and the irreconcilables on both sides who would uproot the foundations of the State for narrow and perverse objects are becoming feeble and discredited minorities'. The French royalists, while not exactly endeared to the Third Republic, were now beginning to see that it was 'the only form of

government which divides Frenchmen least'. Consequently, The Times argued, they would in future be sacrificing 'family prejudices' to 'public duty' in order to ensure that existing political institutions remain standing.⁸ What most impressed the Spectator, on the other hand, was not so much that French Governments had succeeded in withstanding these attacks and intrigues from the extreme Right, but that they had apparently emerged from them much stronger than they had been before.

'An entire generation has passed away', it wrote on 18 April 1903,

and the Republic still subsists, and is still as popular with the people as it ever was. Its rulers have spent money rather recklessly; but they have maintained peace; they have so remade the Army that France no longer fears invasion; they have restrained the bitterness between poor and rich till property is as safe in France as in England; and they have secured for the electorate a firm, and, as it has proved, a tranquillising, hold on their representatives... .

Nevertheless, British onlookers of events in France could not be certain; they had no way of knowing for sure whether or not the threat to the Republic from the extreme Right had been completely overcome; and, significantly, when the Combes Ministry fell in January 1905, the Spectator and the Daily News, two organs of opinion with strikingly different views of the world at large, both momentarily came to the conclusion that the latest turn of events presaged a revival of Nationalism in France.⁹ Did such remarks amount to a tacit admission on the part of British newspapers that they had been exaggerating their confidence in the stability of the Third Republic? It would be difficult to say; for the

⁸ The Times, 20 July 1903.

⁹ Daily News, 16 January 1905; and Spectator, 21 January 1905. Both organs of opinion had taken Combes's resignation over the anti-clerical issue very much at face value and assumed that it was due to the pressure of the Church's political allies on the Right rather than the impatience of the Left. They soon altered their views, however, as soon as it became apparent that it was Rouvier, and not the right-wing Doumer, who was coming into office.

press, despite its claims to accuracy and objectivity in the reporting and the discussion of the news, did from time to time over-indulge in its praise of France and the Entente Cordiale during these years. What is undeniable, however, is that at least some people in Britain were alive to the strength and resiliency of French royalism and ultra-conservatism. Laurence Jerrold, the Paris correspondent of the Daily Telegraph and one of the most astute observers of the contemporary political and social scene in France, in particular held this view.¹⁰ Writing in the summer of 1906 shortly after the general election of that year had yet again reduced the number of Nationalist deputies sitting in the French Chamber, Jerrold warned his readers not to become too complacent about the results. It was a curious feature of French politics, he pointed out, that the Nationalists never numbered more than forty-nine in the legislature and yet 'made one hundred times more more noise than the same number of any other politicians'. That so few could make so much commotion was due, he explained, to the diffusion of Nationalist principles and ideals through several parliamentary groups. Although there was but one self-styled Nationalist party, reactionary thinking found its way into other parties as well. Moreover, Nationalism was in his opinion 'the one powerful re-agent' in French politics.

¹⁰ Born in London in 1873 as the grandson of the prominent nineteenth century man-of-letters, Douglas Jerrold, educated at the Sorbonne, and married to a Frenchwoman in 1908, Jerrold in many ways belonged, along with Hilaire Belloc, Edmund Déné Morel, and a few others, to that small group of men whose personal background and experiences on both sides of the Channel made them equally expert on both the British and French ways of life at this time. Jerrold spent his first few years after university writing in French journals on English and American literature as well as in British journals on French literature and social questions. In 1902 he succeeded Campbell Clarke as Paris correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, where he performed his duties well enough to earn himself the tribute of that newspaper's biographer as **a man** of considerable brilliance and almost equally considerable indolence, whose scholarship and great knowledge of

It either attracted or repelled all other 'bodies'. If during the previous Chamber it had managed only to repel, this was because its 'fearsome aims' and subversive methods had produced a widespread revulsion which in turn managed to keep the Bloc going. But once the Nationalists had shed their anti-republican objectives, their other goals, like a war with Germany over Alsace-Lorraine or a great extension of France's colonial empire, stood a chance of being realised: 'there always will be an audience in France for furious rhetoric...'.¹¹

The view is an interesting one and not altogether without substance; for it helps to explain the 'New Nationalism' and virulent revanchist politics that sprang up in the Third Republic under Poincaré's leadership on the eve of the Great War. Still, for many British organs of opinion at this time Nationalism was very much a waning force in French politics. The fortunes of the creed, it seems, were to be identified solely with the fortunes of a single political party.

Indeed, if anything, this notion that French Nationalism was dying seemed to gain currency as time wore on. It emerged once again in the British press during the first Moroccan crisis when both the French Government and the French people studiously refused to heed the belligerent calls of the Nationalists to take up Germany's challenge over North Africa. It reappeared in connection with the disestablishment struggle in France, in which a prominent ally of the reactionaries, the Roman Catholic Church, suffered repeated defeats. And it came to the fore in the spring of 1906 when rumours of a royalist plot

France well maintained the standards of the Paris office in the easy years between the establishment of the Entente Cordiale and the cataclysm of 1914'. (See Edward F. Lawson, Peterborough Court: The Story of the Daily Telegraph (London, 1955), p.57.) Jerrold died in Paris in October 1918.

¹¹ L. Jerrold, 'French politics and the French people', Contemporary Review, 90 (July 1906), 58.

against the Sarrien Ministry and Nationalist predictions of success at the forthcoming general elections both failed to materialise.¹² What, however, most successfully kept this notion circulating in the leader pages of the newspapers in 1906 was the election of M. Fallières to the Presidency after Loubet's retirement in January of that year. For a number of people in Britain, the mere fact that the various Presidents of the Third Republic had not abused their considerable legal powers to further their own ambitions was significant in itself. Since 1870, there had been no presidential coups d'état, not even a series of recurrent quarrels 'such as often disturb the American Presidency and Senate'. On the contrary, the French Presidents had by and large been only too

12 Daily Express, 2 May 1906; also Daily Chronicle, The Times, and Westminster Gazette, 9 May 1906. The Nationalists and the royalist groups in France were disliked not only for their subversive activities against the Third Republic, but also because of their strong Anglophobic feelings and the conspicuous coolness with which they greeted the 1904 understanding with Britain. But although French right-wing groups were regarded with almost universal dislike in Britain, not everyone felt equally disposed to condemn them. Thus while Conservative organs of opinion like the Spectator (loc. cit.) were busy warning their readers of the dangers to international peace should the Nationalists ever come to power in France, Radical newspapers were openly wondering whether the super-patriotism of French Nationalists was any worse than the jingoism of British imperialists. The former might have produced the notorious Dreyfus case, noted the Manchester Guardian, but the latter led directly to the morally unjustifiable war in South Africa. In a similar vein, Norman Angell in his book Patriotism under Three Flags noted that in the Dreyfus affair 'a political temper, hardly distinguishable from later British imperialism, was predominant. There was the same intolerance of free speech, the same credulity, sensitiveness to criticism, glorification of the soldier, hostility to the foreigner; the same tendency to government by irresponsible authority, and the same impatience of discussion. French Nationalism is even to-day, in its general tendencies, indistinguishable from English imperialism: it is marked by much the same incidents, manifested in the same fashion, and possesses the same catch-words concerning the flag and destiny, greatness and prestige, expansion and patriotism'. See Ralph Lane (Norman Angell), Patriotism under Three Flags, (London, 1903), p.3; also Manchester Guardian, 2 May 1903. Of course, neither Angell nor the Manchester Guardian was being more sympathetic than the Tories to French Nationalism when they made these remarks. Rather, they were simply pointing out to their right-wing counterparts that France's instances of extreme patriotic outbursts had their equivalent in Britain.

willing not to increase the importance of their office.

According to the Spectator, all this could be explained in terms of past events. 'Their history', it once wrote of the French,

gives them a certain dread of the dominant Person, whom we, with our different history, do not fear; and they have a liking, though their earlier history did not reveal it, for the man who is not brilliant, for the temperate man of affairs - the notaire, as they would say, ...who is always trustworthy, though seldom original....The French people wish, in fact, neither for a great statesman, nor a great leader of any party so much as for a dignified Moderator, who will keep all parties within the boundaries marked out for them by the present Constitution. 13

Needless to say, virtually everyone in Britain even vaguely familiar with Loubet thought that he fitted this description to perfection. At the time of the French President's State visit to London in 1903, for instance, The Times and other newspapers showered praise on Loubet for his 'calm good sense, his power of hard work, his blameless private life, his preference for the solid rather than the superficial and the showy, and his power of steering the ship of State on an even keel'.¹⁴ That Fallières possessed the same steady, bourgeois qualities the press had no doubt. But it was his succession to the highest office in the land without causing, as the Scotsman put it, 'more than a ripple on the surface of French politics',¹⁵ that impressed British onlookers the most. This, they maintained, implied a continuity in France's domestic and foreign policies, and it indicated that Frenchmen had a strong faith in the

13 Spectator, 13 January 1906.

14 The Times, 6 July 1903. See also Daily Express, 6 July 1903 and St. James's Gazette, 9 July 1903, for similar sentiments.

15 Scotsman, 18 January 1906.

safeguards built into the Constitution. The election of M. Fallières to the French Presidency, wrote the Morning Post,

is the more significant because it is not a sensational event. Everybody expected M. Fallières to be elected. He was elected because France wishes for the continuity of its Republican Government, for the avoidance of adventures, and for peace and quiet at home and abroad. It is a commonsense election, and it has been received in France in a commonsense way. That this election should have taken place in the legal manner, without any special excitement, without fuss, just as a matter of course, is the sign that the French nation has attained to political stability under the Republican institutions which have proved themselves so well suited to the practical needs of France. 16

3. The Rise of Socialism

The British press, then, was well inclined to discount any notion of the Republic succumbing to a right-wing coup or even being threatened by another Boulanger-type figure with an appreciable following. But it was not only the Nationalists and kindred groups that the newspapers feared. At the opposite end of the political spectrum there was another force which posed an equally serious challenge to the parties of the Bloc and possibly the Republic itself. This was, of course, Socialism, whose creed, unlike that of the Nationalists, was attracting an increasing number of followers in France, particularly in the more industrial regions of the country. The growing appeal of Socialism to France's working classes is perhaps best reflected in the steadily rising number of left-wing deputies elected to the French legislature. Whereas in the early years of the Third Republic there were only a handful of Socialists sitting in the Chamber of Deputies, by 1902 there were forty-six. Four years later there were seventy-six. But despite this comparative success at the polls, the French Left was not wielding more influence in

16 Morning Post, 19 January 1906.

the Chamber. Indeed, in recent years it had been able to secure the passage of only a few minor measures on behalf of its supporters: a much-delayed law in 1898 on workers' accident insurance; a relatively unimportant piece of legislation regulating hours of work shortly afterwards; and an act in 1905 granting an eight-hour working day in the mines. In the meantime, Alexandre Millerand joined the Waldeck-Rousseau Cabinet as Minister of Commerce, an act which made him the first Socialist in the world to become a member of a government. Not only did this decision provoke a fierce debate within the ranks of the French Left, thereby weakening the Socialists in the Chamber of Deputies; but the purpose for which it had been made, to initiate social legislation which would put striking workmen on a more legal footing, came to naught in the light of the disestablishment controversy. Given these circumstances, it is understandable why a number of French left-wingers should turn to militant trade unionism rather than parliamentary Socialism as a means of achieving social justice. In 1903, the Confédération Générale du Travail,¹⁷ founded only eight years earlier to bring together under one organisation all the national and local trade unions in France, adopted revolutionary syndicalism as its doctrine. The C.G.T. not only preached 'direct action' tactics to bring about a general strike, but it declared itself indifferent, if not hostile, to reforms achieved by parliamentary methods. As a result, there ensued a series of internal quarrels which racked the French Left as a whole. Was syndicalist agitation the best means of emancipating the French

17 Herein cited as C.G.T.

proletariat, or did the 'gradualist' beliefs of the parliamentary Socialists offer a more likely chance of success? Could men like Jaurès and Millerand intervene constructively in the Chamber of Deputies and take a stand on the issues of the day without sacrificing their Socialist principles, or did such intervention automatically make them collaborators with bourgeois politicians? And, indeed, were there any instances in which French Socialists might be justified in coming to the defence of the Republic?

Contrary to what might be expected, the British press, when writing on the subject of Socialism in France, did not dwell on these quarrels and divisions. They did not even take seriously the argument that these quarrels would permanently divide the French Left. On the contrary, British newspapers never ruled out the possibility that the 'pragmatic' and the 'doctrinaire' Socialists in France might one day sink their differences and confront the existing leaders of France with a challenge much more formidable than that posed by the Nationalist Right. 'It is not thought by observers that the reactionary forces will greatly recover from their present condition of comparative harmlessness', wrote the Scotsman in early 1906, 'But Socialism is supposed to be a growing power in France as in Germany, and if it can effectively combine its forces and agree regarding leaders and programme... it may succeed in so disturbing the political balance as to cause another change of Government, and may create a new danger to France and to the Republic...'.¹⁸ To be sure, there were those who thought otherwise. It was the opinion

¹⁸ Scotsman, 13 January 1906.

of the right-wing Pall Mall Gazette, for instance, that 'the "Haves" are too numerous in laborious, provident France for the hunger of the "Have nots" ever to become popular'.¹⁹ The mere threat of triumphant Socialism, it argued, would be enough to throw France into the arms of a new 'Saviour of Society'.²⁰ Similarly, The Times thought that the average French workingman had been too inculcated with bourgeois values for the Left in France to be able to topple the Third Republic. The impulse to save and own property in France, it noted, 'may be said to permeate almost every class. It is most conspicuous in the traditional attachment of the French peasant to his plot of land, but it is in no sense alien to the new industrial population, even if among them it has to struggle with the presence of competing influence. This national devotion to the petite épargne is so much deadweight for M. Jaurès and his friends. It is, on the other hand, the strength behind M. Clemenceau and all other statesmen who virtually defend the existing order'.²¹ On balance, however, the various organs of opinion in Britain felt that Socialism was much more of a force to be reckoned with in France than was Nationalism.

One reason for this belief was the rise of Jean Jaurès to the leadership of the French Socialist movement. In the eyes of many people in Britain, it was Jaurès more than anyone else in France who could claim credit for the gains of the Left in the Chamber of Deputies. Unlike the 'dry-as-dust' Jules Guesde, who also held considerable sway over left-wingers in France at

19 Pall Mall Gazette, 20 June 1906.

20 Pall Mall Gazette, 20 June 1906.

21 The Times, 20 June 1906.

this time, Jaurès had a practical rather than a theoretical approach to politics. It was this approach, the newspapers declared, that allowed Socialism to become acclimatised to the Third Republic and give the movement an aura of respectability in the eyes of the all-important French electorate. 'Socialism during the last Chamber, under Jaurès one might say,' wrote Laurence Jerrold, 'stepped out of its sanctum of principle and theory into ordinary everyday life, and the apparition was a revelation to the level French mind'.²²

Certainly Jaurès had done much of late to earn the admiration of non-Socialists in Britain like Jerrold. In the late 1890s Jaurès, much to the disgust of the more doctrinaire left-wingers in France, threw himself whole-heartedly into the Dreyfus affair and sought to enlist Socialist support for the Republic against the subversive efforts of the extreme Right. In 1903 he further antagonised those to his Left when he accepted a nomination for the post of Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies and promised the various parties of the Bloc his co-operation in passing all legislation that was not blatantly contradictory to the Socialist ideal. And at the Amsterdam congress of the International in August 1904, Jaurès clashed head on with the German Social-Democrat Bebel and others on the matter of whether or not such co-operation inevitably protected and reinforced the existing capitalist order. Needless to say, with regard to these and other similar controversies, British organs of opinion took care not only to impress their readers with the difference between Jaurès and his critics on the Left, but also to explain to them that it was his views that prevailed in most Socialist circles in France. Shortly after

22 L. Jerrold, op.cit., p.60.

the closing of the Amsterdam congress, for example, the Daily News pointed out that in French Socialism 'there is comparatively little of the acrid, irreconcilable spirit which distinguishes Socialism on the other side of the Rhine. The typical French Socialist is the greatest orator of contemporary France, and one of its finest thinkers - Jean Jaurès. And the policy of Jean Jaurès and of the powerful party which he leads is loyal, patriotic co-operation with the Republic which had already achieved so much in the sphere of social reformation'. 'Not class war, but class association', it continued, '- not brute force, but the force of education, of reason, is what the majority of French Socialists hold by'.²³ A month later The Times made a passing description of Jaurès and his followers who, it claimed, 'for want of a better name are called Socialists, although neither he nor they are advocates of that Socialism which is better described as Communism. They are in reality only the advanced advocates of social amelioration, who are thinking to-day many things that a far larger number will think to-morrow'.²⁴ Indeed, in sum it can be said that taken in its entirety British public opinion looked quite favourably upon the French Socialist leader. Conservatives and Liberals regarded Jaurès as an upholder of the Constitution and the Third Republic; Radicals admired his pronouncements on international politics and saw him as a spokesman for peace;²⁵ and people of all political outlooks

23 Daily News, 20 October 1904.

24 The Times, 29 November 1904.

25 See, for instance, the article of H.S. Weinroth, 'British Radicals and the balance of power, 1902-1914', Historical Journal, XIII, no.4 (1970), p.673, in which it is stated that Jaurès's desire to bring Britain and Germany together through France made him 'the idol of left-wing pacifists in Britain'.

in the country appreciated his considerable intellectual and oratorical abilities. But to some Socialists in Britain, notably H.M. Hyndman, leader of the Marxist-oriented Social-Democratic Federation, Jaurès's views on co-operation with the State were all too reminiscent of those of Millerand and smacked of 'revisionism'.²⁶

None the less, there was real cause for worry. Despite all the calm assurances about the comparative harmlessness of French Socialism, the Left in France was not accepting conditions as tamely as the newspapers had said it would. In the Nord department, coal miners, angered by a fatal explosion at Courrières killing more than a hundred workers in April 1906, went out on strike in protest against the negligence of the owners and proceeded to ransack the home of the director of the mines. In the neighbouring Pas-de-Calais, coal miners staged a sympathy strike with their fellow workers in the Nord, an action which led to clashes first with the police and then with the Army. And two weeks earlier at Fressenville, striking ironmonger workers burnt down their employer's château and then pillaged the homes of the overseers. Nor was this all. While the workers in the industrial North were becoming more and more restive, prominent Socialists and trade union leaders were organising May Day demonstrations in Paris, demonstrations which were ostensibly being held for the introduction of a general eight-hour working day in France, but which some Frenchmen suspected were politically motivated. Similar suspicions were to emerge once again in January 1907 when left-wing groups demonstrated in the French capital on behalf of a six day working week. But it was the continued

26 See the article of Hyndman in Justice, 5 September 1903.

spate of strikes in 1906-7 that did most to bring about a domestic confusion unparalleled in France since 1871. It was the building workers at Clermont-Ferrand who first went on strike after the coal miners in the North. Postmen and teachers in Paris soon followed, and by the end of the year Lorient, Toulon, Alais, and Bordeaux, had all undergone considerable syndicalist agitation. The year 1907 was scarcely less strife-ridden. In March of that year, Paris went dark because of an electricians strike; in April, there was trouble in the provisions trade in the capital; in May and June, the ports of Marseilles, Le Havre, and Dunkirk had to be closed because merchant seamen refused to board ship; and by the end of 1907, building workers in Paris had also downed their tools.

With regard to these and other disturbances, the reaction of the British press was one of bewilderment. What, the newspapers asked, prompted this sudden agitation? Why had it assumed such a violent and revolutionary character, particularly in the North? A host of different explanations was put forward: the genuineness of the labour grievances which the strikes and the demonstrations had intended to redress; the rise among Socialist intellectuels in France, 'impatient of the delays of the past eight years constitutional democracy and impressed by the gigantesque Russian strikes' in 1905, of a belief in violence as a political method; the example set by right-wing extremists in connection with the recent Church-State struggle;²⁷ and the poor method of reconciliation between capital and labour in France,

27 Speaker, 28 April 1906.

especially its tendency to rely upon brute force rather than arbitration as a means of overcoming difficulties. As if to emphasise this last point, a number of organs of opinion in Britain like the Birmingham Daily Post and the Glasgow Herald pointed to the 'immaturity' of French trade unionism, a movement which they acknowledged was growing but which by British standards was still in its 'apprenticeship'. The Government in France was all too willing to use soldiers in these instances, conceded the Herald, but it was the unions, 'impinged upon by the crude Socialism of the class war' and prevented in their 'natural development towards the orderly struggle for the workers' rights which we know in this country', that were most responsible for such confrontations.²⁸ These statements of the Glasgow Herald and the Birmingham Daily Post might have been true as far as they went, but they did not go nearly far enough. Once again it was Laurence Jerrold, that most penetrating observer of early twentieth century French politics, who had the most to say on the subject.

Writing in 1907, Jerrold described from a strictly British viewpoint what he construed to be wrong with the French trade union movement. At the bottom of the matter, he insisted, were not the unions themselves but the parliamentary Socialists in France. Unlike the various Labour groups in Britain, which were 'social first and political afterwards', French Socialists were 'political first and foremost'. As far as he was concerned, this meant that the Left in France had 'gone the right way about to wrest power in French politics, but not to coax vitality

28 Glasgow Herald, 24 April 1906; also Birmingham Daily Post,
26 April 1906.

for their cause from French life'.²⁹ Not only did the Socialist bloc in the Chamber of Deputies overlook the unions, but it 'played a double game with them'. At first it ignored the unions because it felt that they lacked respectability; later, when it could no longer help but recognise them, it tried to patronise them, and now in 1907 it had become 'violently distraught' by the unions and split over the issue of whether to take the lead of Syndicalism or dissociate itself from that movement.³⁰ Hence in his opinion the French trade union movement had been 'naturally driven to extremism', and the C.G.T. had to talk revolution because if it did not, it would be ignored.³¹ Not that Jerrold believed that all French workers were extremists. 'Syndicalism', he hastened to add, 'has a bad odour with the respectable artisan'.³² Nevertheless, Jerrold did believe that there were strong revolutionary tendencies in the French trade union movement and that these tendencies were likely to grow until the parliamentary Socialists had ceased their condescending attitude towards the unions.

4. Clemenceau helps 'save' the Third Republic

Whatever the roots of the disturbances of 1906-7, the press in Britain was virtually unanimous in agreeing that the Third Republic would survive it all intact. The various organs of opinion based their confidence on this point on two different factors: one, what they conceived to be the high degree of resilience of France's political and social

29 L. Jerrold, 'France and Socialism', Fortnightly Review, LXXXII (July-Dec., 1907), 823.

30 L. Jerrold, 'French strikes and alarums', Contemporary Review, 91 (June, 1907), 780.

31 Ibid., p. 778.

32 Ibid.

institutions to attacks from within;³³ the other, the emergence of Georges Clemenceau as a prominent political figure in France during these years. As of the time, Clemenceau had only just entered cabinet ranks when he became Minister of the Interior under Sarrien in March 1906; nevertheless, he was far from unknown either in France or abroad. He first rose to prominence in 1898 when, as editor of the radical newspaper L'Aurore, he thought up the explosive headline 'J'Accuse' to Zola's famous letter on behalf of Dreyfus to the President of the Republic. During the Boer War he once again came to the fore as a journalist when he defended Britain against the rabidly Anglophobic attacks of the bulk of the French press. And, indeed, throughout these years Clemenceau's outspoken criticisms both in the press and in the Chamber of Deputies of various French Governments had earned him the reputation of being one of the most formidable politicians of the Third Republic. It was these more positive aspects of Clemenceau's career that the newspapers and journals in Britain stressed. Of his dubious connections with men involved in the notorious Panama scandal, on the other hand, they had little to say, just as they tended to ignore the fact that over the years Clemenceau had acquired as many enemies as admirers. At the same time, they refuted outright the notion that Clemenceau was as yet too inexperienced a politician to become a successful Minister of the Interior and countered that the sheer force of his personality was more than enough to see him through

33 See, for instance, the comment in the Speaker, loc.cit.: 'The counterinstinct, which even in France, has always come out on top after very short submissions, is the instinct of social solidarity. In England this seems to be stronger than in France, but in France it is strong. Men refuse to see their society's wealth recklessly destroyed, however unjustly minute is their own share in it'.

any trouble. Doubtless this was what the Daily Chronicle was suggesting when it wrote in March 1906 that 'the most notable feature of the new Cabinet is the inclusion in it of M.Clemenceau...'. Clemenceau's obvious political qualities, together with his unquestioned liking for Britain, would, it added, make English Liberals 'watch with the liveliest interest his career as Minister'.³⁴

Clemenceau's subsequent performance in office more or less fulfilled these expectations of him. Certainly he was not averse to dealing almost singlehandedly with the series of labour disturbances that arose in the spring of 1906. When the course of events in the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais threatened to get out of control, it was he who intervened personally by first dispatching troops to quell the riots and then by visiting the striking miners and their families to hear their grievances. Similarly, when rumours began running wild in Paris a few days later about the nature of the forthcoming May Day demonstrations, it was Clemenceau who took precautions for law and order by issuing a public curfew and stationing troops about the French capital. And in the spring of 1907, it was he who showed almost equal firmness in dealing with the wine-growers revolt in the South of France. The only difference was that whereas in the first two instances Clemenceau did not hesitate to use

³⁴ Daily Chronicle, 14 March 1906. Clemenceau's stature in Britain can perhaps best be seen when measured against the comments which the newspapers were making about other political figures in France at the time. They never regarded him, as they did M.Combes, as 'a spirited party leader and a born fighter, but not exactly a great personality or Commanding intellect'. (See Manchester Guardian, 14 January 1905.) Nor did they see him, as some did M. Rouvier, as 'a wily, tactful personality, an "old Parliamentary hand"', capable of dealing with rivals but relying on cunning rather than force of character to keep his Government going. (See Daily News, 18 January 1905)

force, in the last he waited before dispatching troops to the affected areas because at first he 'failed to recognise the seriousness of the situation'.³⁵

In the main, such confrontations were treated by the British press as solid evidence that Clemenceau had definite qualities both as a politician and as a national leader. As far as the Daily Express was concerned, Clemenceau's actions at the time of the 1906 May Day celebrations were 'brilliant' because they had intimidated the demonstrators and gained the

35 Glasgow Herald, 24 June 1907. The story of the wine-growers crisis in the spring and summer of 1907 is a long and complex one, and many contemporary organs of opinion in Britain were at pains to explain it to their readers in great detail. Briefly, the revolt, which was more or less confined to the Midi, was caused by an excess production of wines. At the turn of the century, Midi wine-growers, whose vineyards had only just been cleared of the dreaded phylloxera plague, were confronted with stiffer competition from growing areas, particularly Algeria, and the adulteration of their own petits vins by the sugar producers of the industrial North. The wine thus made was largely poor in quality as well as cheap in price, and the growers maintained that they could not grow and sell enough of it to hold on to their property or pay their taxes. Accordingly, the growers began to demand in the early years of the twentieth century full scale State action in the form of subsidies, temporary tax exemption for the growers, and an adulteration bill to limit the watering and the sugaring of wine by the northern manufacturers. When in early 1907 the Chamber of Deputies passed a bill that complied with only some of these demands, the wine-growers, under the leadership of a M. Marcelin Albert, began a series of protest meetings and demonstrations in various southern towns and cities. At first the demonstrators were few in number, but soon farm labourers joined the ranks in droves so that by mid-June 1907 no less than seven hundred thousand people were marching through the streets of Beziers and Montpellier threatening to stage a total insurrection if all their demands were not immediately met. It was only at this point that Clemenceau decided to act, and even then the initial steps he took seemed to worsen the situation. The French premier ordered the 17th Infantry Militia to suppress the mob, and fatal clashes ensued. To make matters worse, a large number of the soldiers, many of whom were natives of the affected areas, mutinied rather than obey Clemenceau's orders. It was not until fresh troops from other parts of the country were sent in that the insurrection finally subsided. At the end of June, Clemenceau sent for Albert

confidence of public opinion.³⁶ A week later, when the results of the 1906 general election gave the Sarrien Ministry a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, the Daily Chronicle argued that it was Clemenceau who had earned the victory because 'it was in his department that prominent events immediately before the elctions belonged'.³⁷ And during the 1907 crisis in the Midi newspapers like the Scotsman praised Clemenceau as a man who 'does not shrink from responsibility' and who 'can be bold and unflinching alike in deed and word'.³⁸ Even left-wingers in Britain, while deprecating Clemenceau's 'uncalled for' attacks on French Socialists and his 'mishandling' of the 1906 miner's strike, acknowledged the attributes of his character. 'He has never abandoned a cause on account of its unpopularity, nor has he ever failed to take up a case (sic) because it might damage his position', wrote H.M. Hyndman of Clemenceau upon the latter's accession to the premiership in October 1906. 'Skilled in every physical as well as in every intellectual exercise, his only drawbacks are that he is an individualist and an anti-Socialist'.³⁹ But while British editors and journalists put forth all this on behalf of

to meet him in Paris, where further concessions to the striking wine-growers were agreed upon. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that, at its height, the revolt was one of the worst ever to confront the Third Republic.

³⁶ Daily Express, 2 May 1906.

³⁷ Daily Chronicle, 9 May 1906. On the other hand, the Manchester Guardian (2 May 1906) felt that Clemenceau had over-reacted to the announcement of the 1906 workers' May Day parade, protesting that their object all along had been 'to demonstrate, not to revolt; to urge an economic demand, not to subvert society, law, and order'. Later, Laurence Jerrold accused Clemenceau of deliberately over-reacting so as to make the Government appear stronger than it actually was on the eve of the elections. See L. Jerrold, 'M Clemenceau', Contemporary Review, 90 (Nov. 1906), 684.

³⁸ Scotsman, 21 June 1907.

³⁹ H.M. Hyndman, 'M. Clemenceau's administration', Justice, 27 October 1906.

Clemenceau in connection with the disorders of 1906-7, there was another, and in their minds, more important, point which they sought to press home to their readers. They maintained that the strikes and insurrections of these two years were only passing phenomena and that, far from shaking the social and political foundations of the country, the recent disturbances had only served to demonstrate how capable France was of meeting any challenge from within. The chief result of these troubles, wrote the Economist at the time of the Midi revolt, .

has been to exhibit once more the stability of the Republic. M. Clemenceau's Ministry had been threatened with overthrow ever since it took office, partly by jealous rivals, partly by a section of its advanced supporters for whom its policy, Socialistic as it is, has not been Socialistic enough. It has surmounted dangers which seemed a priori the gravest possible for any Ministry in any country of Western Europe. It has been in conflict with the whole forces of the Roman Church, and with all that Church's auxiliaries outside the sphere which is properly political. It has had to face profound discontent in the higher ranks of the army, serious labour troubles, and now a movement which has run counter to all the centralising tendencies of French Governments since the first Revolution, and which has affected the most law-abiding class of France. Yet it has come successfully through them all, even, so far as can be seen, the last. 40

Once again, the British press showed its determination to portray France as a highly stable country. Regardless of all the troubles in France, whether they be major insurrections, labour and religious disturbances, or merely a succession of short-lived governments, the newspapers and journals, by virtue of their own peculiar twist of logic, insisted that at bottom all was well in France. But this was not all. The press maintained that in the realm of international politics as well

as domestic affairs the French Government and the bulk of the French people were on the side of law and order and in favour of pursuing their objectives in a peaceable fashion.

5. France's stabilising influence in world affairs

That the various organs of opinion in Britain should regard France as a peaceful and stable force in world politics is perhaps in itself scarcely surprising. As has been pointed out elsewhere, France's desire to come to a comprehensive settlement with Britain on colonial matters in 1904 and her willingness in the end to accede to German demands about a conference of the Powers to handle the Moroccan question in 1905-6 were both taken as signs in Britain that France was a pacific-minded nation. Yet for some organs of opinion there was more to the matter than this. As they saw it, France's 'pacificism' did not stem from any new diplomatic policies emanating from the Quai d'Orsay so much as it did from certain deep-rooted forces at work in French society. In particular, they stressed the 'depopulation question', a problem which had long afflicted France, most noticeably since the end of the Franco-Prussian War. Whereas in 1871 there were roughly as many Frenchmen as there were Germans, by the early years of the twentieth century there were nearly half again as many of the latter as of the former. Nor was it only the Germans who were outstripping the French in this respect. Britain, Italy, Russia, and Austria were all enjoying a substantially higher surplus of births over deaths than was France at this time. 41

41 The surplus of births over deaths was so low in France during these years that between 1896 and 1901, for example, the population increased by only 500,000, and almost half of this figure could be accounted for by the influx of immigrant workers from Italy, Spain, and elsewhere. (See Charles Dawbarn, 'The depopulation question

True, trends such as these did not necessarily spell disaster; population, the Glasgow Herald once wrote, 'is not in itself a measure of the prosperity of a country'.⁴² But as many were only too well aware, they did hold some ominous implications for both France and the world as a whole. While most of the industrialised nations of the world were producing a sufficient supply of men to fill their labour markets, the French were failing to do so. This portended a possible slackening of France's agricultural production, a weakening of her already insufficient industrial strength, and even a loss of some of her existing overseas possessions.⁴³ Yet there was another, even more pressing danger connected with this problem. France's static population threatened to undermine the existing balance of power in Europe. It was pointed out that already by 1905 the Germans were recruiting 450,000 soldiers a year to France's 300,000; and contemporary observers were convinced that, at the present rate of progression, Germany would have twice as

in France', Nineteenth Century and After, LVIII (Dec., 1905), 966.) Not unexpectedly, perhaps, Dawbarn attributed this phenomenon to the Frenchman's proverbial love of economy: 'It is the influence of the bank-book that affects the population curve' in France (p.968). But he thought that the rise of feminism in France also played a part in the matter. The Women's Rights movement in France was not as concerned as was its English counterpart in female suffrage, he conceded, but it was anxious to compete 'in all the professions and occupations'. As Frenchwomen earned small salaries and rose by slow degrees to positions 'of even moderate comfort', they tended to 'defer their marriages beyond the normal period'. This, Dawbarn argued, went a long way towards explaining why there were comparatively few large families in the country. (p.970).

⁴² Glasgow Herald, 6 February 1907.

⁴³ It was the opinion of Hector Macpherson, editor of the Edinburgh Evening News, for instance, that European imperial expansion was linked with 'numbers' and that France would eventually lose out to Germany over the Moroccan question because her population was not large enough, as was Germany's, to need another outlet beyond the seas. See Edinburgh Evening News, 2 April 1906.

many conscripts as France by 1916.⁴⁴ Given these comparisons and predictions for the future, it is not surprising that a number of contemporary writers should see a new role for France in the ranks of the Powers of the world. As one such contemporary writer put it: 'The sense of her growing weakness has completely altered the character of the French nation. Her rulers and the people think less of glory than they used to. France is no longer a military nation. She no longer aspires to rule the Continent. She has become a peaceful and conservative nation which will do everything she can do to avoid war'.⁴⁵

Indeed, there were a number of events happening in France that seemed to bear out this statement. Between 1903 and 1907 French pacifist groups were busy publicising their cause. Particularly active were the anarchists who, under the leadership of one Gustave Hervé, sought to promote desertions and disruptions within the ranks of the army and navy by spreading anti-military propaganda in the barracks. Their activities were not entirely without fruit.⁴⁶ French Socialists, if somewhat more divided than the anarchists as to what their attitude would be in the event of war, were scarcely less anti-militaristic. At their Congress at Châlons in November 1905, they overwhelmingly condemned the armaments budget passed

44 Dawbarn, op. cit., p. 966.

45 O. Eltzbacher, 'The balance of power in Europe', Nineteenth Century and After, LVII (May, 1905), 795. For similar views, see Perseus, 'France and the equipoise of Europe', Fortnightly Review, 78 (Nov., 1905), 771.

46 In February 1903 there occurred a minor mutiny at Poitiers as a result of anarchist newspapers and pamphlets being distributed at the garrison there. And according to the Annual Register, 1907, (p. 277), some Frenchmen felt that the mysterious explosion on the battleship Jena, in which more than a hundred men were killed while it was in dock in Toulon, was due to anarchist-inspired indiscipline in the Navy.

by the Chamber of Deputies earlier that year.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, even the French Government seemed to be getting in on the act. In March, 1905, the Rouvier Ministry secured the passage of a long-delayed bill that reduced military conscription from three years to two.

Did all this indicate that France was becoming a 'dangerously' pacifist country? As far as most organs of opinion in Britain were concerned, the answer was in the negative. While not going so far as to deny the significance of the above developments, contemporary observers in Britain argued that at most these developments amounted to a mere strong distaste in France for aggressive policies and an attempt on the part of the people to insure that the army remain well under the control of the State. Thus in the opinion of the Pall Mall Gazette there was in France a 'deep and strong current of revolt against the intolerable burden of militarism'. But the 'noble instinct of a man to fight "for the little things he cares about", ' it hastened to add, 'would suffice to disappoint the expectations of those who affect to believe that Frenchmen and Germans, if face to face in the field, would either fraternise or flee'.⁴⁸ Likewise, one writer, while admitting that in France 'the Anglo-French understanding would be ruined if it were once believed that it was intended to be used for aggressive purposes', nevertheless argued that the great majority of Frenchmen were neither pacifist nor anti-militarist.⁴⁹ Needless to say,

47 Ibid., 1905, p.267

48 Pall Mall Gazette, 23 September 1905.

49 Robert Dell, 'French politics and the coming elections', Fortnightly Review, 79 (Jan., 1906), 69.

remarks such as these had the effect of increasing public confidence in Britain about the stability of the Third Republic and the soundness of its institutions. What is more, they helped to support the notion that France was the ideal nation for Britain to enter into diplomatic partnership; for although the French were still strong enough to count in the political and military councils of the world, they had sufficient doubts about their strength not to consider perverting the Entente into an alliance for some selfish aim like the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine. Above all, France simply wanted peace. For a war, 'even if it were victorious, would mean the temporary suspension of many of her democratic liberties, while should it be disastrous the political door would be open wide to all those importunate pretenders and sinister adventurers whom she has hitherto so successfully locked out'.⁵⁰

In the early years of the twentieth century, the main concern of the various organs of opinion in Britain in their comments on domestic events in France was that of the stability of the Third Republic. That the newspapers and journals became preoccupied with this theme was due, to a large extent at any rate, to the lingering influence of the late Lord Salisbury's outlook on foreign affairs. Certainly at least some people in Britain at this time still retained some of the former Conservative premier's reservations about coming to an understanding with a government of the Third Republic, and it was these reservations that the press set out to overcome in its leader-articles on French politics. Between 1903 and 1905, the newspapers and journals had comparatively little difficulty in performing this task. The longevity of the Combes Ministry,

⁵⁰ Rowland Strong, 'M. Rouvier and the French people', Westminster Gazette, 11 September 1905, pp. 1-2.

the continuing decline in political fortune and popularity of the parties of the extreme Right, and the superficial calm on the labour front, were all readily cited to show that France was a contented and orderly country. After 1905, when the tensions of French politics and society began to manifest themselves more and more openly, the press undoubtedly began to find the pursuance of this theme a bit more difficult. Nevertheless, it was their approach rather than their tune that the newspapers altered. Whereas earlier they measured the stability of France in terms of her supposed domestic tranquility or the durability of her ministries, later they did so only in terms of the capacity of the various French premiers to continue governing within a democratic framework despite the numerous internal upheavals. No doubt it does say something for the Third Republic that it could be confronted with a succession of short-lived ministries, an unprecedented series of industrial strikes, a major insurrection of farm workers, and the open hostility of the extreme Right and the Roman Catholic Church, and yet survive. But to argue this point, as so many of the newspapers did, at a time when in fact France's internal troubles seemed to be mounting and showed no end in sight was to do little other than to give the British reading public a false impression of the country. One can only presume that this was done to keep the Entente Cordiale in the highest esteem of British public opinion.

CHAPTER V

BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION ISSUE IN FRANCE

On the fact of it, the struggle that took place between Church and State in France in the early years of the twentieth century ought not to have attracted particular notice in Britain. After all, the two opposing sides in the struggle, the parties of the Bloc and the Roman Catholic Church, were either relatively unknown or regarded with suspicion in Britain. Moreover, the conditions which gave rise to the conflict were deep-rooted, complex, and unlike anything in Britain's recent history and thus did not readily lend themselves to the attention of the average British newspaper reader. And yet, despite this, the various organs of opinion in Britain were to report and comment on the Separation issue in France in depth and with an unusual degree of interest.

Why was this the case? The answer, it seems, is many fold. For one thing, a number of British people were increasingly of the opinion at this time that, although the relationship between Church and State in Britain differed greatly in form from that in France, the former country had much to learn from the latter in the matter of dealing with an established religion. In particular, this was the feeling in Liberal and Nonconformist circles throughout the country, where many drew striking parallels between French efforts to secularise education and their own attempts to repeal the 1902 Balfour Act. But interest in the matter also prevailed in Wales where the disestablishment of the Anglican Church was already becoming a major political question, as well as in Ireland, where the big part played by the Catholic Church in local affairs resembled

to some extent the situation in France. For another thing, many newspapers in Britain saw in the Separation issue the seeds of a conflict which could one day bring considerable strife and disorder to France. This threatened to destroy for good the peace and stability which they said the Third Republic had more or less enjoyed since its founding in 1870. Still another reason for this interest was the possibility that the quarrel between the Vatican and France which accompanied the disestablishment question would have wide repercussions in the sphere of international politics and intensify the already fierce rivalry of the Great Powers in the Near and Far East. It was the combination of these three factors which more than anything else induced individual writers as well as the newspapers and journals in Britain to study the disestablishment issue in France very closely.

1. Immediate background of the quarrel

Of all the writings that appeared in Britain on the French Church-State question, one of the most authoritative and informative was J.E.C. Bodley's book, The Church in France.^x Published in 1906, when the conflict between the Vatican and the Third Republic was still very much in progress, this work sought to give a thorough exposition of the relationship between Church and State in France from the time of the 1801 Concordat to the passing of the Separation Law in December 1905.¹

¹ The book was, in fact, little more than a printed version of two lectures which Bodley gave in January 1906 to the Royal Institution in London. These lectures, which were attended by a number of prominent people, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, were perhaps the most impartial account rendered in Britain on the subject. Bodley, a Protestant, could not in accordance with the regulations of the Royal Institution present his own views on the matter. Nevertheless, what he did say

Bodley argued in his work that the latest round of difficulties between the Roman Catholic Church and the French Government could be traced directly to the Dreyfus affair. The 'scurrilous' role played by a few French clergymen, particularly those in the religious orders, had created a situation which allowed the French people, once they discovered that they had 'gone mad' over the Dreyfus affair, to make a scapegoat of the entire Clerical party 'for an infatuation which it shared with nine-tenths of the population'. The Ralliement which Pope Leo XIII had promulgated in 1892 was suddenly at an end, and as had been the case in the earlier days of the Third Republic, the Church was once again publicly linked with the forces of reaction and subversion in France. The hostility against the religious associations, 'always latent in the majority of French minds', was roused once again, and it was at this point that Waldeck-Rousseau re-entered politics 'to rid the nation of the nightmare of the Dreyfus case... and regulate definitively the question of the Associations, lay and religious'. This he more or less managed to do with the passage of the Associations Law in July 1901, which placed a great many restrictions on the Orders. When the French people in effect gave their sanction to this Law by voting for the various parties of the Bloc in the general election of 1902, Waldeck-Rousseau resigned the premiership and was succeeded by Emile Combes, a man who had

creates the impression that he sympathised with the Church of Rome. A brief summary of the two lectures can be found in The Times, 22 January 1906 (p.3) and 29 January 1906 (p.3), which later praised Bodley for having brought to the subject 'a mass of knowledge accumulated by study and personal residence in France'. (See The Times, 2 February 1906.)

none of his predecessor's 'impartial qualities'. Combes then began his term of office by applying the 1901 Law in the most vigorous manner possible and, indeed, supplemented it with other legislation in 1904 which suppressed the teaching orders altogether. In the meantime, Pope Leo XIII, 'a diplomatist of penetrating sagacity', had died and was succeeded in the summer of 1903 by Pius X, 'a prelate of unexampled piety' but 'inexperienced in politics and diplomacy, and unacquainted with the people of France and its language'. Taken together, the obstinacy of the new Pope and the fanaticism of the new French premier managed to intensify the conflict, and on 11 December 1905 the Chamber of Deputies passed a law which formally brought the century old Concordat to an end.²

² J.E.C. Bodley, The Church in France, (London, 1906), pp. 50, 52-60. It is perhaps best at this point to sum up the nature of the relationship of the various churches with the State in France prior to the December 1905 Law and to explain the changes that the Law introduced. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, all the major religions of France, Protestantism and Judaism as well as Roman Catholicism, were subsidised by the State. Secular clergymen of all denominations were paid salaries out of a Budget for Public Worship, the estimates of which were determined annually by the legislature. Apart from financing clerical salaries, the Budget for Public Worship also subvented the upkeep and expenses of the various parish churches and synagogues throughout the country, though not the monasteries or convents. With the Roman Catholic Church, which during the Bourbon Restoration had become the official Church in France, the French Government had a special relationship arising largely out of the Concordat of 1801. Under the terms of this agreement made by Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII, the French Government secured the right to nominate, subject to papal veto, ecclesiastical candidates to fill vacant French bishoprics. The Government was also conferred with, amongst other things, the right to intervene in the nomination of French Cardinals and the right of jurisdiction over French religious establishments at Rome. It was for these privileges that the French Government undertook in exchange to guarantee a suitable salary for all Bishops and parochial clergymen within France.

Virtually all of this, however, was drastically altered as a result of the 1905 Separation Law. Without denying freedom of conscience or of public worship, provided that its terms were

2. Anglican and Roman Catholic views on the matter

Up to this point there was a general consensus of opinion in Britain; beyond that, however, contemporary organs of opinion disagreed about the origins of the struggle as well as about what was at stake. For their part, Anglicans were

adhered to, the new Law did away with Roman Catholicism as being the official religion. The French Government renounced any of its claims to investiture, intervention in the nomination of Cardinals, and other privileges. The 1905 Separation Law also did away with the yearly Budgets of Public Worship, and churches of all denominations were now to finance themselves through subscriptions, weekly collections, and fees for religious ceremonies. In return, the Government promised to grant pensions to retiring clergymen, the amount of which would depend upon the age and length of service in the pay of the State of the individual concerned. Likewise, those clergymen not qualified for a pension were granted state subsidies, to be paid in diminishing proportions in the first four years following disestablishment. Those chaplains performing duties in secondary public schools, hospitals, and prisons were, however, to be continued to be maintained by the State. In addition, all religious establishments were to reorganise themselves along lines stipulated by the 1901 Law into associations cultuelles, or 'associations for public worship'. By the terms of this particular clause of the 1905 Law, all parish churches, like the monasteries and convents before them, had to apply for special authorisation from the French Government before they could re-open. Priests, ministers, and rabbis were obliged to make a preliminary declaration of a public meeting with the authorities each time they wished to hold service, a requirement which later had to be modified in view of the opposition which this clause provoked in clerical ranks. This same clause allowed agents of the Ministry of Finance to inspect yearly the accounts of the churches and to limit their funds on a scale proportionate to their revenues. Article III of the 1905 Separation Law empowered the Government with the right to take an inventory of all the possessions of the Churches in order to determine the value, origin, and legal ownership of any ecclesiastical property. For a full account of the 1905 Separation Law, see ibid., pp.145-170.

largely sympathetic with the cause of the Catholics in France. Some, like the Church Times, the voice of 'High' Anglicanism and one of the largest-selling religious weeklies in Britain, felt this way because they viewed the struggle as fundamentally one of Christianity against atheism. The Roman Catholic Church, it argued, was locked in mortal combat with a group of 'malevolent and irreligious' politicians who, along with the Freemasons, were aiming to destroy not only Catholicism but also all forms of religion in France as such. It was these men who first whipped up the 'formidable amount of venomous hatred' of all the religions in the Third Republic, and it was they who were keeping such sentiments alive with their 'shocking blasphemies' in the press.³ The Roman Catholic Church 'means religion in France', wrote the Church Times, and 'any defeat it suffers is a defeat of religion'.⁴

Others, while not entirely disagreeing with this, were more inclined to see the struggle primarily as one between Catholicism and Socialism. In a specially written article to the Westminster Gazette, D.C. Lathbury, editor of the Anglo-Catholic weekly the Guardian, noted this to be the case and argued that the contest was important enough to affect not only the future of religion in France, but also the very way of life as most Frenchmen then knew it. At the moment the real

³ Church Times, 15 May 1903 and 24 August 1906. By contrast, the Church of Rome was portrayed as an organisation innocently defending its own interests and property throughout France. See Church Times, 17 July and 20 November 1903.

⁴ Ibid., 24 August 1906.

issues at stake had become blurred because the separation of Church and State in France was an integral part of the legislative programme both of the Socialists and of the Liberals in the Bloc, Lathbury contended. 'But when the religious revolution is accomplished the other half of the Socialist programme will come to the front. After doing their utmost to destroy one great institution they will take in hand a second. Will the French nation be as patient under an attack on private property as they have shown themselves under the attack on religion?'.⁵ No doubt Lathbury was presenting only one side of the coin; for there can be no question that anti-clericalism helped to keep the troubled Combes Ministry together at least as much as it helped lead France down the path of Socialism. Whatever the forces behind the campaign, however, it would not be too much to say that Anglicans in general regarded them as posing a far greater evil to the moral fibre of France than the Roman Catholic Church. It was for this reason that Church of England members sympathised so much with the latter in its struggle with the republican politicians, although it would only be correct to mention that the analogous position of the two religions in the two countries also played its part. Nevertheless, as will be seen later, hatred of atheism and fear of Socialism were not enough to prevent Anglican opinion in Britain from redressing its outlook on the matter in the light of Pius X's later uncompromising stance with the leaders of the French Government.

British Roman Catholics adopted much the same outlook.

⁵ D.C. Lathbury, 'The Concordat and disestablishment', Westminster Gazette, 23 August 1904, pp. 1-2.

The leading Catholic organ of opinion in Britain at the time was the Tablet, and like the Church Times, the Tablet was convinced that the struggle was essentially one against atheism. 'The Republic's refusal to recognise any religion', it wrote in early 1906 after the Separation Bill had finally become law, 'is nothing short of a national apostasy'.⁶ Like D.C. Lathbury, it pointed an accusing finger at French Socialists; behind the whole affair, it said, were 'the rabid anti-Clericals of the Left', who year by year had brought up the question of the denunciation of the Concordat despite the reluctance of the Government and the Chamber alike.⁷ Of course, British Catholics had good reason to be concerned about the course of events in France. Not only did the brunt of the anti-clerical struggle fall upon the shoulders of their French co-religionists, but even some members of their own ranks had been directly affected by it. Hence, it was their aim to take positive steps on behalf of their religious brethren across the Channel.

Spearheading this campaign of the Catholics in Britain was Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster and a prominent figure in the fight against the 1906 Liberal Education Bill as well as the struggle for Catholic 'rights' across the Channel. Bourne's primary intention was to seek some sort of compensation on behalf of British Catholic clergymen in France like the Benedictines at Douai, whose property had been confiscated by the French Government. With this in mind, he made personal representations to the Foreign Office. But at the same time, Bourne was anxious to criticise the more general aspects of

⁶ Tablet, 6 January 1906.

⁷ Ibid., 15 July 1905.

the disestablishment campaign in France, and from the pulpit he delivered a series of sermons denouncing the French anti-clericals.⁸ Nor was the Archbishop of Westminster the only Roman Catholic in the country to adopt such tactics. In the House of Commons, a coterie of Catholic M.P.s, most of them Irish Nationalists, beleaguered whichever Government that happened to be in power with a battery of questions similar to those which Cardinal Bourne had been posing first to Lord Lansdowne and then to Sir Edward Grey: How many British subjects owned church property in France? To which religious denominations did they belong? To what extent would these people be affected if the proposed Separation Bill became law? And if worst did come to worst, would the British Government take any steps on their behalf?⁹ Meanwhile, individual laymen and the Catholic weeklies like the Tablet continued to give the reading public their view of the broader issues involved through a series of editorials, specially written articles, meetings, and lectures.

Needless to say, none of these representations had any real impact on Anglo-French relations. Roman Catholic pleas

⁸ Many of the Cardinal's remarks about the Church-State question in France were quoted in the French press and produced much annoyance and embarrassment in high-ranking British diplomatic circles. The British ambassador to France, Sir Francis Bertie, for instance, complained to the Liberal Foreign Secretary Grey on 24 December 1906: 'I see by the Matin of this morning that in a sermon at a church in Warwick Street he (Cardinal Bourne) has been abusing the French Government. This seems from the point of view of the worldly interests of his seminarists protégés rather short-sighted'. See the Bertie Papers, F(oreign) O(ffice) 800/49.

⁹ Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, CXXVI (29 July 1903), 682; CXLIX (20 July 1905), 1370-71; and CLXVII (19 December 1906), 1529.

on these points either went ignored or were answered by a Foreign Office 'non possumus'. In 1903, for instance, Lord Lansdowne refused Cardinal Bourne's request for compensation on behalf of the Benedictines at Douai on the ground that it was difficult to ask Paris 'to make an exception in favour of the English community'.¹⁰ Three years later, Grey made more or less the same point when the fate of a number of British and Irish-run seminaries in France became uncertain because they did not comply at first with French law by forming associations cultuelles. 'All we could do in such a case', he later explained, 'was to ask that the institutions in which British subjects were interested or British property involved should receive the same treatment as the French Government gave to their own subjects'.¹¹ It appeared to British Catholics that nothing would stir the Foreign Office to act on behalf of what they considered to be justice. To Francis A. Gasquet, the Abbot-President of the English monastery at Douai, it was an 'unheard of' argument of the Balfour Government that, if British subjects went on their own will to live abroad, virtually nothing could be done to defend their property and interests there. 'Recent cases in Venezuela and elsewhere', Gasquet contended, 'seem to throw considerable doubt upon this as a principle of British diplomacy'.¹² Not that Gasquet, or any other Catholics in Britain for that matter, allowed the disestablishment issue in France to affect their judgment of the Entente Cordiale. On the contrary, they welcomed the 1904 understanding with

¹⁰ Quoted in Tablet, 9 May 1903.

¹¹ See Grey's letter to Bertie, 18 December 1906, in the Bertie Papers, F.O. 800/49.

¹² See Gasquet's letter to the editor of the Quarterly Review, 198 (July-Oct., 1903), pp. 543-544.

France just as warmly as any other section of British public opinion.¹³ Rather, their complaint was that 'English ecclesiastics in France should alone be exempted from the benefits of the entente, and that while it disables the British Government from asserting their rights, it has no affect in modifying the sour and surly persecution by the Republican Government of all who wear the religious habit'.¹⁴ In any event, it is unlikely that, even had British Catholics clamoured for an end of the close diplomatic partnership with France, they would have succeeded; for as the Economist pointed out, the sufferings of the Roman Catholic Church in France, if it was really suffering, 'could only affect only a section of English opinion, which would be more than counterbalanced by other forces at present powerful in British politics.'¹⁵

3. Views of other Protestant groups

Nonconformist opinion in Britain, however, adopted a very different view of the matter. Almost from the outset of the struggle, dissenting Protestants in Britain had sided with those Frenchmen favouring disestablishment. Their reason for

¹³ Tablet, 16 April 1904.

¹⁴ Ibid., 19 August 1905. In the House of Commons, however, one Catholic M.P., a Mr McKean representing Monaghan South, asked in view of all that was going on in France whether the Prime Minister would 'advise his Majesty, King Edward, to annul and dissolve the alliance between this country and France generally known as the entente cordiale unless and until the French Government undertakes to respect the rights of conscience on the part of, and the rights of property belonging to, French citizens'. The request was greeted with outbursts of laughter, and the Deputy Speaker refused to table the question. See Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, CLXVII (19 December 1906), 1529-1530.

¹⁵ Economist, 18 August 1906.

doing so was twofold. In the first place, they were inclined to look upon the controversy over the Separation Bill as but the latest in a series of rows between the Vatican and the Third Republic in which the former was trying to prevent the latter from becoming master in its own house. For them, this was the Middle Ages all over again, and Combes and his supporters were entirely correct in trying to expel the religious orders and put an end to the Concordat.¹⁶ In the second place, many British Protestants were hoping that out of the struggle would arise a new national religion in France which would reject the Papacy and would re-organise itself along a framework more familiar to them. 'What one would think most desirable', wrote the Methodist Times, 'is that France should follow in some degree the lines on which the English Reformation proceeded, should by force separate the Church from Rome, reconstitute the Gallican National Church, abjure the Pope, and establish Catholicism throughout France on a democratic basis. That would be to bring religion to the national side; it would rapidly tend to bring enlightenment and reform into the Church itself, and prepare for a complete separation of Church and State so soon as the Church had learned to walk alone'.¹⁷ Not that British Protestants were unaware that the proposed Separation Bill was also a blow to the Reformed Churches in France. In a report to the 1905 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at Edinburgh, it was pointed out

¹⁶ See, for instance, Methodist Times, 26 March 1903 and 26 May 1904.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26 May 1904. At the same time, however, the Methodist Times admitted that the chances of France becoming Protestant or even experiencing revived Gallicanism were remote: 'The true difficulty is that neither the dominant party nor the country generally has serious hold of any religion outside the Roman Church. The Protestants are few, respectable and inert; too rich and well placed to become popular. Most of the Liberals, if not actually atheists, have no institutional religion'. For strikingly similar views, see the Church of Scotland Assembly Papers (1906), pp.803-804.

that the Huguenots alone in France stood to lose £73,600 a year if the State subsidies were withdrawn.¹⁸ Rather, they merely felt that in this, 'as in countless other ways, the Protestant Churches have to share the penalties provoked by the travesty of religion presented by the Church of Rome.'¹⁹

Clearly, then, this was the sort of issue in which sectarian passions in Britain could become easily aroused. Indeed, on certain occasions they reached a pitch of near hysteria. When it became known, for example, that some of the expelled French monks and nuns were resettling in England, many Protestants in the country sounded the alarm. As they saw it, this was a repetition of events after the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1792, the only difference being that the French émigrés might this time cross the Channel in even greater numbers. As a result, a number of M.P.s at Westminster demanded to hear from the Home Secretary the exact number of French monasteries and convents that had transferred their institutions to Britain once the closures in France had begun.²⁰ On several occasions between 1903 and 1905 did Protestant organs of opinion beg the Conservative Government to widen the scope of its Aliens Bill so as to be

¹⁸ Church of Scotland, Assembly Papers, 1906, loc. cit.

¹⁹ Methodist Times, 5 August 1905. By contrast, British Jews, whose French co-religionists were enduring much the same fate as the Protestants, placed no blame whatsoever on the Roman Catholic Church for the situation in France. They merely regretted the action of the French Government and expressed the hope that, in the long run, the freeing of French Judaism from its official connections would make for its 'increased strength and efficiency'. (See Jewish Chronicle, 26 January 1906.)

²⁰ Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, CL (1 August 1905), 1149. The Home Secretary Akers-Douglas could not provide his questioner with the appropriate information.

able to limit this new influx. 'The question of the immigration of aliens is not a mere question of poor Polish Jews', wrote the Methodist Times; 'it has many sides'.²¹ Only as time wore on did English and Welsh Dissenters and Scottish Presbyterians begin to shed their anxieties on this point when it became apparent that French clerical émigrés were not arriving in droves after all. But even then they did not desist from using the Church-State Separation issue in France as an excuse to vent their spleen against Roman Catholicism.

4. Secular opinions

In addition to the various organs of religious opinion in Britain it was the secular press, assisted by a few individual experts on ecclesiastical matters, which took the lead in discussing the subject. As a mere issue in itself, the collision between the Vatican and the French Government over the rights of the Church in France would probably have attracted at least some interest on the part of a few Liberal and Conservative newspapers in Britain. Yet it was to do more - to start a lively debate in virtually all their leader columns precisely because of the similarities between it and another political/religious struggle that was taking place at home, as well as because of its possible repercussions on the relations of the Great Powers. Only recently had the Balfour Government passed an act which, among other things, placed the burden of maintaining denominational secondary schools on the shoulders of the rate-payer, thereby pleasing the Anglicans and Roman Catholics but infuriating Free

21 Methodist Times, 23 April 1903.

Churchmen, most of whose children attended the State-run or 'provided' schools. Equally outrageous to the Nonconformists was the failure of the 1902 Act to do anything about the 'single school' areas, in which many of their children were forced into being taught the Anglican creed for the lack of other educational facilities. As religion and education had combined to make for a burning political controversy in France, it is not surprising that prominent British politicians and influential British organs of opinion should look across the Channel for a solution to their own difficulties.

(a) Liberals, Radicals, and Socialists

This was particularly true of the Liberals, many of whom were Nonconformists and therefore anxious to do away with what they construed to be the more contentious clauses of the 1902 Education Act.²² The Liberals were well aware that no precise imitation of French methods of dealing with an established Church would do for Britain. The political and social conditions in the two countries were too diverse, the conceptions of law and order prevailing in them were too dissimilar, and the type of religion they were up against was too different from the one in France, for this to take place with any hope of success.²³ Nevertheless, British Liberals did insist that the course of events in France did bear some resemblance to what was happening in England and Wales with

22 According to the Free Church Year Book, 1906, (pp.306-311), there were in the new Parliament of that year about two hundred Liberal Dissenters in the House of Commons, out of which no less than 193 favoured a reversal of the 1902 Education Act. This latter figure included thirteen Scottish Presbyterians (not connected with Established Church) and Utilitarians as well as those belonging to the Evangelical Free Churches.

23 See, for instance, H. Halliday Sparling's article in the Liberal monthly, the Westminster Review, 167 (Feb., 1907), 125, on this point.

regard to education. They argued that in both cases there was an intrusion of clerical pretensions into the political sphere and that in both instances the people were siding with the Government. 'What the right honourable Gentleman sees in England', said Lloyd George to Sir Arthur Balfour in the midst of a heated debate on the Liberal Education Bill in the House of Commons in the spring of 1906,

is only part of a general movement which occurs in every democratic country in the world. There are three great democratic countries, namely, America, France, and England. What do you see in France? It is a great Catholic country, and what have they done with the schools? What have they done with the Catholic religion? They had an election fought there substantially upon the same issue - the issue of clericalism. What happened there? Exactly the same thing as in a Protestant country. Go to America. That is a country to which Catholics flee from the tyranny of denominational countries like Germany and this country...What do they get there in denominational instruction? They would not get a four-fifths clause. America would not look at it.... It is part of a great movement. Democracy has come to the conclusion that clericalism is its enemy. It is no use saying that this is hatred towards an individual Church. It is the instinct of three great democratic peoples moving in the same direction towards what they believe to be real liberty of conscience and the only guarantee for continuity of liberty of conscience. 24

Not that Lloyd George, or any other Liberal for that matter, ever ventured to say that a dissolution of the Concordat was the panacea for France's problems with the Church; for as the Manchester Guardian noted, a complete break with Rome did not necessarily spell an end to clerical intrigue or political subversion. Indeed, it might increase such activities.

24 Hansard, Parl. Debates, H. of C., Fourth Series, CLVI (8 May 1906), 1186-1187. It perhaps should be mentioned here that a number of Liberal newspapers fully endorsed the President of the Board of Trade's views on the relationship between Church and State in democratic countries and enthusiastically quoted parts of his speech to the Commons in their leader columns the next day. See, for example, Westminster Gazette and Daily Chronicle, 9 May 1906.

Nevertheless, both this and a good many other Liberal organs of opinion in Britain felt that the Separation Bill would make for a definite improvement on the existing state of affairs in France, since its implementation would 'undoubtedly mark an advance towards the ideal of a tolerant lay State'.²⁵

British Liberals, then, were very much in sympathy with the efforts of those who sought to divorce Church and State in France. Yet despite its rather pronounced views on the subject, the Liberal press as a whole did not become as excited as the various organs of dissenting Protestant opinion. In the first place, being concerned primarily with secular rather than religious matters, it was more inclined to see the struggle as a political rather than a religious one. As many Liberal newspapers saw it, the 'revolt' of the French Government and people was not against the spiritual authority of the Pope as such, but against 'foreign interference in the political sphere'.²⁶ French Freethinkers, it is true, had played their part in the affair, but their role had been 'provided for them by the Vatican and nobody else'.²⁷ Unlike the Methodist Times, most Liberal writers and journalists of the day were not even going to consider the possibility of a resuscitated Gallican Church. In the second place, it began to dawn on many Liberals in Britain, particularly the more left-wing ones, that the Church-State struggle in France was not all that it appeared to be. While most Nonconformists and others regarded the contest as one with nothing less than the

²⁵ Manchester Guardian, 25 February 1905.

²⁶ Daily Chronicle, 6 April 1907.

²⁷ H. Halliday Sparling, op. cit., p. 131.

question of France's national sovereignty at stake, many Radicals began to suspect that the whole affair was little more than a manière d'être in French politics, a convenient means of keeping together the constantly bickering parties of the Bloc. It was a theme which first found expression in the Radical weekly the Speaker, which at the time of Combes's fall from power in January 1905 argued that the only reason the French premier lasted so long was because 'with all his vigour, he did so little'. Combes knew that anti-clericalism was a cause common to the various factions within his Government and so deliberately kept it to the forefront, this journal reckoned. But he came to the end of his resources when he was forced by dissident left-wingers in France to enter upon some truly constructive social legislation.²⁸ British Socialists, of course, subscribed to the same line of thinking and, indeed, enlarged upon it; for whereas the Radicals accused certain French politicians of using the disestablishment question merely to further their own ends, the Socialists accused them of employing it to obscure 'the real struggle' in France, that of egalitarianism versus privilege.²⁹ Taken together, these suspicions did not induce the Left in Britain to ignore France's Church-State issue entirely, but they did tend to make the Left feel more indifferent about the outcome than others.

(b) Conservatives

Conservative opinion in Britain, on the other hand, did not take such a cynical view of the disestablishment issue in France. Indeed, if anything, most right-wing organs of opinion

²⁸ Speaker, 21 January 1905.

²⁹ Labour Leader, 27 April 1906.

were inclined to think in virtually the opposite terms, namely, that the bourgeois parties of the Bloc were playing a dangerous game in asking Socialist support to deal with the Church. Nor were British Conservatives as inclined as were their Liberal counterparts to draw distant parallels between the ending of the Concordat and the education controversy at home. To be sure, there were plenty of those on the Right who perceived 'the seeds of the same trouble' in Britain as was happening in France. The Church Times, for instance, felt that the demand of the Nonconformists for a uniform type of religious and secular education in all schools maintained by the State, and the demand that this education be of a type 'which they approve and which we reprobate', were 'steps, feeble and slow, but of direction unmistakable, towards the policy of monopoly which is now being worked in France in religion'; hence, as far as that paper was concerned, it was advisable 'to study the end, in order that we may understand the beginning'.³⁰ Another writer, a George Arthur, presented the interesting and highly individualistic argument that the diverse courses of the anti-clerical struggles in Britain and France reflected fundamental differences of temperament and character between the two peoples. In France, the fight was being waged between the Roman Catholic Church and a 'highly aggressive atheism'. French logic, 'incisive, clear-cut, relentless, uncompromising', saw no third position 'intermediate between the magnetic poles of religious opinion'. In England, on the other hand, the 'national way of looking at things the practical side of things

30 Church Times, 20 November 1903.

rather than the theoretical' tended 'to modify the external aspects of the religious question, and perhaps to obscure its true import'. Still, as Arthur felt that the prospect of Secularism was well and truly before England, and since 'Secularism spells Indifferentism', he could only conclude that 'the example of France should warn us in time that the non-belief of one generation may easily become the unbelief of the next'.³¹ And even the King in his private correspondence noted some similarity between the Liberal Government's 1906 Education Bill and the disbanding of the religious teaching orders in France and privately questioned whether Campbell-Bannerman and his colleagues were trying to copy the French.³² Nevertheless, these were only the opinions of certain individuals. By contrast, prominent Tory newspapers and journals were reluctant to make comparisons between events in Britain and France. Instead, they concentrated on what they considered to be other, more frightening aspects of the anti-clerical campaign in France.

Almost from the outset Conservative organs of opinion in Britain expressed doubts about the wisdom of the civil authorities in France pursuing an anti-clerical programme. Their reservations arose for two distinct reasons: one, what they considered to be the utter senselessness of destroying or even tampering with a compromise which in their view had lasted more than a century without really hurting either side that had

³¹ George Arthur, 'Anti-clericalism in France and England', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 55 (May, 1904), 731-732.

³² See the letter of the King to Viscount Esher, 14 April 1906, quoted in Philip Magnus's *King Edward the Seventh*, (London, 1963), p.353.

entered into it;³³ the other, the manner in which the campaign was actually being conducted. Like the Catholics in their own country and in France, they had come to see French premier Combes and a good number of his followers as little other than fanatics. The eviction of the monastic orders struck some of them as being 'neither more nor less than persecution',³⁴ just as the very terms of the 1905 Separation Bill later struck others as being exceedingly harsh and unfair.³⁵ These beliefs were in themselves sufficient reason to cause a number of Conservative newspapers in Britain to think twice about welcoming the anti-clerical campaign in France. But there was an even more pressing fear at the back of their minds in connection with this issue. The campaign against the Roman Catholic Church, they maintained, threatened to upset the entire political and social fabric of France. Those Frenchmen who have gone ahead with these suppressive policies, warned the Spectator, 'will in the end be visited by the natural penalty. The reaction which always comes in France will come more speedily,

33 The Times, 11 May 1903.

34 Spectator, 28 November 1903.

35 The Morning Post, for instance, noted on the eve of the passage of the Bill that whereas Socialists and Anarchists could hold meetings in France to discuss methods for subverting the State, a priest or Bishop who publicly criticised any French Government official was, under the terms of article 31 of the Bill, liable to a fine from five hundred to three thousand francs. 'This alone seems sufficient to justify the complaint so often made', wrote the Post, 'that special interpretations are given to the Law of Associations when it is applied to a religious association. But there is more to justify the complaint. While, under the new law, the Church boards are corporations with "civil personality", capable of owning and managing property, their property must be invested in stocks upon which the State can lay hands'. Thus as far as this newspaper was concerned, if the above two provisions 'are duly appreciated it will be seen how nominal is the religious liberty ostensibly given to the Church'. (See Morning Post, 7 December 1905)

and will direct itself more decidedly against the form of government under which such legislation is possible'.³⁶ If this reaction was not in the immediate offing, wrote Sir Edward Monson, Britain's ambassador to France in 1903, then one could not help but think that it would eventually be provoked.³⁷ Equally worrisome was the prospect that the Separation Law would throw the entire political weight of the Roman Catholic Church on the side of monarchism and reaction, thereby bringing renewed dangers of subversion to the Republic. Certainly there was little doubt in the minds of some Conservative organs of opinion that the whole affair had spelt an end to whatever measure of Gallican independence the Church had under the terms of the Concordat.³⁸ Yet whatever form the conflict took, Tory newspapers were inclined to think that it would in any case be a serious one; for as the Pall Mall Gazette pointed out, 'the Catholics, knowing their enemies will not allow them any real liberty, will certainly cling with desperate tenacity to the comparative protection which the Concordat affords them'.³⁹

Nevertheless, one could not be certain. Those who asserted most positively that a grave confrontation loomed ahead rested their case on the notion that France was too much

³⁶ Spectator, loc. cit.

³⁷ See Monson's letter to Lord Lansdowne, 1 December 1903, in the Lansdowne Papers, F.O. 800/126.

³⁸ Scotsman, 22 September 1906. It should be noted that this view of the Scotsman conflicts with that of the Methodist Times, the Glasgow Herald, and others, namely, that the Church was already under 'the iron rule of the Vatican', and only through a dissolution of the Concordat could it regain some of its earlier distinctive French character. (See Glasgow Herald, 16 August 1906; also Methodist Times, 26 May 1904.) However, J.E.C. Bodley, op.cit., pp.3-4, wrote that 'Gallicanism, long declining, has received its final death blow' from the 1905 Separation Law.

³⁹ Pall Mall Gazette, 7 May 1903.

of a Catholic country to view with equanimity any unnecessary punishment inflicted upon the Church. A great many Frenchmen, it was said, were going to be outraged once they realised that dissolution meant paying the stipends of the parochial clergy out of their own pockets. In particular, it was the frugal peasantry that was going to resent this.⁴⁰ But could such an assumption be taken for granted? The Economist thought not. It felt that France was a Catholic country only in the sense that most Frenchmen happened to be born into the Church of Rome and that the Protestants were few in number and had a limited influence on the conduct of affairs; beyond that, however, the student of French affairs found himself in a 'vista of uncertainties'. True, in the Vendée and Brittany and in some parts of the rural West and Southwest of France the mass of people were devout Catholics; but at the same time, there were in other regions of the country 'whole provinces in which it seems possible that all the churches might be closed and all the clergy banished without the peasantry being seriously disturbed - certainly without their being moved to any active manifestation of their displeasure'. Nor could the Economist suppose for one moment that even the practising Catholics in France would put up much of a fight. The Royalists wished to see the Church powerful, but they did not desire a civil war; the educated Catholic laity was still less disposed to violence; and much of the secular clergy were good Republicans as well as good Catholics.⁴¹

Laurence Jerrold, the Paris correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, strongly agreed. In a special article to the

40 Church Times, 15 May 1903; also Tablet, 28 March 1903.

41 Economist, 15 December 1906.

Monthly Review, Jerrold strove to show how the Roman Catholic Church in France had succeeded over the years in alienating itself from virtually every major social class. With the bourgeoisie, hostile enough towards Catholicism since 1789, it had incurred still more antipathy because of its identification with the forces of intrigue against the Republic. With the workers, increasingly in need of some social justice rather than the mere workings of charity, it had incurred other, more widespread and deep-rooted misunderstandings. And even with the peasantry, 'the backbone of the French nation', all was not well. In the rural regions of France the curé was still looked up to; but he was being regarded more and more as a meddling figure in family life, and many of his excursions into the realm of politics had only brought damaging results to the Church. Indeed, in France only the monarchists completely supported the Church, and it was their very support that had precipitated its dwindling influence amongst the other classes. In a word, the situation for the devout Catholics was 'inextricable', and the Church was bound to lose ground 'with the nation at each step she takes' in the current struggle.⁴² Undoubtedly it was the force of these and similar arguments elsewhere in the press that induced some Conservative newspapers like The Times to adopt a more cautious approach to the subject and declare that in the end the intensity of the struggle would be determined by the manner in which the Government in Paris carried out its anti-clerical legislation.⁴³

⁴² Laurence Jerrold, 'Church v. State: the real French view', Monthly Review, 16 (May, 1904), 35-38.

⁴³ The Times, 4 August 1904.

For much of right-wing opinion in Britain, however, the most frightening aspect of the disestablishment campaign in France was neither the harsh legislation of the Government against the various Churches nor even the possibility that such legislation might produce a political and social upheaval. Rather, it was the impact that the struggle was likely to have on the rivalry of the Great Powers throughout the world, particularly in the Near and Far East. In China, Syria, the Lebanon, and parts of Palestine, France had managed to acquire over the years an economic and political foothold largely through the blessings of the Holy See, which granted her, as 'eldest daughter of the Church', the right to protect and adjudicate in the disputes of all Catholics and all other Christians with rites in communion with Rome in those areas. Although the French had long since held this privilege in many of these areas, this is not to say that their position vis-à-vis the Christian populations of Asiatic Turkey and China went unchallenged. By the turn of the century, Italy, Germany, and even Russia, had questioned the exclusive protectorate which the Vatican had conferred upon the French.⁴⁴ In the opinion of many Conservatives in Britain it was quite

⁴⁴ In the late 1880s, the Italian Government sought to gain recognition from the Vatican of the right to protect its own nationals in the Ottoman Empire. Pope Leo XIII refused to consider this request in an encyclical written in 1888. By the late 1890s, German involvement among the Christians in the Near East had become so great that the Pope felt obliged to issue a similar, though somewhat more discreet, refusal to Berlin on the eve of a well-publicised visit of the Kaiser to the Holy Land. Despite these Vatican pronouncements, neither Germany nor Italy gave up in their efforts and soon began to pressurise the Porte into putting them on a par with France in this respect. As for Russia, her influence at this time was confined to the Eastern Orthodox Christians, chiefly in Syria, but it was of sufficient scope to cause some French diplomats

possible that France's anti-clerical policies at home would ultimately work to the advantage of all these Powers, especially the Germans, who, as they saw it, had a finger in virtually every pie at this time.

Indeed, everywhere they looked, Conservative newspapers saw Berlin ready to step in and take over from Paris as the sole protector of Catholics abroad. When it first became apparent in 1903 that Combes's anti-clerical legislation might cause France to lose 'one of the strongest props of her power' overseas, The Times put Germany at the head of a list of States 'which would be glad enough to enter into her (France's) inheritance should she decide to abandon it...'.⁴⁵ When Kaiser Wilhelm II held an ostensibly ceremonial meeting with the leading Roman Catholic prelates of the German Empire at Metz in the spring of 1905, the Spectator declared that the purpose of the meeting was more probably twofold: to give the Emperor a 'new hold over his troublesome and powerful party of the Centre' and to further the cause of Weltpolitik by arranging a deal with the Vatican whereby Germany would replace France as the protector of the Eastern Christians.⁴⁶ Even the election of Cardinal Sarto to succeed Leo XIII as to the Papacy as Pius X was deemed as part of the German scheme of things. According to Leo Maxse, the rabidly anti-Teutonic editor of the National Review, Pius X 'owed' his victory at the Conclave to

a great deal of worry. For more details on such diplomatic intrigues, see William I. Shorrock's article, 'Anti-clericalism and French policy in the Ottoman Empire, 1900-1914', European Studies Review, vol. 4, no. 1, (1974), 36-37, 37n 13.

⁴⁵ The Times, 23 March 1903.

⁴⁶ Spectator, 20 May 1905.

the Austrian Cardinals, who, 'on a suggestion from Berlin', vetoed the nomination of Cardinal Rempolla, the former Vatican Secretary of State and the French candidate, so that relations between the Holy See and the Third Republic might become even more strained.⁴⁷ Given this tendency to see German diplomatic machinations at every twist and turn, it is scarcely surprising that so many right-wing organs of opinion in Britain should seek to remind the French Government of Gambetta's dictum that 'anti-clericalism is not an article for export'. If some Tory journals like the Saturday Review did not condemn French politicians outright, they did complain that the 'madness' of the politicians in their refusal to compromise was bound to 'wreck a traditional policy'.⁴⁸ The Pall Mall Gazette said more or less the same thing, only in somewhat less uncertain terms. On 21 September 1904, it reflected ruefully on the French Government's obstinacy in dealing with the Church, which in its opinion meant 'a distinct weakening of French influence oversea'.

And yet, despite all these misgivings, Conservative opinion in Britain, or a good deal of it at any rate, was in time to come round to the side of the anti-clericals. Whereas in 1903 it largely sympathised with the Church, by 1907 it had long since begun to support the State in this matter. Precisely what precipitated this remarkable, if somewhat gradual, shift of opinion is difficult, though not impossible, to ascertain. Doubtless the dismissal of Combes in January 1905 had its effect; for his replacement, whoever he was to be, was virtually certain to be more moderate and therefore less

⁴⁷ See Maxse's column 'Episodes of the month' in the National Review, 44 (Oct., 1904), 244. J.E.C. Bodley's op.cit., p. 61, makes a similar accusation.

⁴⁸ Saturday Review, 27 May 1905.

likely to provoke unnecessary trouble. No doubt, too, the growing realisation that the Church-State struggle was not going to produce the dire consequences for France that some had predicted also played its part. Neither the dreaded social and political reaction at home nor the further invigorated German challenge to French interests in the Near and Far East ever really materialised.⁴⁹ But it was the behaviour of the Vatican more than anything else that brought about this volte-face in British Conservative opinion. For a period lasting longer than two years Pope Pius X took a series of controversial and seemingly aggressive steps in his quarrel with the French Government: the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Paris as a result of President Loubet's state visit to the Quirinal in May 1904; the bringing to book two months later at the Court of Rome of two leading French prelates, the Bishops of Laval and Dijon, for daring to speak out in favour of the Government in the midst of the controversy; the issuance of the encyclical Vehementer Nos in February 1906 condemning the passing of the two month old Separation Law in no uncertain terms; and the issuance of a

49 In point of fact, there had been trouble in France in the earlier months of 1906 when State officials, acting in accordance with the terms of the recent Separation Law, tried to take an inventory of all goods and valuables in the churches and were confronted with hostile crowds in Paris and some of the provincial towns and cities. In most instances, the crowds gave way, though at Boeschépe near the Belgian frontier clashes did occur and one demonstrator died. This incident was directly responsible for the fall of the Rouvier Ministry in March 1906. (See The Times, 8 March 1906.) For the most part, however, these demonstrations amounted to a 'feeble protest'. (See Scotsman, 2 February 1906.) As for the impact of the quarrel on France's position in the Near and Far East, Shorrocks, op. cit., p. 39, notes that there was at about this time 'an increasing concern on the part of the French with Italian religious penetration of Turkey. The record indicates, however, that the German threat to French missionary preponderance was regarded in France as virtually negligible...!'

second encyclical in 1906 urging the clergy and the faithful in France to refuse point-blank to sanction the formation of the associations cultuelles. All this greatly excited Conservative opinion in Britain, particularly the last step which had the effect of reversing a decision made a few weeks earlier by a conference of French Bishops at Paris to accept the Separation Law with a few modifications.

As a result, the Conservatives were now inclined to concur with the view of their Liberal counterparts that what was most at stake in the struggle was not freedom of religion as such but the right of France to govern herself without foreign intervention. The Spectator, which previously had been among the most outspoken critics of ministerial 'fanaticism' in France on this matter, was one of the first to redress its thinking. With the crisis reached in France after the second papal encyclical of 1906, it argued that it was Pius X rather than the French Government who ought to submit. The situation in France, it noted, was highly analogous to that in England at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, at which time people asked 'whence foreigners could derive any right to interfere with internal legislation'.⁵⁰ To The Times, at one point equally antagonistic to French anti-clericalism as the Spectator, the Separation Law suddenly became in the light of the Pope's actions nothing less than 'the penalty which Ecclesiasticism has to pay for having gathered to itself every form of anti-Republican intrigue...', the only answer to 'a fight for retention by the Vatican of the purely secular power of negotiating upon equal terms with the French State

⁵⁰ Spectator, 25 August 1906. The emphasis in the quote is the Spectator's.

upon all sorts of subjects which belong to the province of the State'. 'On that ground the Law is obnoxious to Ultramontanes in all countries', it continued; 'but it is not obnoxious to the mass of the French people, and, if it is unpalatable, it is by no means intolerable to the bulk of the French clergy'.⁵¹ Even the Church Times reconsidered its views. After still another refusal on the part of the Vatican to compromise on the formation of the associations cultuelles in December 1906, it accused the Curia of 'plunging French Catholics into intolerable difficulties, merely to gratify a diplomatic amour propre'.⁵²

Of course, similar reactions to these developments were to be found in other quarters of British public opinion. Upon hearing in May 1904 that a breach in diplomatic relations had erupted between the Holy See and the Third Republic as a result of Loubet's visit to Rome, the Daily News voiced its displeasure for several reasons, not the least of which was because it believed that 'such a style at the Vatican threatens the whole structure of European politics'. 'The only people who will be really pleased will be the enemies of the Papacy in every part of Europe', wrote this left-wing Liberal daily. 'The storm which has burst over France shows how completely the Pope has miscalculated the strength of the new national feeling which has grown up in the modern world. M. Combes will be immeasurably strengthened in his war against the Congregations'.⁵³ In connection with this incident, A.G. Gardiner, editor of the

51 The Times, 5 January 1907.
 52 Church Times, 14 December 1906.
 53 Daily News, 23 May 1904.

Daily News, was portraying the Pope as something of a well-intentioned but obstinate man whose policy of stubbornness was playing straight into the hands of the enemy. Other Liberals, however, thought worse. When Pius X issued his second encyclical of 1906 calling for French Catholics to fight the formation of the associations cultuelles, the Daily Chronicle accused him, amongst other things, of 'inciting France to a Holy War in defence of the extreme claims of the Church'.⁵⁴ The Speaker, in much the same fashion as The Times and the Spectator, dragged up some of the more sordid episodes in the annals of the Third Republic and reminded its readers that the Roman Catholic Church had involved itself in 'all the unpopuliarities and worst causes in French politics'.⁵⁵ To the Westminster Gazette, on the other hand, it was the French Bishops who most deserved sympathy; for they were in 'the unfortunate position of having to fight for a policy which is not their own and which all the world knows to have been forced upon them by the foreign power which controls the Church, and which is itself apparently controlled by influences hostile to the French Republic'.⁵⁶ And so it went on. In recording these statements, it is interesting to note that in all of them there is a tendency to side against the Vatican not only because its position seemed to be untenable in its own right, but also because its stance had failed to gain the support of the bulk of the French people.

⁵⁴ Daily Chronicle, 16 August 1906.

⁵⁵ Speaker, 9 June 1906.

⁵⁶ Westminster Gazette, 13 December 1906.

5. The dénouement of the Church-State affair and its impact on the Entente

Indeed, in many respects this was the crux of the whole issue. For despite their often very pronounced views on the disestablishment issue in France, the various organs of opinion in Britain had little means of judging with certainty which side was right and which wrong in the matter. In fact, until the spring of 1906 they had no definite means of ascertaining this whatsoever. Then in May of that year a general election was held which returned the anti-clerical forces to the Chamber of Deputies with a considerable majority. In the eyes of many people in Britain this was the most striking piece of evidence there was to show that the policy of separation of Church and State was the proper course for France.⁵⁷ Nor did those who had most consistently supported the Church disagree. According to the Catholic weekly the Tablet, the results of the 1906 general election constituted an enormous defeat for the Church. There could be no going back now to the days of the Concordat; henceforth, the Pope would have to ask the faithful in France to make the best that they could out of the Separation Law.⁵⁸

Thus what had once amounted to a very wide difference of opinion in Britain on a question of much importance to the Third Republic had by 1906-1907 narrowed to the point where most onlookers could find at least some agreement. Although British Catholics had far from given up supporting the Vatican in its stance on the disestablishment issue in France, they had by this time concurred with the view prevailing in other quarters

⁵⁷ Daily Chronicle, Westminster Gazette, and The Times, 9 May 1906; also Manchester Guardian, 3 September 1906.

⁵⁸ Tablet, 9 June 1906. x

of British public opinion that it would be best for the Church to accept the decision of the French electorate as final. Laurence Jerrold and the Economist had been right. Frenchmen were not going to allow their religious sentiments interfere with their political thinking, however much this thinking diverged from one class to the next on other issues. True, in the spring of 1906 there had been some disorders over the Church-State question, and some people in Britain, albeit a minority, felt that these disorders were a portent of things to come.⁵⁹ But in the main, the feeling was that France was a very stable country, populated by folk who were not likely to rush headlong into either reaction or revolution. Even those who were most perplexed by the 1906 general election results admitted this. Hence one contemporary writer, baffled at how the peasantry and the devout members of the middle class in France could protest one moment against the slightest attack against the Church only to turn round the next and vote for anti-clerical candidates at the polls, was forced to conclude:

those who know France well, who have mixed with the people of all classes and of all parties, are by no means despondent of the future.... The future is...uncertain, full of possibilities for good and for evil; but underneath it all there is that toiling, laborious France which works quietly and unostentatiously. It is in this France that all hope for the future must lie. The unexpected may therefore be awaited with some measure of confidence. 60

The Church-State question in France, although it provoked a good deal of discussion in the more informed circles of British public opinion, did not in the final analysis arouse

⁵⁹ Pall Mall Gazette, 8 March 1906.

⁶⁰ See the unsigned article entitled 'The general election in France', Quarterly Review, 205 (July-Oct., 1906), 286

much emotional feeling in the country between 1903 and 1907. Nor did it produce any fundamental changes in British attitudes towards France during these years. Certainly no one allowed the disestablishment issue to alter his or her own feelings about the Entente Cordiale. Even British Catholics, from whom one could most expect such a change of heart, continued to endorse the 1904 understanding. None of this is to say, however, that the anti-clerical campaign which the French Government conducted during these years was without interest to many people in Britain. On the contrary, it was generally regarded as an important issue in its own right and one with wide-ranging implications for Britain and the world at large. This was immediately recognised in virtually every quarter of British public opinion. Whatever the difference in viewpoint between Conservatives, Liberals, Catholics, and Protestants about the day-to-day events surrounding the disestablishment issue in France, they all agreed that in its broadest context it held some important lessons for Britain. Just as they maintained in other leader-articles that France had something to learn from Britain in the field of labour relations or in the art of putting together long-lived ministries, so they now argued that Britain had something to learn from France in this domain, even if they could not agree about what conclusions ought to be drawn from the French experience. At the same time, the various organs of opinion in Britain were aware that the disestablishment issue was important because of its possible repercussions in the sphere of international politics.

Not only did it bring a new element to the rivalry of the Great Powers in the Near and Far East, but it also threatened to upset Europe's delicately balanced diplomatic and military equilibrium should the tensions it engendered within France get out of control and bring the country to its knees.

Doubtless this is what the Economist was suggesting when it wrote on 15 September 1906:

The prosperity and tranquillity of France, the stability of her government, and the permanence of her institutions are matters of genuine concern to us. France is more than a neighbour, she is a friend, and a friend whose interests are in some important particulars closely associated with our own. That France should be saved from religious strife, still more ~~from~~ religious strife which is political alike in its origin and in its objects, must be the wish of every Englishman who recalls the disastrous part that religion has occasionally played in secular controversies.

Believing that such high stakes were involved, the newspapers and journals in Britain felt duty-bound to follow the Church-State struggle in France as closely as possible.

CHAPTER VI

BRITISH MILITARY AND NAVAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS FRANCE AND THE
ENTENTE CORDIALE

Up to this point we have examined the attitudes towards France and the Entente Cordiale of certain writers with considerable sway over the general public but more often than not with only a limited impact on the Government and the official policy-makers. This chapter, however, deals with a group of men who exerted much influence over both the high-ranking politicians and the man in the street. Indeed, if anything, Britain's military and naval leaders were, by virtue of the highly professional and secretive nature of their work, on a closer footing with the members of the Cabinet and the permanent civil service than they were with even the most prominent Fleet Street journalists. Nevertheless, they did cultivate friends in the newspaper world; and their unique position vis-à-vis the Government and, indirectly, the people makes them an integral and crucial part of contemporary British public opinion, certainly one worthy of our attention. But there is another reason for studying the attitudes of the Generals, Admirals, and defence experts towards Anglo-French relations in the early years of the twentieth century! Much more than any other of the various sections of British public opinion, they tended to view the durability of the Entente with a good deal of scepticism, and while they welcomed its inception for a host of reasons, they were cautious enough not to allow the heady euphoria that surrounded the rapprochement to impair their judgment about the defence requirements of the nation.

1. The Influence of the Army and the Navy

That military and naval leaders exerted a good deal of influence in the uppermost political circles in Britain can perhaps best be seen by the role of the Committee of Imperial Defence¹ in the decision-making process. Founded in December 1902, the C.I.D. was in many respects a manifestation of the insecurity which arose in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century in the light of the reverses of the Boer War, the new German naval challenge, and the continued imperialist rivalry of the Great Powers in various parts of the world. At first, it was little more than a remodelled version of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet set up by Lord Salisbury in 1895. True, unlike the latter institution, the C.I.D. from the outset included professional heads of the Army and the Navy as well as prominent Cabinet ministers, but the two interdepartmental committees that had existed at the turn of the century to deal with such problems, the Colonial Defence Committee and the Joint Military and Naval Committee, were allowed to continue in much the same form and with the same heads as sub-committees of the new C.I.D. The publication of the report of the Esher Committee on the Reconstitution of the War Office in January 1904, however, changed much of this. This report was highly critical of the existing means of co-ordinating national defence, and as a result of its recommendations, the Prime Minister radically altered the structure of the C.I.D. four months later. Whereas initially the Lord President of the Council (then the Duke of Devonshire) presided over its meetings,

¹ Herein cited simply as C.I.D.

the Prime Minister himself was appointed chairman and for a while sat as the only permanent member of the new body. Moreover, the Prime Minister was given sweeping powers in the selection of other members. This reform made it possible for the C.I.D. to bring in experts on the most far-ranging subjects, military and non-military alike, and seek out their advice on specific problems while Ministers cross-examined them. Finally, a permanent Secretariat was created as a result of the findings of Lord Esher's Committee, and the first Secretary of the C.I.D., Sir George Clarke, was responsible for the day-to-day paper work of the organisation and for keeping the Prime Minister abreast of the recommendations of the various sub committees. Taken together, these changes did not enhance the position of the C.I.D. beyond that of being merely an advisory body. Nevertheless, they did, along with the sheer scope of the C.I.D.'s operations, make it very difficult for leading Cabinet Ministers to ignore that organisation's findings and recommendations; and, as will be seen shortly, in 1902-3 Lord Lansdowne closely abided by the suggestions which the C.I.D. made with regard to the colonial negotiations then in progress with France.²

² For further details on the scope and structure of the C.I.D., see Balfour's paper entitled 'A Note on the Constitution of the Defence Committee', delivered to the Cabinet on 3 March 1904, in the Esher Papers 16/12. As regards attendance at C.I.D. meetings, it was the opinion of Sir George Clarke that during most of Balfour's premiership, the Prime Minister sat in on the most important meetings, as normally did the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for India, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Foreign Secretary. Of the professional members, the First Sea Lord usually took part in the more important C.I.D. sessions, along with the Chief of General Staff and the Heads of the Military and Naval Intelligence Departments. In a letter to Viscount Esher, Clarke intimates that on a number of occasions the principal Cabinet Ministers were summoned to attend, if only to spare the Committee from requiring its ideas to be sanctioned by the entire Cabinet. See Clarke to Esher, 9 October 1905, in the Balfour Add MSS 49719.

In another sense, too, prominent C.I.D. members held considerable sway over the Government. Men like Sir George Clarke, the Secretary-General of the C.I.D., and Viscount Esher, the only other permanent member of the organisation apart from the Prime Minister, wielded an influence over and above that which they exerted at their official posts by virtue of their rather close links with ministerial figures, in particular, Balfour and Lord Lansdowne. Some, not content with merely having strong ties with certain Cabinet Ministers, developed friendships with Fleet Street and provincial journalists so as to ensure that their views got the widest possible airing. This was especially true of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John Fisher, whose 'glorification in releasing blazing indiscretions' to the press gave J.L. Garvin, editor of the Observer, 'more secrets than his paper usually dared to print'.³ In addition to such personages, there were the periodicals of the armed services, which, if they did not make such a strong impact on eminent politicians and the public at large, did at least reflect the views prevailing in the lower officer ranks on the more important issues of the day connected with defence. The Broad Arrow and the Army and Navy Gazette, for instance, both sought to give advice through their weekly leader-articles, and they, along with other organs of military opinion like the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, printed pertinent articles dealing with the condition of the armed services of foreign countries and the like. Throughout most of this period it was, of course, the C.I.D. sitting in its official capacity

³ Christopher M. Andrew, Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale, (London, 1963), p.283.

that played the greatest role in shaping Government policy on matters of defence; nevertheless, private expressions of military and naval opinion as well as those vented in the newspapers did assume an importance of their own at this time and indeed, if anything, probably assumed an even greater importance between 1906 and 1908 when the C.I.D. underwent something of a decline in importance during the Campbell-Bannerman Ministry.⁴

2. The Terms and Implications of the 1904 Agreements

As regards the possibility of improving Anglo-French relations by means of a comprehensive settlement of colonial disputes between the two countries, the various sections of military and naval opinion began to express their views as early as 1902. In September of that year, the Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne, after just having been approached on the matter by the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, sounded out the Service Departments for their reactions to the proposal. The insistence of the Intelligence Divisions of the Military and Naval Departments that Tangier should not fall into French or Spanish hands, their desire that the French should be excluded from the Moroccan coast altogether in the interest of safeguarding Gibraltar, and

4 The Liberal Prime Minister pursued his task as Chairman of the C.I.D. with a good deal less enthusiasm than either his predecessor or his successor. Whereas eighty-two formal meetings of the C.I.D. were held during Balfour's tenure as premier, for example, only fifteen were held while Campbell-Bannerman was in office. The latter was quite happy to leave most matters connected with defence in the hands of Haldane, his Secretary of State for War, and to allow the sub-committees of the C.I.D. to undertake more and more work without having to report their findings to the Committee as a whole. (See F.A. Johnson, Defence by Committee, (London, 1960), p. 82.) Nevertheless, Fisher, Clarke, and others were still frequently expounding their views on a host of subjects to several Liberal Cabinet Ministers, much as they had done with Conservative Ministers prior to December 1905.

the belief, of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Office at any rate, that Germany should also be allowed to stake her claims in Morocco, all had the effect of making Lansdowne put off M. Cambon.⁵ But with the successful State visits of King Edward VII to Paris and of French President Loubet and M. Delcassé to London in the spring and summer of 1903, and with Anglo-German relations having taken a turn for the worse as a result of the Venezuelan imbroglio earlier that year, these same Departments were much less inclined to take such a tough bargaining stance when Lansdowne again asked their opinion on the matter almost twelve months later. At a meeting of the C.I.D. held on 14 December 1903, it was decided that a few substantial concessions could be made to the French after all without prejudicing Britain's interests in the Mediterranean. True, the Admiralty members present remained insistent that Tangier be kept independent of any European control and opposed the building of any new fortifications or naval bases on the Mediterranean coastline of Morocco to the west of that city; but unlike in September 1902, they were not now nearly so adamant about keeping the French entirely away from the Moroccan coast and were even willing to countenance the construction of a Trans-Sahara railway line between Algiers and Tangier, provided that this line would not be used as a cover for a new naval base on the Mediterranean. Equally true, the Military Intelligence Division of the War Office continued to voice doubts about handing any part of Morocco over to France or to Spain, since in its mind the occupation of even the smallest part of that country posed an additional threat to Gibraltar. Nevertheless, the Military

⁵ P.J.V. Rolo, The Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiations of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904 (London, 1969), p. 141.

Intelligence Division had by this time shed its earlier suggestion that Germany should also be consulted about Morocco; and if it still had reservations of a strategical nature about the proposed colonial convention, it did not in the end demur to the view of Sir Louis Battenberg and other naval members present at this particular session of the C.I.D. that such reservations were 'mainly of a kind affecting naval rather than military interests' and were in any case of insufficient importance 'to outweigh the advantages which this country would derive from the adoption of the Agreement as a whole'.⁶

Thus by the end of 1903 there was something of a consensus of opinion in military and naval circles that Britain had, in the final analysis, little to fear strategically from exchanging Morocco for Egypt or from resolving disputes in certain other overseas areas. With such general agreement behind him, Lansdowne felt safe in pressing ahead at full steam with the colonial negotiations, and as he continued the talks with Cambon in early 1904, he all but treated the recommendations of the C.I.D. with regard to Tangier as orders not to be defied.⁷ Nor was it merely over Morocco that the Foreign Secretary felt obliged to carry out the suggestions of the C.I.D. Over the

6 Cab. 38/3/85. 'Minutes of the 28th Meeting of the C.I.D., 14 December 1903'. In point of fact, Lord Lansdowne and Sir Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, had questioned the Admiralty and the War Office about their attitudes towards the proposed negotiations as early as July 1903. The replies from Sir Louis Battenberg (7 August 1903) and the War Office (31 July 1903) were more or less the same as given in December 1903. The War Office, in fact, was in favour of permitting Spain to have all that she could persuade France to give her in Morocco, 'since territory in her possession is far less likely to be used to our detriment than if it be in the possession of France'. See F(oreign) O(ffice) 27/3765. Battenberg at this time was Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty.

7 It probably would be more correct to say that the recommendations of the C.I.D. on 28 December 1903 only reinforced the Foreign Secretary's determination, seeing the Cabinet on several occasions insisted on a neutral Tangier.

question of suitable territorial compensation for France's withdrawal from the 'Treaty Shore', he accepted the recommendations of the C.I.D. without any questions and bargained along the lines it urged so stubbornly that he came close to destroying the negotiations altogether.⁸ In view of Lansdowne's ultimate success in securing concessions from the French on both these points, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that many spokesmen for the defence services in Britain were highly critical of the Anglo-French Convention when it was finally published in April 1904. Yet this is precisely what happened. Military journals like the Broad Arrow and the Army and Navy Gazette poured scorn on the Government for having got the worse of the arrangement. Britain gained considerably, they acknowledged, but not nearly in the same proportion as France.⁹ To Sir George Clarke, a man who had figured prominently in the C.I.D.'s pronouncements about Tangier and West Africa, the Agreements were something 'for which we have paid pretty heavily'.¹⁰ Some even opposed the Convention for reasons having little to do with politics or defence. Thus Admiral George Tryon, then an instructor at Camberley Staff College, criticised those clauses of the Convention pertaining to Morocco partly because he feared that they would give offence to third Powers, partly because he

8 At the twenty-ninth meeting of the C.I.D. held on 4 January 1904, it was agreed that Lansdowne should refuse Cambon's proposal that France should receive territory on the right bank of the River Niger extending southwards as far as the River Moussa, thereby gaining access below the rapids of the Niger, in exchange for the 'Treaty Shore' right. Instead, the C.I.D. offered by way of compensation a rectification of the Anglo-French colonial frontier to the north of Sokoto. (See Cab. 38/4/1). In the end it was more or less this latter arrangement that was accepted, but not before the negotiations reached an impasse in January and February 1904.

9 Broad Arrow and Army and Navy Gazette, 16 April 1904.

10 Clarke to Esher, 4 May 1904, Esher Papers 10/33.

thought Morocco showed a potential for grain-growing and might one day be valuable to Britain as a source of food imports.¹¹ In the main, however, Britain's military and naval leaders were disturbed by the one-sidedness of the arrangement rather than by its moral or commercial implications. Only the awareness that there were other possible advantages to be derived from the Agreements seemed to console them.

Indeed, if anything, Battenberg's belief as expressed at the 13 December 1903 meeting of the C.I.D. that the broader considerations of the Anglo-French Entente outweighed its more technical aspects grew during the first few months of 1904. Others besides prominent members of the Admiralty began to speak of 'advantages which this country would derive from the adoption of the Agreement as a whole'. Was this a tacit admission on the part of the C.I.D. and others that they had envisaged almost from the very start some anti-German possibilities arising from the rapprochement? It would be difficult to deny; for although the nation's defence experts were usually circumspect in the matter of linking the Entente with European power politics, they were worried about the growing German challenge and had begun to contemplate, if only in private, the need for some sort of accommodation with France. As early as November 1901 Admiral Sir John Fisher, then in command of the Mediterranean squadron, was advocating an alliance with France to be directed against Germany. 'They have never and will never interfere with our trade,' he wrote of the French to a journalist friend. 'It's

¹¹ Major-General George Aston, 'The Entente Cordiale and the "military conversations"', *Quarterly Review*, 258 (April, 1932), 366-367. Aston does go on to say, however, that in the minds of most of his colleagues the arrangement gave more to Britain than it did France, since the former did gain a free hand in Egypt, whereas the latter could not be sure of the same in Morocco.

not their line and, really, we have no clashing of vital interests....The Germans are our natural enemies everywhere'.¹² A little more than a year later, Lieutenant-Colonel William Robertson, then the head of the Foreign Section of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Office, had become alarmed enough at the recent German naval programmes to commence preliminary planning for an Anglo-German war, with amphibious operations against German colonies or Heligoland being considered as the Army's most likely task.¹³ And as early as 1897 James M. Grierson, at the time the military attaché at the British Embassy in Berlin, was expressing the opinion that 'England must go to war with Germany and that soon'.¹⁴ Nor was it merely prominent military and naval personnel who thought along these lines. Their political counterparts in upper echelons were almost equally belligerent towards Germany. In September 1902, H.O. Arnold-Foster, the Parliamentary and Financial Secretary at the Admiralty, was so alarmed by the naval construction he had seen at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven earlier that year that he drafted a memorandum warning of a future conflict between the two countries and urging a redeployment of the various fleets and a revision of war plans. One month later Lord Selbourne, the First Lord at the Admiralty, informed his colleagues in the Cabinet that he was convinced of the Kaiser's intention of building up the German Navy 'from the point of view of a war with us'.¹⁵ But it was General Henry Wilson, later to become Director of Military Operations at the War Office, who first

¹² Quoted in Richard Hough, First Sea Lord: An Authorized Biography of Admiral Lord Fisher, (London, 1969), pp. 136-137.

¹³ Samuel R. Williamson Jr., The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 2.

¹⁴ J.E. Tyler, The British Army and the Continent, 1904-1914, (London, 1938), p. 15.

¹⁵ Williamson, op.cit., p. 17.

spoke of the Anglo-French rapprochement in an anti-Teutonic light. Writing in his diary at the time of Loubet's State visit to London in 1903, Wilson observed:

This visit of the French President is History. I have for many years advocated friendship with the French as against the Germans because in my opinion there is no legitimate cause to quarrel with the French...whereas the Germans, who have an increasing population and no political morals, mean expansion and therefore aggression. 16

What Wilson quickly jotted down in private he soon expounded more fully to those around him. Others, hitherto more reticent on the subject, also began to remark on the possible consequences for Berlin arising out of the Entente. Given this tendency of prominent figures in the defence services to see Anglo-French friendship as a device to contain what they construed as German expansionism, it is scarcely surprising that some of them should all but leap at the opportunity of holding secret military conversations with France during the Moroccan crisis of 1905-6.

Of course, it was not only Germany that stood to be affected by this diplomatic development. The recent rapprochement between Britain and France was almost bound to leave its mark on Russia as well, if only because she had made an earlier alliance with France. In some quarters of public opinion the latter Power was suddenly being cast in the role of an intermediary between her friend and her ally.¹⁷ Did all this therefore mean that the Generals and Admirals also saw the Entente Cordiale as a convenient stepping-stone to an equally positive understanding

16 Quoted in Basil Collier, Brasshat: A Biography of Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson (London, 1961), p. 85. The emphasis in the quotation is Wilson's.

17 The notion that 'a friend of a friend is our friend' became a favourite and oft-repeated theme of many newspapers not long after King Edward VII's visit to Paris in 1903. This was particularly true of Conservative organs of opinion. For further details on this point, see Chapter IX of this thesis.

with the Russians? It would be difficult to say; for despite the obvious benefits of reaching a friendly accord with Russia through France, Britain's high-ranking military and naval men did not openly advocate such a ~~move~~ between 1903 and 1905. Rather, they were at the time quite content to have France use her good offices in St. Petersburg to help secure a détente in Anglo-Russian relations, a détente aimed in part at reducing tensions between the two Powers in Asia, but primarily at keeping Germany at bay in Europe while war was being waged in the Far East.¹⁸ Indeed, it was not until the Russo-Japanese war had been concluded that figures like Sir George Clarke began to speak openly about converting the Anglo-French understanding into a Triple Entente, and even then their motives for doing so were not entirely clear. Thus the Secretary-General of the C.I.D. wrote to Lord Esher in the summer of 1905 that 'our present relations with France ought to be used to secure an arrangement with Russia which would secure the peace of the East for a long time and give us leisure to put our house in Order. This - after the A(rnold)-F(oster) régime - will be a long task'.¹⁹

Although Britain's military and naval leaders gave grudging acceptance to the terms of the 1904 Agreements and on the whole looked favourably upon the implications that these Agreements

¹⁸ On the eve of the outbreak of the Far Eastern conflict, for instance, Lord Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty, pleaded with the Government to co-operate with France to halt somehow the drift towards war. Otherwise, the two Western Powers might be dragged in to the delight of Berlin. See Selborne to Lansdowne, 21 December 1903, in the Balfour Papers Add MSS 52518.

¹⁹ Clarke to Esher, 1 September 1905, Esher Papers 10/36.

held for Anglo-German and Anglo-Russian relations, this is not to say that they were altogether happy about the course which Anglo-French relations had taken since the inception of the Entente. Far from it. The defence services, like many other sections of official and public opinion, did from time to time express annoyance, if not outright anger, at the way in which the French had behaved on certain occasions. In 1905, the Broad Arrow waged a campaign of protest against France's policy of 'exclusiveness' in Abyssinia. The extension of a French railway line from Dire Dawa to Adis Ababa in contradiction of earlier treaty arrangements, it wrote, was not only a slap in the face to British capitalists there, it threatened to ruin the Entente.²⁰ Two years later, articles appeared in the military journals complaining about French encroachments at the expense of British interests in Siam, particularly in the Menam Valley.²¹ But it was the French practice of coaling Russian ships for more than twenty-four hours at a time during the Far Eastern conflict that produced the greatest outcry. Military journals like the Broad Arrow felt that French behaviour in this respect amounted to a 'violation of the principle on which International Law is based', if not 'an outrage on neutrality itself'.²² Lord Selborne sympathised with the French desire to accommodate Russia as best as possible, but argued that the practice put Britain in an even more awkward position vis-à-vis Japan.²³ Sir George Clarke felt likewise.²⁴

²⁰ Broad Arrow, 22 April 1905 and 2 December 1905.

²¹ See, for instance, Angus Hamilton, 'Siam and the French Colonial Party', United Service Magazine, XXXV (April - Sept., 1907)49.

²² Broad Arrow, 13 May 1905. For further details on the legal aspects of this question and criticisms of the French practice made in other quarters of British public opinion, see Chapter IX of this thesis.

²³ Selborne to Balfour, 2 January 1905, Balfour Papers Add MSS 49708.

²⁴ Clarke to Balfour, 29 April 1905, Balfour Papers Add MSS 49701.

Not that the Admiralty or War Office were so intent on making France change her ways. At a sub-committee meeting of the C.I.D. held in June 1904 it was decided that France's departure from neutrality in this respect was not of sufficient gravity to be construed as having an effect on the course of the war; therefore, the casus foederis 'contemplated by the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 would not necessarily arise'; and even if Japan went to war with France in consequence of such an action, Britain would not be compelled to follow suit.²⁵ Nevertheless, Britain's military and naval leaders could at times be annoyed at France, and they showed their annoyance by constantly urging the Government to put pressure on the French to behave more in the spirit of the Entente.

If prominent members of the defence services were not as pleased as they might have been about the nature of Anglo-French relations in the first few months after the signing of the 1904 Convention, they did not entertain any wild illusions about the relationship between the two Western Powers in the long run either. Whereas many politicians, journalists, and editors of varying political outlooks in Britain tended to see the Entente

25 Cab. 38/5/68, 'Note on the conclusions arrived at by the sub-Committee appointed to consider certain questions of International Law arising out of the Russo-Japanese War', June 1904. Although this sub-committee of the C.I.D. never admitted as much, it is more than probable that this particular instance of bending over backwards to avoid being dragged into the Far Eastern fray was determined at least in part by fear of Germany. During the Malacca incident of a month later when the Russians illegally seized a P. and O. liner, Sir George Clarke went to great lengths to convince Balfour how Britain could, if the worst came to the worst, enter the struggle without involving France. Anglo-French co-operation was absolutely necessary at such delicate moments, Clarke told the Prime Minister, if only to prevent Germany from using these complications to advance her cause in Europe. See Clarke to Balfour, 19 July 1904, Balfour Add MSS 49700.

Cordiale as a diplomatic edifice upon which permanent Anglo-French friendship was being built, Britain's military and naval leaders took a more qualified view of the matter. The same near obsession with the threefold theme of security, strategy and defence that caused these leaders to look so closely into the proposed colonial settlement in 1903 had not abandoned them, and throughout the next few years they never completely lost sight of the fact that Britain and France might one day be enemies again. Articles written long after the conclusion of the 1904 Convention appeared in the military press cautioning the nation not to allow amicable diplomatic arrangements to upset or interfere with the most carefully laid plans for defending the Empire and the Home Islands. One, written in the autumn of 1905, bluntly stated that all nations were Britain's potential adversaries. The recent colonial understanding might have improved Anglo-French relations, went its message, but it was not a guarantee against any future wars between the two Powers.²⁶ Another, written primarily as a plea on behalf of a conscript army, went even further; it insisted that France remained along with Germany 'the most formidable of our probable enemies'.²⁷ Meanwhile, defence experts at the War Office and Admiralty were busy contemplating the possibility of a French invasion of the British Isles. True, many of these memoranda were written at the time of the Boer War when Anglo-French relations were particularly bad and only kept on file for lack of any up-to-date memoranda. But others, written well in the aftermath of King Edward VII's successful visit to Paris, still considered the likelihood of an Anglo-French war:

²⁶ James R. Thursfield, 'Imperial defence: the strategy of position', United Service Magazine, XXXII (Oct., 1905), 24.

²⁷ Lieutenant C.H. Browning, 'A permanent army on permanent principles', United Service Magazine, XXXI (Apr. - Sept., 1905), 643.

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a study authorised in 1903 by Earl Roberts, then Chief of General Staff, examining France's chance of success in a surprise attack across the Channel; a War Office Intelligence Department paper prepared for the C.I.D. in November 1903 considering the possibility of a Franco-Russian attack on India; another War Office memorandum written at the end of 1904 reviewing tactics concerning an amphibious assault on French colonies overseas; and still another study of a possible French invasion of the Home Islands written at the end of 1905.²⁸

Why were such studies conducted? The military historian S.R. Williamson has suggested that it was all due to the preoccupation of the armies and navies of both Powers with renovation rather than with strategy. It was 'problems of organisation, morale, material, and reform', writes Dr Williamson, that 'were everywhere the order of the day'.²⁹ No doubt there is much to be said for this point of view; by comparison with all the efforts then being made to reorganise the War Office, reconstitute the Defence Committee, and improve the fighting quality of both the men and the equipment, strategic considerations based on recent diplomatic and political changes were lacking. The reverses suffered during the Boer War and the critical self-examination that occurred in military and naval circles after that struggle made much of this inevitable. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to attribute all War Office and Admiralty memoranda written about France in such terms during these years to a form of neglect or oversight

²⁸ David James, Lord Roberts, (London, 1961), p. 426; Cab. 38/3/76, 28 November 1903, 'Defence of India: Memorandum on the possibility of a French advance from Indo-China into Burmah'; and Williamson, op.cit., p. 21.

²⁹ Williamson, op.cit., p. 15. *

on the part of the nation's defence experts. The authors of some of the above memoranda, far from failing to take the Entente Cordiale into account, chose to ignore it. As they saw it, all such memoranda required consideration of the most adverse war conditions, and France, if only because of her close geographical proximity, had to be regarded as a potential enemy. The portrayal of France as an adversary in these memoranda was not to ignore or overlook the recent rapprochement between the two Powers, Britain's military and naval leaders insisted, but merely to frame the invasion hypothesis in the least favourable way for the nation's defence experts. 'And if we can show that the navy is equal to this, the more difficult task', wrote Lord Esher after one such memorandum. in 1903, 'we need not waste argument over any easier one'.³⁰ For similar reasons, Sir George Clarke was willing to consider what he regarded as the 'extreme case' of France and Germany being allied with each other as a measuring rod for the Two Power Standard.³¹ More likely than not both Esher and Clarke had the best intentions in mind when examining these improbabilities. But if such was the case, then it should be noted that their portrayal of France in this light was later used by others as an excuse to bolster Britain's already large expenditure on armaments.³²

³⁰ See the memorandum marked Confidential A, 'Draft report on the possibility of serious invasion', dated 3 December 1903, in the Esher Papers 16/10.

³¹ See the 'Note on comparative naval strength' dated June 1907 in the Sydenham Papers Add MSS 50836.

³² As early as the spring of 1905 Balfour tried to justify his Government's proposed increase in the defence estimates at least in part on the basis of the amount of naval tonnage found to be in the French Channel ports by the C.I.D. in a memorandum written earlier that year. See Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXLVI (11 May 1905), 73.

For the most part, then, Britain's military and naval leaders were cautious about the Entente Cordiale. In recording this it is important to note that they had reacted in this manner, not because of any innate suspicion of the French Government, but simply because plans involving strategy were slow to change with the times, or because geographical and other non-political considerations dictated such an approach. And yet, despite their protestations of good faith in the durability of the Entente Cordiale, several members of the armed forces were in due course to reveal a mistrust of France that went far beyond anything being voiced in other quarters of British public opinion. What brought their misgivings on this point to the fore was the Channel Tunnel Bill laid before Parliament and the country in late 1906 and early 1907. A number of businessmen and financiers, hoping to make a profit out of the recently improved relations between Britain and France, resuscitated this time-honoured scheme not long after the 1904 colonial Convention had been signed. Their clamour had been such that within two years a number of M.P.'s introduced legislation on their behalf to the Commons. That a submarine railway link was never laid between the two countries at this time does not need emphasising here; what does need stressing is the role the defence experts played in killing the Bill. Their reasons varied. Some, like the Army and Navy Gazette, expressed their disapproval because in their view such a link exposed Britain to the Kaiser's army. A war between France and Germany was not at all impossible, this newspaper argued, and even if Britain should remain neutral, she would be threatened with invasion once the German army had overrun

the north of France.³³ Others felt that if Britain was willing to risk this danger by constructing a Channel Tunnel she would need a conscript army, and conscription, Sir John Fisher added with a touch of resentment, would inevitably increase the annual Army Estimates without necessarily reducing the Naval ones.³⁴ Still others were against the idea because they regarded the supposed commercial benefits to be of doubtful value.³⁵

But for all these explanations, there was another, that of uncertainty about the permanency of the Entente Cordiale, which seemed to lie at the core of their opposition to the Channel Tunnel scheme. Anglo-French relations had been on a solid footing on a number of occasions in the past, they noted, but not for any great length of time, and as far as they were concerned, it would be little else than folly or self-deception to think otherwise of the latest rapprochement between the two Powers. As the Broad Arrow put it: 'the friendship of nations is a notoriously unstable quantity, and no sane politician will regulate his conduct upon the supposition that present friendships will never suffer from coldness, however earnestly both parties may strive to avoid such a calamity'.³⁶ In making such statements, the Broad Arrow and other journals like it were not, of course, predicting a quick end to the Entente Cordiale; rather, they were merely trying to prevent the Government from rushing head-long into an undertaking which they felt the country might one day regret. Their opposition to the Channel Tunnel scheme thus differed in a sense from

33 Army and Navy Gazette, 22 December 1906.

34 See Fisher's secret memorandum entitled 'The Channel Tunnel' (January 1907) in the Balfour Papers Add MSS 49711.

35 Lt.-Col. Walter H James, 'The Channel Tunnel', Contemporary Review, 91 (Feb., 1907), 213; also the memorandum written by Sir George Clarke for the C.I.D. dated 19 June 1906, Cab. 38/12/31.

36 Broad Arrow, 22 December 1906.

that of the civilian press, much of which did campaign against the project on strategic grounds, but without singling out France by name as a possible future enemy. What is more, their opposition revealed a lack of confidence in high-ranking British military and naval circles in the fighting ability of the French army in a war against Germany, a lack of confidence which in turn perhaps explains their insistence upon some sort of military and naval accommodation with France during the first Moroccan crisis. It is to this all-important area that we now turn our attention.³⁷

³⁷ Throughout these years, Britain's military leaders had been in something of two minds about the state of the French Army. On the one hand, they clearly recognised that improvements had been made since the 1870-1871 war. Better defences had been constructed on the frontier with Germany; French military equipment was thought on the whole to be of higher quality, even relative to Germany's, particularly in the area of field guns; and visiting British officers were invariably impressed with the drilling which they saw in the French manoeuvres. (See, for instance, D.S. Macdiarmid, The Life of Lieut.-General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson, (London, 1923), pp.218-219.) Nevertheless, certain doubts existed in War Office minds. Many of these doubts arose simply from the fact that the French Army was smaller than its German counterpart and was falling further behind in numbers with the passing of each day. But there was the question of morale as well. At first it was felt that the association of some aristocratic officers with the anti-Dreyfusards had discredited the Army too much in the eyes of 'patriotic' Frenchmen for it to be a totally effective instrument. (See Broad Arrow, 14 February 1903.) Later, when this issue began to recede from the forefront of French politics, some military journals began to express concern about the impact of anti-militarism and pacifism in the barracks. See (Army and Navy Gazette, 27 July 1907.) Still others argued that the 'highly strung, imaginative Frenchman was 'too intelligent and quick-witted to make an ideal warrior'. (See E. Ashmead Bartlett, 'The French army on campaign: an account of this operation in Morocco', Blackwood's Magazine, 183 (Jan.-June 1908), 13-14, 16-17.) Taken together, these doubts were of sufficient strength to induce a number of British military leaders to question the fighting ability of the French army, but they were not strong enough to make the War Office think that Britain's siding with France in a land war with Germany was a lost cause. Indeed, as will be seen shortly some British Generals argued on behalf of an alliance with France, if only to boost the morale of French soldiers. (See below, footnote 49.)

3. The Secret Military Conversations of 1905-6

Taken in itself, the visit of the Kaiser to Tangier in the spring of 1905 did not give rise directly to the military and naval conversations that began between the two countries several months later. What did were the subsequent rumours that the Germans intended to secure a coaling-station at Mogador as compensation for France's gains in Morocco secured in the 1904 Convention. The news of this German intention greatly disturbed a number of Government ministers, particularly those who were aware of the C.I.D.'s warnings made in December 1903 of the need to keep Moroccan ports out of the hands of foreign Powers for the sake of Gibraltar. Balfour, always sensitive to matters involving strategy and defence, was so alarmed that he asked Admiral Sir Charles Ottley, the new Director of Naval Intelligence, precisely what the dangers would be to Britain if Germany did secure Mogador for this purpose. The answer, if not immediately forthcoming, was none the less disturbing as far as the Prime Minister was concerned. Not only would Britain's position in the Mediterranean be threatened if such a turn of events happened, went the report, but the Home Islands themselves would be put at risk, since Germany would then be able to strike both from the North and South Atlantic.³⁸ Lord Lansdowne, on the other hand, could not even bear to await the Director of Naval Intelligence's findings. He was sufficiently alarmed by the rumours to instruct his Ambassador in Paris to inform the French of his desire that the two Governments 'should continue to treat one

³⁸ See Ottley's paper dated 6 July 1905 in the Balfour Papers, Add MSS 49711.

another with the most absolute confidence...'.³⁹ Vaguely worded as this message was, it seemed to encourage some members of the French Government in the belief that the Conservative Foreign Secretary was aiming at some sort of military arrangement between the two countries. Certainly the French foreign minister construed Lansdowne's words as such when trying to shore up his position in the Cabinet a few weeks later.⁴⁰ But when in early June 1905 Delcassé was replaced by the more pro-German Rouvier, weeks passed without any French reply to the offer; and by July Lansdowne was at a loss about how to proceed with the notion of joint military and naval planning. 'We have been giving a good deal of thought to the question', he wrote to one official at the British Embassy at Paris, 'but until it is asked I doubt whether we should be wise to volunteer a statement'.⁴¹ His sense of disappointment and vexation resembled that of Sir George Clarke, who wrote to Viscount Esher shortly after the fall of Delcassé: 'Our policy must be to support France, if she so desires, but of course not to press support upon her'.⁴²

The French, then, were silent on British hints of aid in the event that the Tangier crisis erupted into war. Nevertheless, this did not prevent Britain's military and naval leaders from making further studies into the matter on their own. Indeed, throughout the spring and summer of 1905, many of them pressed ahead with the idea of Anglo-French military co-operation much as if the Government in Paris had consented to Lansdowne's proposals. In July, Admirals Fisher and Ottley asked Balfour

39 B(ritish) D(ocuments) on the Origins of the W(ar), III, no. 90, p. 72.

40 Williamson, op.cit., p. 39.

41 Lansdowne to Geoffrey Lister, 10 July 1905, F.O. 800/127.

42 Clarke to Esher, 19 June 1905, Esher Papers 10/36.

to create a permanent sub-committee of the C.I.D. 'to consider and elaborate schemes for joint naval and military expeditions', even though the French had as yet given no indication that they were interested in such co-operation.⁴³ Meanwhile, Fisher and others kept harping in their letters to the Foreign Secretary on the supposed dangers that would result for Britain should the Germans get a foothold in North Africa.⁴⁴ Part of their anxiety had been based on the conviction that Germany would, if the worst did come to the worst, invade Belgium in order to strike at France, thereby infringing the 1839 Treaty of London. Already a war game worked out in the recesses of the War Office had it that the Germans would violate the Belgian frontier after first being repulsed by the French following an attack from Alsace-Lorraine.⁴⁵ Sir George Clarke was inclined to agree. It was his impression that 'the inducement to Germany to violate Belgian territory in the event of war with France is greater by far now than it was in 1870' because of the extensions recently made in the French fortress system; this was enough in itself without taking into account additional defensive preparations made by the French since the crisis had begun.⁴⁶ Admittedly, a new sub-Committee of the C.I.D. set up by Balfour in the summer of 1905 to examine this particular

43 See the memorandum entitled 'Formation of a permanent sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence to consider and elaborate schemes for joint military and military expeditions' dated July 1905 in the Balfour Papers, Add MSS 49711.

44 Fisher to Balfour, 17 June 1905, Balfour Add MSS 49711.

45 See the 'Records of a Strategic War Game' dated 24 May 1905 in the Field-Marshal William Robertson Papers, I/1. Although not completed until May 1905, this war game was started in January of that year. General J.M. Grierson, then the Director of Military Operations in the War Office, played the part of the French force; Robertson, then only a Colonel, the German; Major Lyden-Bell, the Belgian; and a Colonel Callwell and a Major Hills, the British Expeditionary Force.

46 Clarke to Sanderson, 16 August 1905, in the Sanderson Papers, F.O. 800/116; also Clarke to Balfour, 17 August 1905, Balfour Add MSS 49702.

question more thoroughly thought somewhat differently. It felt that either France or Germany might be tempted to invade Belgium if war did break out, although it added that neither was likely to do so until a stalemate had resulted in the fighting on their common frontier, and even then the possibility of British intervention might make them think twice. Still, of the two Powers the sub-Committee felt that it would more likely be the Germans who would violate Belgian neutrality and cause Britain to enter the struggle.⁴⁷

Part of their anxiety, however, had been based simply on the belief that Germany was out to destroy France as a Great Power, and this, some military and naval leaders maintained, had to be prevented, regardless of whether Belgium had been dragged into the conflict or not. As early as July 1905, Admiral Sir John Fisher was arguing that 'should Germany attempt to push France to extremes over the Moroccan imbroglio, Great Britain would almost perforce have to come to France's assistance'; this in a memorandum which failed to mention Belgium.⁴⁸ Certain members of the War Office, on the other hand, seemed to take it for granted that Britain would be able to side with her Entente partner in a purely Franco-German struggle, should the occasion arise. In a privately written memorandum dated 4 January 1906 General Grierson, the Director of Military Operations, stated:

⁴⁷ Cab. 38/10/73, 29 September 1905.

⁴⁸ See Fisher's memorandum entitled 'British Intervention in the event of France being suddenly attacked by Germany' in the Balfour Papers, Add MSS 49711.

If, therefore, the Germans do not violate Belgian neutrality, our only course will be to send what troops we can to reinforce the French Army in the field and so help stem the tide of German invasion, and there is no doubt that their presence side-by-side the French Army would exert a great moral effect on soldiery especially prone to such influences. British aid to the French field forces must come at once, owing to the fact that the moral effect of a first success would have an enormous influence on the course of the war. 49

In other words, honouring Palmerston's time-hallowed agreement was no longer the only, or even the basic, reason for despatching an expeditionary force to the Continent. Britain's commitments in Europe were not merely now a matter of protecting Belgian independence, but also of shoring up France's Great Power status. Admittedly, a number of other people in Britain were in favour of rendering military assistance to France in the event of the latter Power becoming involved in a war with Germany. The Morning Post, for instance, warned that 'in case of an unprovoked attack upon France' by the Germans, 'this country could not remain an indifferent or inactive spectator'.⁵⁰ For its part, the Observer, while not anticipating war, argued that 'it would be well for the British Government to prepare for such a possible issue' by establishing closer links with France.⁵¹ Both of these statements were made, however, in connection with the Moroccan imbroglio. Grierson's memorandum, by contrast, seemed to be calling for military aid to the French as a matter of course. Moreover and perhaps more important, there were some people in Britain who were against any such aid, however qualified and tentative, a point which shall be taken up later. Indeed,

49 See Grierson's memorandum entitled 'Memorandum on the military forces required for oversea warfare', p. 7, in the Field-Marshal William Robertson Papers, I/2/6. The emphasis in this quote is Grierson's.

50 Morning Post, 1 January 1906.

51 Observer, 25 June 1905.

it is highly open to question whether Fisher and Grierson were correct to make the assumptions that they did.

As for the French, if they had given no reply to Lansdowne's overtures, they also did not rule out the possibility of military and naval co-operation between the two Powers. Indeed, the official French attitude towards this all-important matter oscillated throughout the last nine months of 1905. In March, even before the intention of the Kaiser to visit Tangier had been announced in the press, certain Frenchmen had been pressing for an alliance with Britain to counteract the weakening of the Dual Alliance in the light of the Russo-Japanese War. Valentine Chirol, the foreign editor of The Times, noted this after stopping off in Paris on his way home after spending a holiday in Egypt. During his visit to the French capital he met, amongst other people, Combarieu, President Loubet's Chef de Cabinet, who 'hinted very plainly at a still closer understanding between England and France in view of German ambitions - Holland, Austria-Hungary, the Near East - which the impotence of Russia would certainly stimulate'.⁵² Once it became apparent that Morocco too was part of the German scheme of things other Frenchmen welcomed the idea, most notably Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to Britain, and M. Delcassé. As against these views, however, were those of men like premier Rouvier, who opposed any such conversations lest they antagonise Germany further, and General Pendazac, the French Chief of Staff, who estimated the fighting value of the British Army in rather low terms and next to worthless to France should a war break out over Morocco.⁵³

⁵² Chirol to Hardinge, 20 March 1905, in the Hardinge of Penshurst Papers, volume 7.

⁵³ Major Huguet, Britain and the War, translated by H. Cotton Minchin, (London, 1928), p. 4.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1905 it was the feelings of these latter figures that prevailed in France, and it was not until late November-early December that the views of the Cambon-Delcassé constellation began to regain the ascendancy. One reason for this shift was undoubtedly the continued demands of the Germans for a conference of the Powers to settle the Moroccan question even after the fall of Delcassé at the Quai d'Orsay; another, the newer and more favourable assessment of the British Army made by certain Frenchmen. In particular, it was Major Huguet, the Military Attaché at the French Embassy in London, who did most to bring about this latter reappraisal. Persuaded by Cambon in the summer of 1905 into believing that Germany was in an especially aggressive mood and ready to launch an attack on France, Huguet decided to take a personal look into the state of the British Army as a fighting force. He noted with satisfaction that Britain was aware of the mistakes she had made during the Boer War and that she alone of the Great Powers had drawn certain tactical lessons from that campaign. He concluded that Britain could muster 150,000 men for mobilisation and have them deployed on the Continent within thirty days. Above all, he was convinced that Britain was still willing to enter into military conversations in secret with France, provided that the Rouvier Government was willing to do the same. Impressed with these findings, Cambon passed them on to Paris, where they were read with great interest, especially by General Brun, the new French Chief of Staff. In early January 1906, the French Government authorised Huguet to sound out British military experts on the matter.⁵⁴ France was

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

now ready to take the initiative in pressing for secret military and naval co-operation between the two countries.

Yet despite their sudden willingness to hold such conversations, the French could not be entirely certain of the attitude of the British. Recent developments had raised the possibility that London might no longer be prepared to enter into secret dealings. In October 1905 sensational revelations appeared in the Parisian press emanating from the retired Delcassé himself and alleging that, at the height of the Tangier crisis, the British Government offered to land 100,000 men on the Schleswig-Holstein coast, seize the Kiel Canal, and sign an alliance with France. True, throughout much of 1905 Admiral Fisher had spoken publicly about launching a preventive attack against the German Navy along these lines; articles appeared in journals like Vanity Fair and the Army and Navy Gazette advocating much the same thing; and in February of that year, only two days before the Japanese attacked the Russian fleet at Port Arthur without making a formal declaration of war, Arthur Lee, then Civil Lord of the Admiralty, delivered a speech at his Eastleigh constituency which, if it did not urge a 'Copenhagening' of the German Navy, did at least warn Berlin that the Royal Navy was in a position to launch an immediate attack against any Power.⁵⁵ But Lansdowne and the Foreign Office denied the French newspaper reports, and a good many British organs of opinion dissociated themselves from the First Sea Lord's extremely belligerent proposals.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the Conservative Government was steadily losing its grip in

⁵⁵ The Times, 5 February, 1905.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, The Times, 9 October 1905; Daily Chronicle and Birmingham Daily Post, 10 October 1905; and Spectator, 14 October 1905.

Parliament thanks largely to the Tariff Reform issue, and in early December Balfour gave way to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a renowned francophile but a man whose foreign policy speeches of late had also stressed the need for an Anglo-German rapprochement similar to the Anglo-French one. Were both of these events indications that Britain was edging away from the idea of secret military conversations with France? To find out the answer to this and other, equally important questions, Huguet dined out with Colonel Charles à Court Repington, the military correspondent of The Times, on 28 December 1905 in London.⁵⁷ Over dinner, Repington managed to ease most of Huguet's worries. He maintained that the British people had not altered their pro-French outlook on the Moroccan question. He denied rumours then afloat in Paris that the new Liberal Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey was about to embark on new policies for Britain. He even went so far as to say that both public opinion and the new Liberal Government in Britain would almost certainly rally to France's aid should a war erupt over the Moroccan crisis - quite a striking remark, considering that the press was deeply divided over this point and that the Liberal Cabinet had not even studied the matter.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Huguet's choice of Repington rather than someone more official was probably determined by the latter's well-known enthusiasm for some sort of military accommodation with France. Throughout the whole of the Tangier crisis, The Times correspondent produced a variety of reasons for an Anglo-French alliance, including the notion that a British Expeditionary force could fill the vacuum in the Dual Alliance created by Russia's collapse in the Far East. The Royal Navy alone, Repington once boasted, 'is worth more than 500,000 bayonets to the French Army'.

⁵⁸ Huguet to Etienne (French War Minister), 30 December 1905, Documents Diplomatiques Français (herein cited as D.D.F.), 2ième série, vol. VIII, no. 300, p. 414.

Up to this point events moved slowly, with the two sides making tentative approaches towards each other; after 28 December, however, the pace began to quicken. Repington in particular seemed determined to get the secret conversations under way at this stage. On 29 December, only a day after his meeting with Huguet, the military correspondent of The Times wrote Grey, then electioneering in Northumberland, informing him of what had taken place and asking for further instructions. The Foreign Secretary's reply, which reached Repington on January 1st, invested the latter with the power to continue the conversations unofficially till the election results were known. Two days later Repington dined out with Grierson and a Major Gorton, also of the War Office, to discuss how best to convert the hitherto reluctant Admiral Fisher and Sir George Clarke to the notion of military co-operation with the French. On 5 January, Repington invited Huguet to lunch at his house and there heard assurances that France would not under any circumstances be the first to violate Belgian territory, a point which Repington had raised at the 28 December meeting. That same evening The Times's military correspondent managed to convince both Clarke and Esher of the need to hold secret conversations with the French. On 12 January Repington, this time accompanied by Esher and Clarke, once again met Huguet to enquire about France's defence plans and learn the exact nature of Huguet's proposals. And so it went on. Indeed, it was not until 19 January, the date when the conversations finally became official, that Repington once again devoted his energies to writing for The Times; and even then he did not entirely lose touch with the proceedings.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Colonel Charles à Court Repington, The First World War, 1914-1918, I (London, 1920), pp.2-6.

Repington's efficient handling of such matters undoubtedly made the pursuance of the same task by his successor, Major-General Grierson of the War Office Intelligence Branch, much easier. Upon assuming the role of Britain's official negotiator with the French, Grierson found that he had little difficulty in starting where The Times's military correspondent had left off. But perhaps even more instrumental in allowing the Director of Military Operations to proceed smoothly with the arrangements for co-ordinating Anglo-French planning were the workings of the C.I.D. The efforts of Fisher and Ottley to form a permanent sub-Committee of the Defence Committee to examine schemes for joint military and naval expeditions had borne fruit, and by the end of 1905 Esher, French, Clarke, Ottley, and Grierson had all agreed to consider the technical and logistical problems arising in the event of Britain being involved with France in a war with Germany. Between mid-December and mid-January these men held a series of conferences with this intention in mind: a conference held on 19 December weighing up the various naval plans put forward by members of the Admiralty to be taken against Germany, in which the scheme to despatch a large expeditionary force to the Baltic was ruled out as impracticable; a meeting on January 6 arranging a time-table for the possible mobilisation of the 50,000 strong Aldershot Army Corps if hostilities did erupt; a meeting held on 12 January in which Ottley presented the Admiralty's views on the pros and cons of transporting troops to France as against Belgium; and a conference held on 19 January dealing with the problems of disembarkation and joining forces with the

French and Belgian armies.⁶⁰ On occasion the recommendations put forth by this sub-Committee produced some friction and misunderstanding between Huguet and Repington.⁶¹ But in the main, they served as a useful guideline for Repington and later Grierson in their dealings with the Military Attaché of the French Embassy in London. What is more, they revealed the lengths to which most of Britain's military and naval leaders were willing to go to help France in a future war with Germany.

There was, however, at least one figure opposed to the conversations as they then stood. This was Admiral Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord and one of the most outspoken personages in Admiralty circles. Fisher's opposition to the conversations stemmed largely from his conviction that they threatened to undermine Britain's supremacy on the seas, that most essential criterion for the successful defence of the nation and one which the First Sea Lord had been willing to guarantee by launching a preventive war against the German fleet. As far as he was concerned, it was ridiculous to talk about despatching an expeditionary force to join up with the Belgian Army or the

60 Cab. 38/11/4. 'Notes of Conferences held at 2 Whitehall Gardens on 29 December 1905; 6 January, 12 January, and 19 January, 1906'. It perhaps should be added here that not all five men attended the four meetings. Esher, French, and Clarke did so; but Ottley sat in on only the first three meetings, while Grierson attended only the last two.

61 Huguet, for instance, took exception to the suggestion made by Grierson after the 19 January meeting that in the event of the British Expeditionary Force being employed on the French frontier, its status 'would be that of an independent body under a general control of the French Commander-in-Chief'. Huguet was in favour of Britain commanding the French Navy, while the French would head both armies. Grierson thought the plan dangerous inasmuch as it would lead critics to suggest that Britain was fighting on behalf of the French rather than the Belgians. See J.E. Tyler, The British Army and the Continent, 1904-1914 (London, 1938), pp. 42-44.

left wing of the French forces. In the first place, the Germans were strong enough to rout the French and Belgian forces within a matter of weeks, if not days. In the second, the proposed force would be too small to play a decisive role, even assuming that the French and the Belgians somehow managed to avoid defeat. To send such a force to fight along side the French or the Belgians in this manner would be, in short, to send it to its destruction. Indeed, its defeat in France or Flanders in the early stages of the war would in turn compromise Britain's naval efforts and expose the country to invasion.⁶² To his way of thinking, it would be far better for Britain to land men on the Schleswig-Holstein coast, seize the Kiel Canal, and attempt to march on Berlin. If sufficient numbers of French and British troops took part in this scheme, Paris would almost certainly be saved, since the Germans would be under enough pressure to divert precious manhood resources away from the French capital towards their homeland.⁶³ Had Clarke, Esher, French, Ottley, and Grierson approved of the idea in their secret meetings of late 1905-early 1906, there can be little doubt that Fisher would have supported the notion of holding military and naval conversations with the French. As it was, they found the scheme unlikely to succeed, and Fisher, presumably out of pique, did his utmost to prevent the conversations from progressing. He refused to help Repington secure the new

62 J.A. Fisher, Lord Fisher on the Navy, (London, 1919), p.5.

63 Fisher had advocated this plan at least as far back as July 1905 when he wrote to the Prime Minister asking for a sub-Committee of the C.I.D. to be formed to examine various plans for despatching an expeditionary force to the Continent. In this memorandum, the First Sea Lord urged the Government to withdraw, if need be, troops from the garrisons of the North-West frontiers of India to fight in Schleswig-Holstein, surely an indication that some military and naval leaders regarded Germany rather than Russia as the primary enemy of the country. See Fisher's memorandum entitled 'British intervention in the event of France being suddenly attacked by Germany', dated July 1905, in the Balfour Add MSS 49711.

Liberal Government's official sanction for the conversations; he held but one meeting with Captain Mercier de Lostende, the Naval Attaché at the French Embassy in London, on the possibility of naval co-operation between the two countries, a meeting in which little was achieved. He even refused to promise the Admiralty's co-operation in working out the details and problems of cross-Channel transport.⁶⁴ Only as time wore on, when it became increasingly apparent that the British Government was never going to endorse the Schleswig-Holstein scheme, did the First Sea Lord guarantee the passage of the British Expeditionary Force across the Channel.

Despite the First Sea Lord's dissent, the conversations continued. Throughout the remainder of January and all of February Grierson held several meetings with Huguet, meetings in which the Director of Military Operations found himself having to defend several of the C.I.D.'s recommendations about the deployment of British troops in northern France and the conditions under which they would fight in the first place. It was not until the French did finally agree to these conditions that Grierson was able to proceed on to the next stage of the C.I.D.'s contingency planning - the inspection of the French Channel ports as possible disembarkation sites. On 2-3 March Grierson and Huguet visited Boulogne and Calais for this purpose. A week later, Colonel Robertson, also of the War Office Intelligence Department, accompanied Grierson on a tour of the northern French frontier from Lille to the Ardennes. And on 10 March Grierson held his first meeting with General Brun, the

⁶⁴ Repington, op.cit., p. 11; also Williamson, op.cit., p.69.

new French Chief of General Staff.⁶⁵ All of this was done in comparative haste whilst the Algeciras Conference was still in session and the fate of Europe in the balance. As the Conference drew to a peaceable close, however, the conversations began to grind to a halt. On 5 April, for instance, the very day that the Conference delegates began to return to their respective capitals, Grierson finished writing a précis of all the arrangements which he had made with the French since January; in his diary entry of that date he noted that further such arrangements 'will now be hardly necessary'. Four days later he went to the Foreign Office and asked for a 'détente of war preparations'.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, some military pourparlers did go on after Algeciras, if at a slower pace. In early May 1906, Huguet brought to Grierson the French Government's railway plans for transporting troops from the Channel ports to the front, whether in Belgium or in northern France. In August, Grierson attended the French and Belgium manoeuvres, the former being a rather important visit, in that it ended with a meeting at Soissons with M. Etienne, the French Minister of War.⁶⁷ Nor was it merely Grierson on the British side who was interested in retaining the links between the two General Staffs in the aftermath of the first Moroccan crisis. His successor, Sir Spencer Ewart, also favoured continuing the conversations and held odd meetings with Huguet reviewing

65 Tyler, *op.cit.*, pp.42-53.

66 D.S. Macdiarmid, *op.cit.*, p.217.

67 *Ibid.*, pp.217-218.

the status of the exchanges.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the C.I.D. for its part continued to examine in detail matters of logistics that arose out of the Grierson-Huguet conversations, and in the spring of 1907 a General Staff memorandum stated its preference for sending a British Expeditionary Force to France rather than to Belgium in the event of war with Germany. 'The Belgian Army is by no means reliable as a fighting machine', this document noted, 'and close co-operation in the field with the actual French Army might perhaps be a more effective way of ridding Belgium of her invaders, than direct support to a force which might only too soon become demoralised and panic stricken'. Still, as the railway lines from Calais, Boulogne, and Le Havre could lead troops with equal facility to the Belgian right or the French left, it was agreed to postpone a definite decision on this point 'until the very last moment'.⁶⁹

4. Conclusions

Out of the details of the history of the secret Anglo-French military conversations of 1905-6, one or two points emerge which require some stressing. First, by advocating and seeking a clearly defined military arrangement

⁶⁸ See the entry in the Sir Spencer Ewart Diaries dated 31 July 1907, in which mention is given of a meeting between Ewart, Huguet, and Sir Neville Lyttleton, the new Chief of General Staff, concerning the status of the conversations. It should be noted that this entry contradicts the statement made by Huguet, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-9, that between 1906 and 1910 he and Ewart never met face to face to discuss any further contingency planning. Instead, Huguet claims that he had to deal with lesser men in subordinate positions, willing to get things done but handicapped by a lack of any real authority.

⁶⁹ Cab. 38/13/18, General Staff memorandum entitled 'Our position as regards the Low Countries', 8 April 1907.

with France, men like Repington, Grierson, Ottley, and Sir John French were only doing what a number of other people in the country wanted them to do. Ever since the outbreak of the first Moroccan crisis a considerable section of British public opinion, especially right-wing opinion, had been clamouring for some sort of military and naval accommodation between the two countries in order to contain what they construed to be blatant and unwarranted German expansionism. Indeed, some fiery chauvinist writers had for some time been calling for the substitution of an alliance for the 'vague' Anglo-French understanding, 'which does not give sufficient guarantee of mutual assistance and of national security either to Great Britain or to France'.⁷⁰ Certain Conservative newspapers, on the other hand, might not have gone so far as to anticipate war in the spring of 1905, but they did argue that 'it would be well for the British Government to prepare for such a possible issue, hastening to add that 'we are committed to the support of French diplomacy in the controversy with Germany'.⁷¹ Even a few left-wingers like H.M. Hyndman from time to time declared themselves to be in favour of a 'defensive agreement between England, France and Italy, running athwart the Triple Alliance, expressly in order to keep the European peace'.⁷² Given the existence of these views, it is difficult to portray Britain's military and naval leaders as men who were out on a limb vis-à-vis British public opinion on the subject of converting the Entente Cordiale into

⁷⁰ O. Eltzbacher, 'The balance of power in Europe', Nineteenth Century and After, 57 (May 1905), 796.

⁷¹ Observer, 25 June 1905.

⁷² See Hyndman's article entitled 'France and foreign policy', in Justice, 12 November 1904, p.4.

something more than a mere settlement of overseas colonial disputes. The second striking feature of these conversations is that the men who conducted them from the British side, namely Repington and Grierson, always exercised a good deal of caution in their dealings with Major Huguet. Despite the considerable pressure exerted by the military attaché of the French Embassy in London for a stronger and more clear-cut British commitment to France neither negotiator would promise anything more than he had been authorised to promise. Admittedly, not all of Britain's military leaders behaved so responsibly when talking to the French about this delicate subject.⁷³ They, however, were more the exception than the rule. In the main, the Generals and the Admirals refrained from encouraging the French to believe that the conversations would eventually lead to an alliance. Indeed, in his handling of Huguet on this matter, Grierson was masterful to the point of perfection. He allayed the Frenchman's fear that Britain might one day leave France in the lurch over the Moroccan issue by telling him that neither the new Liberal Government nor the British people would tolerate such a turn of events, while at the same time he dismissed the notion of an alliance as unnecessary in view of the easing of the Tangier crisis.⁷⁴ Grierson's behaviour was all the more impressive in view of his

⁷³ In the spring of 1906 a General Maurice gave an interview to a French newspaper describing at length how in the event of another Franco-German war Britain would as a matter of course join France and operate against the Germans from Denmark, not the Schleswig-Holstein coast. The interview outraged Campbell-Bannerman, who demanded that Maurice be severely reprimanded and that his views be publicly repudiated. See Campbell-Bannerman to Grey, 25 January 1906, F.O. 800/100.

⁷⁴ Williamson, *op.cit.*, p.84.

own personal belief in an Anglo-French alliance. Deference to a higher authority, it seems, compelled the Director of Military Operations to ignore his own wishes and desires.

Nevertheless, despite these more positive aspects of the conversations, it can still be said that they presented real cause for worry. The very vagueness of the military preparations of 1905-6 made it unclear to all concerned precisely under what conditions British troops would land on the Continent to fight on the side of the French or the Belgians. Uncertainty of this sort was not in itself necessarily an evil, inasmuch as it discouraged the French from thinking that they could invariably rely upon British military support in any confrontation with Germany. But at the same time such uncertainty did give rise to misunderstandings with several foreign Powers. Thus while on an official visit to Paris in the spring of 1907, Campbell-Bannerman, never very happy about the conversations, reputedly told the French premier Clemenceau that the people of Britain 'would be totally averse to any troops being landed by England on the Continent under any circumstances'. The latter, who had been hoping to convert the Liberal Prime Minister to the idea of an Anglo-French-Spanish triplite against the Germans, professed to be shocked and regarded Campbell-Bannerman's remarks as 'the virtual end of the Entente Cordiale'.⁷⁵ An even more serious complication

⁷⁵ R.B. Jones, 'Anglo-French negotiations, 1907: a memorandum by Sir Alfred Milner', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 31 (1958), 224-227. As a point of interest, it perhaps should be mentioned that Campbell-Bannerman later insisted that he made no such statement and only warned Clemenceau of the reluctance, not the total aversion, of the British people to undertake such commitments. (See Grey to Sir Francis Bertie, 13 April 1907, F.O. 800/50.) It is just possible that the French premier, out of pique after having seen his hopes for a three Power alliance against the Germans dashed, deliberately exaggerated the British Prime Minister's remarks.

was to arise for Anglo-German relations. In Berlin, rumours of the conversations confirmed suspicions of an alliance between the two Western Powers and not long afterwards leading German generals began to take it for granted in their war plans that Britain would be in the enemy camp.⁷⁶

In other words, the Anglo-French military conversations, while not amounting to an 'entangling alliance', did produce entanglements which in the long run tended to restrict Britain's freedom of action in dealing with foreign Powers. But serious as this was, there was another, equally unfortunate aspect of the military conversations. By engaging in furtive negotiations with the French, the Government was helping to promote that most undemocratic of practices in foreign affairs, secret diplomacy, thereby misleading the general public about the real nature of the Entente Cordiale. True, some sections of the British public had expressed a willingness to see military overtones added to the Entente, but by no means everyone in the country felt this way and it is significant that a number of organs of opinion in the country expressed alarm upon hearing rumours of the conversations and demanded that the Government reveal everything, if only as a matter of principle. As the Manchester Guardian put it: 'We have a right to know whether Lord Lansdowne, by written or spoken word or in any other way, committed this country to future military co-operation with France in certain eventualities, and, if so, what these were'.⁷⁷

Yet whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, the

⁷⁶ Williamson, op.cit., pp. 340-342.

⁷⁷ Manchester Guardian, 23 November 1906.

direction which the Anglo-French conversations of 1905-6 took are not as important to this study as the more general attitudes of Britain's military and naval leaders towards France and the Entente Cordiale in the early years of the twentieth century. It is with this all-important area that we must concern ourselves. Taken together, the nation's defence experts and journals had a far more dualistic approach to the Anglo-French diplomatic rapprochement than any other section of British public opinion. They disliked the losses involved in the 1904 colonial Convention; yet they endorsed its strategic implications. They were quick to take note of these strategic implications but were slow to act upon them. They outwardly professed trust in France and faith in the workings of the Entente Cordiale but inwardly entertained suspicions about French motives and had misgivings about the durability of the friendlier relations between London and Paris. Much more than any other group in Britain they kept all possible eventualities in mind when contemplating the future of the Entente.

CHAPTER VII

COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BRITAIN AND FRANCE
1903-1908

Commerce and finance, both of which had done so much to put Anglo-French relations on a good footing at the time of the Cobden Treaty of 1860, once again played a positive role in the affairs of the two countries in the early years of the twentieth century. Even before an Anglo-French diplomatic understanding had been realised in 1903-4, a number of businessmen in Britain had been doing their utmost to improve the bonds between the two countries. Thus at the turn of the century they refrained from participating in the passions and fervours being generated by the Boer War on both sides of the Channel. '1900 had become a record year for cross-Channel trade in both directions, and during 1901, 1902, and the early months of 1903, at a time when England was facing a serious drain on her gold resources, French financiers, anxious to profit from the high English bank rate, invested about 1,000,000,000 francs (about £40,000,000) in England'.¹ Some even ventured to agitate for something more constructive. In the autumn of 1900, Sir Thomas Barclay, then Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, organised a meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of the U.K. in the French capital to strengthen the ties between the two countries. A year later, the Association, under Barclay's leadership, passed a resolution at Nottingham in favour of this proposal; this after no less than twenty-seven British Chambers had discussed and passed special resolutions

¹ Christopher M. Andrew, Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale, (London, 1968), p. 202.

on the same subject.²

Such representations, of course, became even more frequent once Anglo-French relations did begin to improve. Scarcely had King Edward VII commenced his well-publicised State visit to Paris in the spring of 1903 when leading members of the British Chamber of Commerce there proposed the negotiation of an Anglo-French commercial treaty.³ In London, the Commercial Committee of the House of Commons, headed by a Sir William Houldsworth, at once extended an invitation to its equivalent group in the Chamber of Deputies to visit the British capital.⁴ Somewhat later in Paris Barclay began to prepare the arrangement of 'municipal ententes' between dignitaries of certain British and French cities in which local businessmen were to figure prominently. Manchester and Lyons were the first to take part in the scheme; the corporations of Edinburgh and Glasgow were soon to follow.⁵ Meanwhile on a more national level, plans were being laid by businessmen in both countries to promote joint trade exhibitions, still more visits, and an underground freight and passenger link across the Channel. Accompanying all this activity was, of course, an underlying belief that profits could be made out of the diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries, a belief which, as will be seen shortly, was to become substantiated to some extent by record cross-Channel trade. Nevertheless taken as a whole,

2 Sir Thomas Barclay, Thirty-Years: Anglo-French Reminiscences, 1876-1906 (London, 1914), pp. 214-215.

3 Sir Edward Monson to Lord Lansdowne, 14 May 1903, F(oreign) O(ffice) 27/3629.

4 See the 'Who's who in the world of commerce' column in the September 1903 edition of the Magazine of Commerce.

5 Barclay, op.cit., p. 298.

businessmen and financiers were to become more disillusioned with the Entente Cordiale than perhaps any other group in Britain. Precisely why and how this came to be the case, will, it is hoped, be explained in this chapter.

1. Commercial relations

The conditions under which trade between Britain and France developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were on the whole favourable. Apart from the sheer volume of trade between the two countries, which as has been seen grew even during the Boer War, there were other circumstances which made it possible for the commercial classes of the two countries to get along with each other quite amicably. To begin with, British and French manufacturers and exporters were by and large still concentrating on developing and exporting two different types of goods at this time. While British exports largely consisted of heavy industrial goods or everyday necessities, French exports mostly comprised luxury items or long-recognised specialities. This meant that British and French manufacturers could seek an outlet for their goods either across the Channel or in overseas markets without facing too much competition from one another. Of course, France was making rapid steps towards complete industrialisation at the turn of the century, and the French, like their counterparts in Britain, Germany, and the United States, were beginning to produce plainer and cheaper commodities for export in sizeable quantities. But even these goods, 'shipped mainly to the reserved markets of her expanding tropical empire, did not often trip up the British

merchant in places where their appearance would have seemed to him an intrusion'.⁶ Moreover and scarcely less important, British overseas trade rivalry with France tended to be less marked than with other Powers simply because the French at this time still were not exporting capital goods in great amounts.⁷ In addition, there had been something of a tradition of co-operation and friendliness between businessmen of the two countries, a tradition punctuated by several free trade agreements made in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the basis of all this evidence, then, it was possible to conclude in 1903-4, as many contemporary organs of opinion in fact did conclude, that commercially speaking Britain's relations with France 'were of the best'.⁸

Such conclusions were, however, quite often far from justified. It would be more correct to say that commercial relations between Britain and France stood on a reasonably good footing but were nonetheless in need of considerable improvement. At the core of much of the difficulty was the problem of regulating the commerce between the two countries. A commercial treaty had been signed between the British and French Governments in 1882, but its most important clauses related to shipping and had little to say about tariff matters, which were left to the devices of the two legislatures. Had Parliament and the French Chamber of Deputies erected more or less equally high protective walls, there could have been few qualms about the matter. As it was, the latter turned out to be a good deal more protectionist-minded

6 J.H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain (3 vols., Cambridge, 1926-1938), III, 38.

7 Ibid., loc. cit.

8 See, for instance, Spectator, 5 December 1903.

than the former. In 1892, the French Government introduced the 'Mélinae Tariff', a schedule of duties described by one economic historian as 'one of the stiffest in the world, though not so stiff as those of Russia and the United States'.⁹ Not only did this tariff fix rates on imports into France at a much higher level than did its British equivalent,¹⁰ but it did so in a very uneven fashion. Instead of setting up a uniform schedule of duties, a two tier system was created: a fixed minimum rate for France's commercial 'friends' and a fixed maximum one for others. As friends like Britain were only awarded a minimum rate, not a set level of duties, precious few British manufacturers in Britain could be certain how their exports would fare in French markets from one sitting of the Chamber of Deputies to the next. Another annoying aspect of the Mélinae tariff was the surtaxe d'entrepôt, a duty imposed over and above all other duties upon products of non-European origin imported into France from European countries and one which obviously worked to the detriment of British traders living in the Empire. Meanwhile, exporters of manufactured goods on both sides of the Channel were complaining of the false marking of products.¹¹

⁹J.H. Clapham, The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914 (Cambridge, 1936), p.264.

¹⁰ With the exception of a few articles like sugar, wine and spirits, the British Government allowed French products, in common with those of other nations, into the United Kingdom free of duty. By contrast, the French levied duties on virtually all imports, and in the case of British imports into France, one historian has calculated that these French duties averaged 34% ad valorem in the early years of the twentieth century. (See ibid., loc. cit.)

¹¹ Apparently a number of French firms were putting British labels on certain goods to mislead their consumers, while a few bottling firms in England were placing French labels on cheap colonial wines. See the Memorandum on Commercial Relations with France, Annex A, p. 12, (17 July 1908) in the Asquith Papers, MS 98.

For their part, French businessmen were very wary of the Tariff reform issue in Britain. That a system of high tariff barriers guarding home produce coupled with preferential treatment for the countries of the Empire was being mooted about in Britain at this time does not need much stressing here. Joseph Chamberlain had formally advocated the idea in the autumn of 1903; almost half of the Conservative party endorsed his subsequent campaign for imperial federation; and a good many organs of opinion in the country nailed their flags to the mast of protectionism as well. What does need some emphasising, perhaps, is that the Balfour Government was already taking some steps in this direction. In the early years of the twentieth century, duties had been levied on corn, coal and sugar. Intended merely as a temporary measure to help rid the country of its deficit caused by the Boer War, they nevertheless lasted for a considerable period of time and were widely regarded both in Britain and abroad as a step towards protectionism.¹² Similar duties were rumoured to be on the way. A number of Liberal newspapers, invariably ready to seize upon any line of thinking to discredit Chamberlain's campaign, argued that the introduction of Tariff Reform would reduce French imports into Britain, produce a trade war between the two countries, and possibly destroy the Entente itself.¹³ Meanwhile the rebuttals of the Tariff Reform press were singularly unimpressive and made little impact upon the

¹² Howard Weinroth, 'Left-wing opposition to naval armaments in Britain before 1914', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 6, no. 4 (1971), 117.

¹³ The Westminster Gazette, 28 November 1903, for instance, found it 'surprising' that anyone could even think France would not be aggrry if we adopted Mr Chamberlain's proposals.

reading public.¹⁴ All this tended to excite French businessmen, many of whom depended upon Britain as the one sizeable market in which they could easily sell their goods. Indeed, some took the Tariff Reform campaign in Britain so seriously that they felt compelled to issue warnings to the Balfour Government. Specially written articles appeared in the Temps, the semi-official organ of the French Government, taking note of Chamberlain's intentions and threatening reprisals if the scheme was carried out.¹⁵ In the end, of course, French businessmen did not have to live up to their words because the British public rejected the notion of tariff reform at the time of the 1906 general election. Nevertheless, the rise of protectionism as a major issue in Britain did produce anxiety in certain French business circles and played a part in making commercial relations between the two countries a shade less cordial than they otherwise might have been.

There were, then, elements of discontent in the links that brought British and French businessmen together. Accordingly, a number of commercial and financial figures in Britain sought to redress the situation by putting pressure on their Government to have the French sign a new treaty. As has

¹⁴ The Times, for instance, tried to argue in an article of 28 November 1903 that, while the duties advocated by Chamberlain 'would in some degree diminish our imports, alike from France and other countries', these countries would 'clearly recognise that the right would be on our side, and that, even if they regretted the change in the interest of their own manufactures, they would not assume any right to blame us for doing what might be greatly to the advantage of our own'. Presumably it was this kind of over-simplification that made the Tariff Reform press appear politically naive in the eyes of many informed readers and voters.

¹⁵ See the letter of Maurice de Bunsen, first secretary of the British Embassy in Paris, to Lansdowne, 21 August 1903; also Monson to Lansdowne, 21 November 1903, F.O. 27/3629.

already been seen, they had for some time been advocating such a move and now that the two Governments had sown the seeds of a political rapprochement the moment for realising an arrangement regulating the commercial affairs between Britain and France suddenly became opportune. As one official of the Board of Trade put it, in rather matter of factly: 'The possibility of negotiating a favourable commercial treaty with France arises from the feeling of friendliness that now exists between the two countries'.¹⁶ Given that this was their ultimate aim, it comes somewhat as a surprise, perhaps, that individual British businessmen and the various chambers of commerce which acted on their behalf strove more to stabilise French customs duties than to reduce them. As far as they were concerned, it was not the height of a given tariff that did the most to damage British trade in France, but the fact that such customs duties were forever undergoing fluctuations. Time and again they sought to impress upon the British Government their preference for 'a régime of slightly heavier duties, with the certainty of knowing how they stood for a definite period of years, to one under which they would have to pay slightly lower duties with the fear that those duties might be subjected to constant fluctuations'.¹⁷ British exporters, it seems, were able to do a 'permanently satisfactory business' with foreign countries, provided that they knew beforehand under what circumstances goods of one kind were going to be prohibited, while goods of another were going to

¹⁶ Harold Cox, 'Memorandum on a new Commercial Treaty with France', December 1906, F.O. 800/106.

¹⁷ See the aforementioned memorandum on Anglo-French commercial relations dated July 1908 in the Asquith Papers, MS 98. (pp.2-3).

be admitted.¹⁸ Of course, pressure was being applied to get the French to lower their tariffs as well. John G. Pilter, a member of the Board of Directors of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, asked His Majesty's Ambassador to France, Sir Francis Bertie, what could be done to convince the French to lower their duties on imported items. The high tariff barrier, complained Pilter in 1906, 'has proved especially unsatisfactory in view of increased Anglo-French trade'.¹⁹ But even he felt that the primary reason for negotiating a new commercial treaty with the French was to give 'a fixity of régime' to the business and financial links between the two countries so as to ensure for British traders 'the certainty of the morrow and not of being suddenly deprived of the fruits of their many years' labour in establishing themselves in this country as importers of British goods'.²⁰

Apart from the injustices of the Méline tariff, there were other anomalies in Anglo-French trade relations which British businessmen hoped to get rid of by exerting pressure on their Government. Among the most notorious of these anomalies was the practice of falsely marking goods, a practice which was carried on by disreputable companies on both sides of the Channel, but more commonly in France. At first British firms were willing to take the matter up through the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris. After this failed to produce results, they sent representations to their Government in London. By 1907 their annoyance and frustration had become such that they took the rather unusual step of having

¹⁸ Harold Cox, 'Memorandum on a new Commercial Treaty with France', December 1906, F.O. 800/106.

¹⁹ Pilter to Bertie, 3 November 1906, F.O. 800/49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the influential Associated Chambers of Commerce in the United Kingdom adopt their cause and demand that the Campbell-Bannerman Ministry immediately provide for the protection of British marks in France.²¹ British shipping companies, constantly facing fines for not accurately classifying their goods for the awkward French customs, took a similar course of action.²² But the commotion stirred up over these comparatively minor matters was nothing when measured against the efforts of colonial exporters to have the surtaxe d'entrepôt abolished. As the surtaxe was being levied only on those raw materials or foodstuffs being manufactured or processed in European countries like Britain, not all exporting businesses in the British Empire had sought to repeal the measure. Nevertheless, their number was sufficient to draw the attention of the British Government. Canadian timber firms had been among the first to complain; the tea growing associations of Ceylon and India were quick to follow; and within a short period of time of the successful visit of King Edward VII to Paris in 1903 a host of exporting and shipping companies throughout the Empire began to demand that the Foreign Office exert its new-found influence with the French Government to get rid of this particular duty. The most notable attempt to achieve this aim came in the winter of 1903 at Montreal when the Fifth

21 'Memorandum on Commercial Relations with France', 17 July 1908, Asquith Papers, MS 98, p.3.

22 Financial Times, 29 April 1907. The French apparently had a myriad of classifications for each type of article that entered into the country and expected foreign shipping companies to know both these classifications and their exceptions, all of which were contained in several large volumes of Customs Administration books. In the opinion of the Financial Times, the number of these 'cautions' was such that 'one begins to wonder at the existence of any export trade at all from England to France'.

Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire passed a resolution condemning the surtaxe as unjust and urging the Government in London to do all in its power to secure its removal.²³ But there were other attempts as well, and as late as December 1906 the tea-plantation owners in British-held Asia were threatening to close their exports to France altogether if something were not done about the surtaxe d'entrepôt.²⁴

Indeed, colonial businesses and those British firms which operated in the various parts of the Empire seemed to have their own grievances against the French. While British merchants engaged in purely cross-Channel trade had to deal with high and fluctuating tariff barriers, colonial businessmen were confronted with an even worse aspect of French protectionism, the denial of the Open Door. In places like Algeria and Madagascar the French had long since set up monopolistic preserves. In Tunis, British trade, if not as yet destroyed, was on the verge of extinction. Meanwhile, in the Congo Basin and Equatorial Africa huge tracts of land were being systematically sealed off from outside competition. Even in those comparatively few areas of France's overseas empire where the doors had not been completely closed to foreign traders there were injustices. The exceedingly narrow scope of the 'minimum rates' of the French Customs Tariff as applied to New Caledonia, for instance, proved so vexatious

23 See the letter of a Kenrick B. Murray, a representative of the London Chamber of Commerce to the Montreal Congress, to Lansdowne, 15 December 1903, F.O. 27/3751.

24 See, for instance, 'Memorandum on the "Surtaxe d'entrepôt" and Franco-British Commercial Relations', 15 December 1906, F.O. 800/92.

to a number of Australian businessmen that the Governor-General of that Dominion felt compelled to write to the Colonial Office in London protesting against the situation in view of Australia's own free trade policies.²⁵ In the province of Tonquin and in certain parts of West Africa, on the other hand, it was the transit duties which the French imposed upon British goods being shipped into the hinterland that gave rise to the most complaints.²⁶ No wonder, then, that a great many colonial businessmen and British shipping firms reacted so favourably to the news of each step in the development of friendlier diplomatic relations between London and Paris. There was little doubt in their minds that what had been achieved in the political sphere could be achieved in the economic one as well. This was particularly true of the Liverpool shipping firms, whose weekly runs to the West Coast of Africa and trading posts in the interior of that continent had suffered tremendously at the hands of the régime concessionnaire in the Congo.²⁷

Of course, none of this is to say that all British and colonial businessmen who had overseas dealings with the French welcomed rumours of the Entente Cordiale. Companies like Messrs. Forwood Bros. and Co., the London shipowners, and

²⁵ See the letter of H. Austin Lee of the Colonial Office to Sir Edward Monson, 16 August 1904, F.O. 27/3671.

²⁶ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXXXV (1 June 1904), 558.

²⁷ On 15 October 1903, only one day after an important Anglo-French arbitration agreement had been signed, E.H. Cookson, Managing Director of the Liverpool trading firm, Hatton and Cookson, Ltd., sent a letter to the Foreign Office congratulating Lord Lansdowne on the success and enquiring whether his company's dispute with the French over the retention of a trading post at Libreville might be considered as a suitable case (Cookson to Lansdowne, F.O. 27/3762). Similarly, when

Emmotts and Wallshaw, Ltd., the Lancashire cotton-spinning firm, both of which did a thriving business in North Africa, were earnestly opposed to a comprehensive colonial settlement between Britain and France. Convinced that the impending barter of Morocco for Egypt would spell disaster for their respective businesses, they organised towards the end of 1903 a series of protest meetings, first at the Accountants Hall in Manchester, then several more in London, and, finally, after all else had failed, they appealed to their M.P.s to challenge the thirty year time limit to the Open Door and other 'unfair' provisions pertaining to Morocco included in the 1904 Convention.²⁸ Meanwhile, the tiny colony of British merchants living in Morocco itself took up the matter with His Majesty's Minister at Fez, Sir Arthur Nicolson.²⁹ In the main, however, such opposition was far more the exception than the rule in commercial and financial circles, whether one speaks of those businessmen who were engaged in purely cross-Channel trade or those who had experiences with the French abroad.

press reports had it in the spring of 1904 that the two countries were on the verge of a comprehensive colonial settlement, several Liverpool shipowners sent notes of approval to Lord Lansdowne and begged him to consider their claims against the French Government in the Agreements. See, for instance, the letters of John Holt, President of John Holt & Co., to Lansdowne, 25 March 1904; the President of Messrs. Taylor and Co. (operating in Africa under the name of the Anglo-French Trading Co., Ltd.), to Lansdowne, 20 April 1904; and E.H. Cookson to Lansdowne, 16 and 30 March 1904, F.O. 27/3763.

²⁸ Manchester Guardian, 15 October 1903; D(ocuments) D(iplomatiques) F(rançais), série 2, vol. 4, no. 28, pp.37-38; and Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXXXIII (28 March 1904), 838-839, 920 and CXXXV (1 June 1904), 551-552, 558.

²⁹ Nicolson to Lansdowne, 17 April 1904, F.O. 800/135.

Only as time wore on with no apparent change in France's protectionist colonial policies did the bulk of British shipowners and colonial tradesmen begin to feel that Lansdowne and the Foreign Office had cheated them.

And yet, despite all these protests and complaints, scarcely anything was done to rectify the situation. Not until 1910 did the French eventually agree to reduce their tariffs, and even then the downward revision applied to only some goods.³⁰ Much of the blame for this unfortunate state of affairs lay with the British Government whose willingness to exert pressure in Paris depended upon the nature of the grievance, the moment when it was lodged, and occasionally even the political views of the people making the protest. How these three factors arranged themselves in the minds of men like Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey usually determined whether or not the Foreign Office would act. Broadly speaking, the Government was not averse to taking up specific infractions committed against British or colonial firms operating in France or the French Empire but was most hesitant to try to force the French to alter or abolish some of their longer-standing commercial and financial policies. Thus when in late 1906/early 1907 the London Chamber of Commerce passed a unanimous resolution calling upon the Foreign Office to make urgent representations to the French Government concerning a new tax about to be levied on all foreign companies in France, the latter complied and managed to secure from the French a

³⁰ J.H. Clapham, The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914 (Cambridge, 1936), p. 264, n.1.

modification of the original measure.³¹ British South African mining firms were similarly rewarded in their struggle to defeat a bill then going through the Chamber of Deputies aiming at the ultimate take-over of foreign concessions in Madagascar.³²

But when it came to encouraging the French to scale down some of the higher duties of the Méline tariff, abolish the surtaxe d'entrepôt, or create an Open Door policy in the French colonies, the Government was strangely reluctant to take up the case. The reasons varied. Quite often the Foreign Office or the Board of Trade simply argued that nothing good could come out of approaching the French with a suggestion to get rid of these measures because the latter were too intransigent in their stance or because Britain was too weak in her bargaining position and had nothing to offer in return. Hence the Montreal Congress of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire was told that nothing would be done about the surtaxe on the ground that this duty had for too many years formed an important part of the 'general fiscal system of France' for any protest to be effective.³³ In reply to the request of

31 Financial Times, 9 January and 29 July 1907. What provoked the outburst from the London Chamber of Commerce in this instance was not so much the principle of the proposed tax but the manner in which it was to be levied. The bill as it originally stood in the Chamber of Deputies aimed at the levying of a tax not on the capital of the branch of the company in France but at the entire capital of the parent company. This proposal was scaled down when the bill finally passed the Chamber in July 1907 so that foreign companies already established in France had to pay the tax solely on the basis of their holdings in the country.

32 See the letter of a Mr Selborne of the British High Commissioner's Office in Johannesburg on behalf of the South African mining companies to Lord Percy, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 8 July 1905, and Percy's reply, 31 October 1905, F.O. 27/3753.

33 See the letter of H. Llewellyn Smith of the Board of Trade to the Foreign office, 8 January 1904, F.O. 27/3751.

the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris for the negotiation of a commercial treaty between the two countries, on the other hand, Sir Francis Bertie pointed out that, as His Majesty's Government had few such concessions to offer the French in return for a reduction of the Méline tariff, the French might be tempted to insist on a defensive military alliance between the two countries as compensation, and this, he intimated, was for the time being out of the question.³⁴ In a similar vein the British colony of merchants were urged to swallow their apprehensions about the 1904 Convention on the argument that a French take-over of Morocco was inevitable and that in a decade's time Britain would have had nothing to offer France in return.³⁵ Even the 1871 Treaty of Frankfurt had sometimes been used as an excuse for not attempting to negotiate some sort of accommodation along commercial lines between the two Western Powers. The most-favoured-nation treatment accorded to Germany by France in this arrangement made it a bit pointless, or so the argument went, for the British Government and businessmen to try and persuade the French to change their ways merely so that the burgomasters of Hamburg and Berlin could reap a profit as well.³⁶ Meanwhile the Government refused outright to consider the possibility of imposing retaliatory measures against the French on the ground that such a course of action would only lead to a tariff war between the two countries, and pointed out that nations which

³⁴ Bertie to John G. Pilter, 19 November 1906, F.O. 800/49.

³⁵ Lansdowne to Sir Arthur Nicolson (then the British Minister at Fez), 21 April 1904, F.O. 800/135.

³⁶ See the 'Memorandum on Commercial Relations with France', 17 July 1908, in the Asquith Papers, MS 98.

had already done so enjoyed access to the French markets on even less favourable terms than did exporters of the United Kingdom.³⁷

Of these various arguments advanced by the Government it can be said that many of them were sincerely presented, in some instances the logical outcome of several sustained but fruitless attempts to reach a commercial treaty with the French;³⁸ nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that more often than not little or nothing was done simply because the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade regarded these complaints as trivial or annoying, at the most of secondary importance when measured against the political and diplomatic benefits that would accrue to Britain if relations with France were kept on as smooth a footing as possible.³⁹

Since their pleas for help to the Government by and large proved unavailing, a good many British businessmen began to act on their own initiative to secure improved commercial relations with France. They were perfectly well

37 Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXXVI (29 July 1903), 686.

38 As early as the spring of 1903 M. Rouvier, then the Minister of Finance in the Combes Government, had been telling prominent Britons that it would be wise to leave Anglo-French commercial relations 'well alone', as the present Chamber of Deputies 'was altogether protectionist and not likely to consent to more favourable treatment being granted to Great Britain...'. See Monson to Lansdowne, 14 May 1903, F.O. 27/3629.

39 That the Foreign Office looked upon such outcries as little more than a nuisance can be seen from the reaction of Lord Lansdowne to the grievances of British firms in the French Congo. The Conservative Foreign Secretary did duly take up the protests of Messrs. Holt and others with the French Ambassador in London, but only grudgingly, apologising to M. Cambon that the problem could not be overlooked because of 'the influence of the commercial element in the British House of Commons and the mischief which was created by the constant complaints which we had received as to the treatment of these firms'. Lansdowne to Sir Edward Monson, 7 July 1903, F.O. 27/3616.

aware that it was futile to approach the French Government without the support or knowledge of their own, but they did feel that it might be worth their while to establish and strengthen contacts with their business counterparts in France. Such a move, they reasoned, almost certainly would not bring about a full-fledged commercial agreement between the two countries, but it could well achieve an increased volume of trade and thereby compensate in some way for the lack of any written commercial arrangement. In the summer of 1906 D.G. Collins, chairman of the City of London International Commercial Association, launched a scheme to hold a Franco-British Trade Exhibition on a ninety-eight acre site in Shepherd's Bush. The proposed Exhibition, which quickly won the backing of an imposing array of politicians and businessmen from both countries, including the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Arthur Balfour, Lord Rosebery, Paul Cambon, and the President of the French Chamber of Commerce in London, had for its aim the opening of new avenues of trade - not only for Britain, but also for India and the Colonies so that 'French visitors will see and learn to appreciate the magnitude and producing capacity of the various components of the Empire'.⁴⁰ It was also about this time that British businessmen became increasingly attracted to Sir Thomas Barclay's notion of 'municipal ententes'.

But it was with the revival of the Channel Tunnel project that the greatest expectations were raised in some commercial quarters in Britain. Apparently a M. Peltureau renewed the campaign for it in a specially written report

⁴⁰ See the 'Notes of the month' column in the Magazine of Commerce, August 1906, p. 84.

prepared for the Paris Chamber of Commerce;⁴¹ prominent businessmen on both sides of the Channel soon expressed an interest in it; and in Parliament Lord Burton, Vice-Chairman of the South-Eastern Railway and Chatham Company, and H.H. Marks, the Conservative member for Kent, Thanet, went so far as to introduce a Bill for such a scheme towards the end of 1906.⁴² Unhappily for all these people the Bill never got past its first reading; the Government simply would not countenance a project which involved obvious military risks but which did not necessarily offer any compensating advantages to trade and industry.⁴³ Still, if improved Anglo-French trade was their real objective, then their efforts were not entirely in vain; for as will be seen shortly, both the amount and value of British exports to France began to increase sharply after 1905. On the other hand, for many British and colonial businessmen this was not enough; and as late as July 1908, at a time when the cross-Channel trade boom was still very definitely taking place, Winston Churchill, then the President of the Board of Trade, was complaining to the Prime Minister of 'being pressed almost daily' by British and colonial businessmen 'to make representations to the French Government in respect of various articles in which tariff increases are apprehended,...'. A 'public avowal of impotence', Churchill warned, 'would be scarcely less detrimental to the

41 Birmingham Daily Post, 25 May 1904.

42 Financial Times, 21 January 1907; also Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CLXIX (25 February 1907), 1272.

43 Ibid., CLXXI (21 March 1907), 1209 and (26 March 1907), 1673.

cause of Free Trade than an abortive negotiation'.⁴⁴

2. Financial relations

The British Government, then, more or less remained deaf to the complaints made by manufacturers both at home and throughout the Empire about France's commercial policies. Nevertheless, there was one group of businessmen whose grievances against the French did prompt the Foreign Office to take some action. This was the financiers whose overseas investment projects from time to time produced some friction with the French. More often than not this friction involved the financing of some public works programme, and more often than not the true victim in the affair was some crumbling empire in Asia or Africa. Beyond these general characteristics, however, the instances of Anglo-French financial rivalry in the early years of the twentieth century differed both in their origin and in their resolution. The first such outbreak of friction to occur after the diplomatic rapprochement between the two Powers had begun was in Morocco. There the triumphant visit of King Edward VII to Paris in the spring of 1903 had little impact on the clandestine activities of British and French financiers. The latter, apparently convinced that their influence at the court of Sultan Abdül Aziz was paramount, suddenly decided to discontinue the policy of co-operating with their British and Spanish counterparts in issuing loans to the insolvent Maghzen and draft their own instead. To those Britons who either lived or had their business dealings in Morocco, the move was but the first of a series of calculated steps on the part of the French aiming

⁴⁴ See Churchill's letter initialled 'W.S.C.' to Asquith, 17 July 1908, accompanying the 'Memorandum on Commercial Relations with France' of the same date in the Asquith Papers MS 98.

at the ultimate dismemberment of the Sherifian Empire; hence, they decided to act. At Fez, Kaid MacLean did his utmost to dissuade the Sultan from accepting the French loan; in London, prominent City financiers like Sir Ernest Cassel and Lord Revelstoke of the House of Baring offered to advance £1 million to the Moroccan Government or, failing that, to raise a loan in concert with the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas under the auspices of the two Governments; meanwhile for his part, the shipowner Ernest Forwood was busy writing letters to the Foreign Office, admonishing it for having permitted the French in Morocco 'to get the whiphand especially when it was within our power to prevent it'.⁴⁵ Not that these pleas produced any degree of real confrontation between London and Paris. On at least one occasion Lansdowne did broach the possibility of floating a joint Anglo-French loan to the Sultan,⁴⁶ but in the end the Conservative Foreign Secretary acquiesced in the insistence of Paris on going it alone in this matter, treating the submission of the Sultan to French pressures as the result of a force majeure. Nevertheless, the entire episode did leave a bad impression of the French Government in the minds of some British bankers and undoubtedly goes some way towards explaining the pro-German and anti-French actions of men like Sir Ernest Cassel in subsequent years.

The duplicity and intrigue that took place between British and French financiers in Morocco in 1903 occurred on an even grander scale in Abyssinia shortly afterwards. The details of

⁴⁵ Forwood to Sir Thomas Sanderson, 29 July 1903, F.O. 99/431; also D.D.F., loc. cit., and série 2, vol. 4, no. 72, p.98, n.1.

⁴⁶ D.D.F., série 2, vol. 4, no. 38, pp. 43-44.

the affair need not concern us here, suffice it to say that in 1905 French capitalists went beyond the terms of an agreement concerning railway concessions accorded to them in 1894 by building a new line from Dire Dawa to Adis Ababa. The move greatly alarmed their British and Italian competitors, and in 1906 T. Lennox Gilmour, a Managing Director of the London-based Mozambique Company, published a book exposing the expansionist designs of the French capitalists. The public notice which this book attracted induced the Foreign Office to demand from the French at least a share in the new spoils in Ethiopia, and in December 1906 an Anglo-French-Italian treaty was signed to this effect.⁴⁷ What does require some mention here are the instances of sharp business practice that continued to go on behind the scenes even after the tri-partite agreement of December 1906 had been approved by the British, French and Italian Governments. French financiers, apparently working with the connivance of the Clemenceau Government, embarked upon a series of obscure financial transactions in which British and other foreign investors were to be deprived of their proper return. British and Italian representatives, whose appointment to the Board of Directors of the *Compagnie Impériale d'Ethiopie* had been one of the principal features of the 1906 treaty, either had unwittingly endorsed these transactions or were ignorant of them. Like the Moroccan affair of 1903, this episode did not lead to any serious rift between the Governments of the two Western Powers. Not only was the Foreign Office inclined to turn a blind eye towards the whole matter, but many British investors were apprehensive

⁴⁷ For further details of this episode, see Chapter III of this thesis.

about pressing their case as far as they might have done for fear of injuring the good diplomatic relations between Governments.⁴⁸ Still, the Ethiopian railway question amounted to yet another thorn in the side of the financial relations between the two countries, and yet another group of British businessmen were left with the feeling that the Entente Cordiale was not all that it was intended to be.

Neither in Morocco nor in Abyssinia did Anglo-French financial rivalry produce anything more than a semblance of a showdown between the two Governments. Two areas of the world where such rivalry did bring about some quarrelling, however, were China and the Ottoman Empire. In the former country the issuing of loans and the financing of public works programmes by Europeans in exchange for commercial concessions had long since been a commonplace. The competition for such concessions had always been keen among the Powers, but never so acute as it had become in the early years of the twentieth century with the entry of the United States and Japan into the field. It is scarcely surprising, then, that British investors in China should all but leap at the chance of financing a public works scheme without consulting their counterparts in friendly countries like France. And in China in 1908 this is precisely what happened. When the Imperial Government at Peking asked British and other foreign bankers to finance the construction of the Canton-Hankow railway, the City agreed, floating loans in conjunction with several Continental banks to the exclusion

⁴⁸ See, for instance, the letter of a Lord Chesterfield to Sir Edward Grey, 17 November 1908, F.O. 800/106. (Chesterfield was Chairman of The International Trust Company, a leading British financial syndicate in this part of Africa.)

of the French.⁴⁹ In Turkey, on the other hand, it was the French who were financing a number of projects in an attempt to isolate and outmanoeuvre their British counterparts. Here the focus of much of the activity was the construction of the Baghdad Railway, but there were other instances of financial foul play as well. In 1906 French and other financiers had begun to grant private loans to the Porte at usurious rates of interest without admitting the British. A year later, the French Government had refused to support the Liberal Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey in his plans to force internal reforms upon the Hamidian régime.⁵⁰

Had all these instances of intrigue and underhandedness involved only Britain and France there might well have been little trouble. As it was, in each case the offending party had resorted to asking the Germans, the most expansionist of peoples in the eyes of many contemporaries, for help in excluding the other. The result was a considerably more strained relationship between the two Western Powers. Sir Edward Grey, upon learning of the threat to British commercial and financial interests in the Near East as a result of the actions of the Franco-German syndicate, reacted angrily and hit upon a provocative counter-measure. In August 1908 he urged British capitalists to withdraw their support from the Anglo-French Ottoman Bank, hitherto the main source of

⁴⁹ Details of this episode can be found in E-Tu Zen Sun, Chinese Railways and British Interests, 1898-1911 (New York, 1954), pp.98-108.

⁵⁰ Most of the grievances suffered by British investors in Turkey are summarised in a memorandum written by a Mr Block, the British delegate on the Council of the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt, to the Foreign Office in British Documents on the Origins of the War, V, ed. Gooch and Temperley, no. 147, p. 179.

funds for the Sultan, and start a new and entirely British-owned institution, the National Bank of Turkey, under the direction of Sir Ernest Cassel.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the French had become equally upset over Anglo-German manoeuvrings in China. On one occasion the French premier Clemenceau went so far as to say that the loan floated by London and Berlin bankers for the construction of the Canton-Hankow railway had produced 'a cleft in the entente'.⁵²

The mutual recriminations that were exchanged between the British and the French Governments as a result of these instances of intrigue and conspiracy did not lead to any serious deterioration in the relations of the two Powers, but they do reflect strongly upon the influence which financiers exerted in high-ranking circles. While the grievances of entrepreneurs, shipowners, and industrialists about French commercial policies largely went unheeded by the Foreign Office, the complaints of City investors and bankers about French financial practices almost invariably were acted upon. On a somewhat different plane but of scarcely less interest, the fact that German financiers were included in these wranglings tends to reinforce in an indirect way the arguments of the contemporary economic theorist Norman Angell about the 'internationalisation of credit'. For even if the Anglo-German partnership to the detriment of the French in China and the Franco-German partnership to the detriment of the British in the Ottoman Empire did fail to provide any

⁵¹ E.W. Edwards, 'The Franco-German agreement on Morocco, 1909', English Historical Review, 78 (July 1963), 497.

⁵² British Documents on the Origins of the War, ed. Gooch and Temperley, VII, enclosure in no. 148, p. 133.

evidence for Angell's central thesis, namely that capitalism by itself is not the cause of war, they did, if in a somewhat unusual manner, lend support to his contention that 'in the business of investment nationalities and frontiers are completely disregarded'. Just as in times of 'political animosity' the banks of England, France, and Germany came to each other's rescue, 'regardless of national differences', so in times of comparative peace and stability the various bankers and financiers of the various Powers took 'no account of politico-national rivalries' by seeking assistance that cut athwart the barriers of the two diplomatic power blocs. In a word, the capitalist, as Angell so persuasively argued, had no country.⁵³

3. How businessmen and financiers fared

In itemising all these conflicts and sources of discontent between British and French financiers and men of commerce, one might be tempted to agree with the conclusion of E.W. Edwards that the Entente Cordiale had come about for diplomatic but not economic reasons. The Entente was, writes this historian, 'at best, a loose association imperfectly co-ordinated at the political level and still more so in respect of financial and commercial policy in zones of expansion'.⁵⁴ No doubt there is much to be said for this point of view; nevertheless, too many businessmen made too much of a profit out of the rapprochement between the two Governments to permit such a statement to go completely unchallenged. British financiers

⁵³ Norman Angell, Europe's Optical Illusion (London, 1909), p.118.

⁵⁴ E.W. Edwards, op. cit., p. 495

in Egypt stood to gain enormously out of the abolition of the Caisse de la Dette; it was in part their strong desire to get rid of France's check on Egyptian monetary matters that prompted Lord Cromer to insist in 1903-4 on a colonial convention between the two Powers at virtually any cost. Indeed, so enormous was their potential gain that in the opinion of one of Britain's foremost Egyptian experts of the day the ending of any international control over the Khedive's finances would soon result in the 'abandonment of the old system of strict economy for one of speculative finance'.⁵⁵ Nor was it only in Egypt that British financiers made gains out of the Entente. The 1904 understanding led to a similar arrangement between Britain and Russia, and it was not long before City financiers were joining their French counterparts in floating loans to the Tsarist régime. Already by April 1906 British investors had shown their interest in Russia by subscribing to a £90 million loan to the Government at St Petersburg. Similar offers were later forthcoming; this despite the strenuous objections being made in Radical, Socialist, and even some moderate Liberal circles in Britain.⁵⁶ The interest on these loans was enough in itself to attract British financiers to Russia, but there were other enticements as well. As a reward for helping to bolster the troubled Tsarist régime British capitalists were allowed to invest in the more lucrative manufacturing and industrial concerns as well as State

⁵⁵ See Wilfred Scawan Blunt's article, 'The opinion of Egypt: financial dangers ahead', in the Manchester Guardian, 7 May 1904, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁶ It was the opinion of the Left in Britain that the issue of loans to Russia served no purpose other than keeping the reactionaries in power so as to ensure that the Triple Entente could be welded more readily into an anti-Austrian and anti-German instrument. (See Chapter X of this thesis for further details.)

securities, while a substantial number of British companies were suddenly licensed to carry on business in Russia. Within a few years of the signing of the 1907 Entente British firms, many of which had hitherto found the Russian market completely inaccessible, were able to engage in various trades and industries in Russia, particularly the iron and engineering trades and the chemical industry.⁵⁷

In much the same way, many men of commerce who had dealings with the French either at home or abroad profited from the improved relations between the two countries. Just as not all British financiers suffered at the hands of French speculators and investors, so not all British merchants and exporters faced ruin or even underwent a loss on account of the Méline tariff or the surtaxe d'entrepôt. Evidence supporting this statement can be found in the trade figures for the two countries. In 1903-4, the value of exports from the United Kingdom to France continued to decline from its highest level of more than £25 millions in 1900. In 1905, by which year the diplomatic rapprochement had time to be felt in commercial as well as political circles, this trend started to be reversed; and by 1906-7 there were staggering increases both in the amount and in the value of British goods sold in France.⁵⁸ Of the staple British exports to France, the sales of metals increased in value by almost fifty per cent. between 1903 and 1908, coals by more than thirty-five per cent., cotton and cotton manufactures by thirty-four per cent., and machinery by thirty per cent.⁵⁹ The figures are even more impressive when measured

⁵⁷ C.K.Hobson, The Export of Capital (London: 1914), pp. 159-160.

⁵⁸ See Appendix, Table 1.

⁵⁹ See Appendix, Table 2.

against the record of French exports to the United Kingdom during the same period. While the British exports more or less made a steady increase during these years, France's cross-Channel exports made very uneven progress and actually dropped in value in 1908 to £47 millions, the lowest amount in more than a decade.⁶⁰

Admittedly, not all of this considerably improved cross-Channel trade can be attributed to the existence of the Entente Cordiale. World trade as a whole was on the increase between 1903 and 1907; British exports to most countries, not merely to France, were on the rise; and, as has already been seen elsewhere, the improved diplomatic relations between the two Western Powers had done nothing to compromise the French Government's ultra-protectionist outlook.⁶¹ Nevertheless, there is much to suggest that the growth which took place in Anglo-French trade at this time was attributable at least in part to the friendlier feelings between the two Governments. For one thing, the main reason for the rise of Britain's exports to the world at large at this time, namely, that they came in the wake of a new foreign investment spree, simply does not apply to British trade with France.⁶² France was

⁶⁰ See Appendix, Table 1.

⁶¹ A general summary of international financial and economic conditions for the early years of the twentieth century can be found in Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain, III, 55-60.

⁶² It is Clapham's opinion that the fifty per cent rise in British exports between 1901 and 1907 was 'essentially an investment rise'. 'Britain was accumulating claims on governments and enterprises of all sorts overseas faster than ever before', writes Clapham. 'Manufacturers, and all who thought like manufacturers, gloried in the swollen exports, and every one welcomed the good employment which went with them'. See ibid., III, p.53.

herself an exporter of capital, and although City financiers did from time to time make investments in France, such investments never amounted to much.⁶³ For another, the growth of British exports to France proceeded faster than that of British exports in total, thereby suggesting that other factors were at work in the improved trade between the two countries. By 1908, for instance, nearly seven per cent. of all British exports went to France, a figure noticeably above those of the previous six years; and this despite a drop in the volume of British commerce shipped across the Channel.⁶⁴ Of course, statistics like these do not prove everything, but when taken into consideration along with the great efforts of British businessmen to bolster exports to France they begin to make more sense. The Anglo-French Entente did prove a benefit to British exporters, even if this was accomplished in a rather unusual way and the benefit was not the one which most British businessmen had been seeking first and foremost.

63 Between 1908 and 1910, for instance, British financiers invested only about £1.6 millions in France out of a total of more than £500 millions exported abroad during these three years. See Sir George Paish, 'Great Britain's capital investments in individual colonial and foreign countries', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXXIV (January 1911), 170-171.

64 Appendix, Table 3. Not that this percentage steadily increased after 1904, as the Appendix might suggest. In 1913 those goods sent to France still only accounted for approximately six per cent. of the total of British exports. (See Table VII/14 in William Woodruff's Impact of Western Man: A Study of Europe's Role in the World Economy, 1750-1960 (New York, 1966), p.317.) It would thus be reasonable to conclude that the impact of the Entente upon Anglo-French trade was only a short-lived one, with the exceptional rise in the amount and value of British exports to France taking place only so long as British businessmen were willing to work doubly hard at promoting their goods.

Against the background of these statistics, the campaign then being waged against French protectionism was almost doomed to fail. Already the movement to have the French adopt a more free trade outlook had foundered on the rocks of Foreign Office reluctance and Quai d'Orsay intransigence. Now its strength was being further sapped by the defection from its ranks of those exporters and merchants who were willing to accept improved trade with France as an adequate substitute for a more comprehensive commercial treaty between the two countries. Of course, many chambers of commerce and individual businessmen still did agitate for a commercial treaty, but not as many as before and not with the same determination. It was as if they had resigned themselves to the notion that the Anglo-French Entente had, after all, been created for political rather than economic reasons.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENTENTE AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

France has traditionally held something of a special place in the hearts and minds of British intellectuals and culture enthusiasts. Even when diplomatic relations between London and Paris had been poor, British musicians, painters, poets, and writers, had all been known to look to France for inspiration, while for their part certain French artists and men of letters had fallen under the influence of some of their British counterparts. This was most noticeably the case during the 1890s and at the turn of the century when, despite the existence of recurrent crises between the two Governments, British artists and intellectuals increasingly went to France in search of ideas. It was at this time, too, that the middle as well as the upper classes of British society, seeking perhaps to follow in the footsteps of the then Prince of Wales, visited France in ever greater numbers. According to one historian, Paris became 'the Mecca, not only of artists and intellectuals, but also of smart society... . The Moulin Rouge was invaded by English tourists and adulating crowds flocked to the Great Exhibition of 1900'.¹ But if by this time such groups were already beginning to turn more and more towards France for their pursuits, and if, as has been alleged, Paris was once again establishing itself as 'the capital of luxurious living',² then the impact of

¹ P.J.V. Rolo, The Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiations of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904, (London, 1969), p. 156.

² Ibid., loc. cit.

the Entente Cordiale on the cultural and intellectual relations between the two countries cannot be deemed quite as great as it might have been. For although the diplomatic rapprochement brought about in Britain an increased interest in virtually all things French,³ it did not do so on any widespread or permanent basis. Indeed, in a few intellectual circles the Entente was looked upon as a temporary, almost insignificant link between the two nations.

As will be seen, virtually all British writers and men of letters of the day felt that a study of French culture was a rewarding pursuit in its own right. For some, however, it was an undertaking that was imperative if the Entente were to become an instrument of true friendship between the peoples of the two nations. As they saw it, French music, literature, and art, all provided clues to the nature and psychology of the French people, that most complex of races and one whose true nature the ordinary person in Britain had so little opportunity of understanding.⁴ In view of this tendency to attach a great deal of importance to the personality and temperament of the French people, we shall examine first what was said in connection with this subject before proceeding to the arts in France.

1. Impressions of the French national character and temperament.

The process of attaching labels to any national group is

3 One historian has found, for instance, that after 1903 there was a 'sharp rise' in the number of books printed in Britain dealing with France and that between 1900 and 1920 translations from the French outnumbered those from any other foreign language by about eight to one. See C. Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, (London, 1965), pp. 241-242. (The findings in this case were based on an examination of publishers' lists covering the twenty year period.)

4 See, for instance, W. Stephens, French Novelists of To-day, (London, 1908), p. viii; also John F. Macdonald, 'French life and the French stage', Fortnightly Review, LXXVI (1 October 1904), 728.

invariably a difficult and thorny one, and as far as many writers of the day were concerned, this was particularly the case with Frenchmen. Much of the difficulty apparently lay in the components that supposedly went to make up the Frenchman's temperament. Not only were these thought to be numerous, more numerous perhaps than in the make-up of many other groups, one observer going so far as to say that they provided psychologists and sociologists with 'one of the most interesting national types ever evolved',⁵ but they were also thought to vary greatly from region to region. Already by the end of the nineteenth century several of the more astute British visitors to France were beginning to take note of certain emotional and physical differences between Frenchmen from one province and Frenchmen from the next.⁶ By the early years of the twentieth century this perceptiveness was becoming more and more common, and as a result sweeping generalisations were harder to make. An alternative and converse problem to such students of France was that of overcoming stereotyped images of Frenchmen which prevailed at home. But if all these considerations amounted to stumbling-blocks in the minds of certain writers, then at least it could not be said that the task was entirely without rewards. For as they saw it, the birth of the Anglo-French Entente kindled a strong desire on the part of the British people to learn more about their French neighbours, and they, with their personal knowledge of France, would be satisfying a popular demand as well as furthering the bonds between the two countries.

⁵ H. Lawler-Wilson, 'Life and literature in France', Fortnightly Review, LXXVIII (1 November 1905), 879.

⁶ Sylvaine Marandon, L'image de la France dans l'Angleterre victorienne, 1848-1900 (Paris, 1967), p. 225.

In the words of one author:

The complete disappearance of those political causes of discord which for so long a period fostered reciprocal distrust has had, among other consequences, that of greatly strengthening in the two nations the wish to know one another better and therefore to clear their minds of all false impressions and engrained prejudices. A book that responds strictly to the title of 'France of the French' seems therefore to be the need of the day. 7

Believing themselves to be at the vanguard of such an important movement, individual writers dwelt at length on the personality and life-style of the French people.

Of the various characteristics which many people in Britain had traditionally attributed to the French personality, frivolity and an excessive love of pleasure perhaps ranked most prominently. The notion that the French were a superficial, overly light-hearted lot died hard in the minds of a considerable number of Englishmen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as in the literature of the period. The diatribe of the prim and proper Annunciata against the French as an immoral and unreliable group of people who lost the 1870-1871 war with Prussia, for instance, because they preferred to enjoy themselves in Parisian cafés and theatres in Arnold Bennett's novel Whom God Hath Joined was by no means unusual.⁸ Frenchmen were quite commonly thought to have nothing other than their own foibles to blame for their reverses, military or otherwise. Nor was this the only generalisation. Other shortcomings often cited in the French character included vanity, garrulousness, and a frugality bordering on meanness. True, in their ever-changing assessment

7 E.H. Barker, France of the French, (London, 1908), p.v.

8 E. Arnold Bennett, Whom God Hath Joined, (London, 1906), pp. 120-121.

of their neighbours across the Channel, many people in Britain had come to reject some of the worst widely-held impressions of Frenchmen. Hence, according to Sylvaine Marandon even before the advent of improved diplomatic relations between London and Paris a number of Englishmen had already begun to view the French as a less bellicose and less vain race than their parents and grand-parents had done in preceding decades.⁹ At the same time, it was gradually becoming recognised throughout Britain that the French character had its strong points as well. Few unbiassed observers could deny, for instance, Frenchmen their braveness in combat or gallantry in their treatment of the opposite sex.¹⁰ Nevertheless, insofar as people in late Victorian/early Edwardian Britain had any impression of Frenchmen at all, it was on the whole an unfavourable one, and writers and lovers of France in general had even at the best of times an uphill struggle to convince their listeners otherwise.

In the main, the various writers who took the lead in discussing this subject concentrated on combatting the more unfavourable notions about the French character. In particular, the Frenchman's supposed frivolity came in for a good deal of discussion. Matilda Betham-Edwards, one of the most prolific of contemporary authors concerned with France and almost all aspects of French life,¹¹ was among the first to take up the

9 S. Marandon, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-208.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 192-195.

11 Matilda Betham-Edwards, born in Suffolk in 1836 and died at Hastings in 1919, first became interested in France after having met George Eliot in London in the 1860s. From that time onwards, she travelled widely in France, where she spent most of her time living with French families and making friends, most of them in republican circles. The bulk of her works are concerned with the less political side of French life, although there is a conspicuous anti-clerical tinge to be found in virtually all of them. All of Miss Betham-Edwards' books mentioned in this chapter are based upon materials gathered in the late nineteenth century, as the author led a retired life at Hastings after 1884.

matter. As far as she was concerned, the French nation was not only not light-minded but 'on the contrary, the most serious in the world'. The behaviour of the French might from time to time appear to contradict this statement, she conceded, but this was only because they loved 'to wear a fictitious heart upon their sleeve, to dandle a mannikin in the eyes of naive beholders'.¹² E.H. Barker, author of France of the French, one of the more objective works of this genre, was inclined to agree. It was his opinion that the French were among 'the most industrious, the most prudent, the most calculating' peoples. 'They even calculate their pleasures, or rather their means of indulging in them,' he went on, 'to a nicety'. If the French showed an aptitude for 'histrionics', it was all due to the fact that most of them were 'born actors' and had a tendency 'to show more feeling than they really felt'.¹³ A third writer, on the other hand, based this supposed superficiality and frivolity on what he construed to be the average Frenchman's natural cheerfulness and innate joie de vivre. 'They have an extraordinary facility for placing themselves beyond the reach of everyday annoyance and for living for the day, "living" in the fullest sense', this man wrote of the French. 'Thus the crowded streets in French cities, the immense gatherings of merry-makers in places of amusement, lead the casual observer to believe that the race has elevated the pursuit of pleasure to an exclusive occupation'.¹⁴

12 Miss Betham-Edwards, Home Life in France, (London, 1905), p.254.
 13 E.H. Barker, op. cit., pp. 175, 231.
 14 W.L. George, France in the Twentieth Century, (London, 1908), pp. 371-372.

It was more or less the same when writing about other defects commonly thought to be part of the French character. Whatever long-regarded flaw of personality or temperament that these type of writers happened to hit upon in their books and articles, they either played down in terms of significance or denied altogether. Indeed, occasionally they tried to make such flaws appear as positive virtues. Thus Miss Betham-Edwards, when writing about the one aspect of the Frenchman's character that most often 'exasperated' English visitors to France, leisureliness, asked her readers to pause and consider how much 'may not the excellence of French manufactures, handicrafts, and produce be thereby accounted for'.¹⁵ Similarly, another writer, when commenting about the Frenchman's legendary sense of thrift, did not deny that the people as a whole were 'probably the most economical race in the world'. Nevertheless, he did think that the Frenchman's frugality amounted to something more than mere stinginess. In fact, in his opinion it went a long way towards explaining the resilience of the nation in times of great political and military difficulties.¹⁶ But to E.H. Barker it was the Frenchman's essentially forbearing nature that provided the real key to understanding France as a nation. 'The statement that the French are among the most patient people on earth may be a little startling to those who have formed general impressions from the most dramatic pages of their history', he wrote. 'We all know that they have had fits of impatience, and very bad ones, too'. Still, as the French were to his mind basically a 'good-tempered people, loving a quiet, easy-going

15 Miss Betham-Edwards, op. cit., p. 258.

16 W.L. George, op. cit., pp. 365-366.

life, happy over their work, if it is not too trying, and especially if it affords a margin of money to be saved, or spent on amusement,' Barker could not help but reach the conclusion that they were almost 'too ready to let themselves be governed, and to treat with indifference the work of their legislators until the causes of dissatisfaction accumulate'. 'Then violent explosions are apt to occur, of which the shock may be terrific'. But these, he added, were comparatively few and far between.¹⁷

By far the greatest effort of those writers who endeavoured to give their readers a character sketch of the typical Frenchman was devoted to challenging what they felt were 'unfair' stereotyped images. But this is not to say that they strove to eradicate all preconceived notions of the French character which prevailed in early twentieth century Britain. Far from it. Most of the more favourable impressions which earlier writers had recorded in books and articles they continued to mention and, indeed, in many instances stressed by offering very favourable comparisons with certain traits found at home. Intelligence, perhaps the most flattering quality traditionally attributed to Frenchmen in general, certainly received a good deal of comment. According to Miss Betham-Edwards, the French mind was 'pre-eminently logical', its intellect 'above all things scientific'. The British and other national groups were not necessarily lacking in this respect, she hastened to add, but they were unable to apply logic as a mode of reasoning as well as the French.¹⁸ A certain flair for artistry was

17 E.H. Barker, op. cit., pp. 232, 234.

18 Miss Betham-Edwards, op. cit., pp. 263-265.

another long-recognised trait of the French which various writers of the day emphasised at the expense of the British national character. Comparisons of this sort were even more forthcoming than they were in the case of intelligence. They also sometimes came from the most unusual of sources. One British traveller touring the various cathedrals of the north of France was so impressed with the architecture that he found it 'impossible to dilate with sufficient enthusiasm upon the exquisite art of the French churches...'. A comparison with the less sculptured English cathedrals, he felt, 'rendered a good idea of the French and English character'.¹⁹ In the same vein, a visitor to the picture galleries at the Franco-British Exhibition held in London in 1908, while not necessarily more impressed with the general layout of the French display than the British one, did feel that in one area, that of decorative treatment, the French exhibition did score 'heavily over ours', the difference being one 'which is unfortunately characteristic of the two nations'.²⁰

Of course, in the past neither the intellectual nor the artistic leanings of the French people had ever really been called into question by even the most critical student of France. One supposed attribute of the French character which had, however, was that of charm. Only recently had British visitors to France been shouted down with abuse in the streets of Paris and other French cities. British tourists, many of whom had not forgotten the days of Fashoda and the Boer War, were thus wont to look upon any hospitable treatment which they

¹⁹ T. Francis Bumpus, Summer Holidays among the Glories of Northern France: Her Cathedrals and Churches (London, 1905), p. 13.

²⁰ H. Heathcote Statham, 'Art at the Franco-British Exhibition', Nineteenth Century and After, LXIV (August, 1908), 269.

were accorded in France as a most welcome surprise and one which was worthy of especial comment. Hence, an Irishman who toured France in a motor car in 1906 was at pains to explain to his readers that he and his fellow travellers found the French 'very civil and obliging'; none of them ever met with 'any opposition or unpleasantness' during the whole of their travels.²¹ A retired Scottish doctor who spent years travelling through the various regions of France at this time discovered more or less the same thing. Only once did he encounter any anti-British feeling there, and this, he hastened to explain to his audience, 'was before the days of the Entente'.²² Likewise, the Positivist thinker Frederic Harrison, commenting on how a number of travellers had been telling him that 'they had not for a long time found Frenchmen more pleasant and friendly', wrote: 'I have never otherwise found them myself, but I notice a new sense of ease, content, and confidence in everything we hear and see'.²³ But if British tourists to and British residents in France made such observations, they were of two minds whether it could all be put down to the improved relations between the two countries. To the extent that the French people did seem more welcoming than in previous years tourists and writers could attribute it at least in part to the Entente Cordiale. Thus W.F. Loneragan, a member of the Daily Telegraph staff in Paris, argued that the 1904 understanding 'has influenced not only official France, but has permeated the people'. Since the Entente had been established, 'caricatures

21 C. Neville, Round France in a Motor, (Dublin, 1907), p. 5.

22 J.A. Hammerton, In the Track of R.L. Stevenson and Elsewhere in Old France, (Bristol, 1907), p. 204.

23 F. Harrison, 'Notes from Paris', Positivist Review, XII (1 June 1904), 129.

of the English, sneers at John Bull and his island, even jibes and jokes about the British tourists and their clothes,' have 'all disappeared'.²⁴ On the other hand, to the extent that politeness and charm were considered to be hallmarks of the French character they could never be sure;²⁵ and it is significant that as early as February 1903, a few months before the famed visit of King Edward VII to Paris, at least one British resident in France was complimenting the French on their courteous and friendly behaviour.²⁶

As regards all of the foregoing descriptions, it must be said that, taken in their entirety, they made for a highly one-sided appraisal of the French character. If contemporary readers were to take what Miss Betham-Edwards, E.H. Barker, and others said at face value, then their impression of France would undoubtedly have been that of a country peopled by a folk with a near monopoly of human virtues. True, the French were recognised to have their faults, including a certain lack of sentimentality which at times made them appear cruel in British eyes.²⁷

Moreover, much of what they had to say was borne out by the written accounts of several other visitors to France, few of whom saw themselves furthering the cause of the Entente. But

²⁴ W.F. Lomagan, Forty Years of Paris, (London, 1907), p. 267.

²⁵ Miss Betham-Edwards, for one, spoke of friendship as an 'art' in France, for which the people had a 'matchless genius'. See Miss Betham-Edwards, op. cit., p. 258.

²⁶ Owen M. Green, 'The people and modern journalism', Monthly Review, X (February, 1903), 81-82.

²⁷ It was a source of constant disappointment to such writers that the French, particularly the peasant class of that country, needlessly mistreated their animals. See Miss Betham-Edwards, op. cit., p. 264; also E.H. Barker, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

as an exercise which purported to be objective in its treatment of the matter concerned, this general portrait of the French character can only be regarded as one of the more biassed accounts of the period. Most of the positive aspects of Frenchman's personality were over-emphasised, while what had traditionally been construed as the negative ones were either ignored or mentioned only in passing.

Nor was it merely a matter of one-sidedness. Taking a broader view of the matter, it is impossible not to notice that the very qualities which these writers stressed in their portrait of the French people were more or less one and the same as those to which the newspapers gave emphasis in their articles about France as a whole. The notion of Miss Betham-Edwards and others that the French were a serious-minded, hard-working, thrifty, and friendly lot had, as we have already seen elsewhere, its counterpart in the leader pages of the great majority of the various organs of opinion in the country. Given that the press tended to use these themes to help promote the idea that France was the ideal nation with which to enter into diplomatic partnership, it would not be too much to assume that the above-mentioned writers were hoping to do the same. It was not that these writers were working hand in hand with their Fleet Street opposites to present a certain image of France, but what they did have to say certainly reinforced the highly favourable image of France being presented in the press at large.

2. The arts in France and the impact of the Entente on Anglo-French cultural relations.

As a phrase in itself, the term 'French culture' meant different things to different people in Britain at this time. To some it implied all that was best in the Classical tradition of the arts, in particular, the expression of seventeenth and early eighteenth century norms of taste like order, reason, and harmony. Exponents of this point of view held that the works of the various artists and men of letters of France from the time of the Renaissance through the Grand Siècle of Louis XIV to the Salons of the early 1800s marked the apex of French, if not European, cultural and intellectual activity, and as such they devoted much of their time to studying and analysing the masterpieces of these periods. Others, a minority, associated the term with all that was new and revolutionary in the arts. As far as they were concerned, the artistic and intellectual genius of the French lay not so much in the ability to create within a rigid framework of rules, but in the ability to give expression to completely new modes of thought without regard for conventional standards. Hence, they pointed to the flowering in pre-World War I Paris of scarcely recognised avant-garde movements like cubism and symbolist poetry as evidence that all was well in the arts in early twentieth century France. Still others regarded French culture simply as a reflection in artistic and intellectual terms of all the main currents of life in contemporary France. To them French literature meant the realism of the novels of the late Zola, just as French art meant the impressionist paintings of Pissarro or perhaps even the post-impressionist works of Cézanne. All, however, agreed that France was a major international centre of the arts, with Paris

as its focal point. As one writer put it, when commenting about French plays, 'in the discussion of any theatrical question it is obligatory to turn to Paris as for a Mahomedan to turn towards Mecca...'.²⁸ In short, there was a widespread tendency in Britain to look upon French culture as representative of virtually all that which was human and universal in the arts and to regard France as a country occupying a position of nearly unparalleled cultural supremacy in the world of the early twentieth century.

Although the various students of the arts in Britain were inclined to speak of France and French culture in such glowing terms, this is not to say that they failed to notice that in certain fields the French, too, were susceptible to outside influences or had shortcomings of their own. With regard to music, for instance, they readily admitted that France's contribution had not been particularly outstanding. But for the impact of foreigners, wrote one such student, 'French music would have made no brilliant figure on the lyric stage of the world...'.²⁹ French composers might have 'manfully held their own', acknowledged another, but they did not exert much of a lead in mapping artistic trends.³⁰ Nor was it merely French music that contemporary critics in Britain spoke of in somewhat disparaging terms. Many of the more recent examples of French plays and French novels were also thought to be unimaginative and inconsequential, if not exactly imitative of other works. Thus the afore-mentioned anonymous critic, while acclaiming Paris

²⁸ See the anonymous article entitled 'Some recent French and English plays' in the Edinburgh Review, CC (October, 1904), 297.

²⁹ E.H. Barker, op. cit., p. 191.

³⁰ Arthur Hervey, French Music in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1903), p. vii.

as nothing less than the theatrical centre of the world, could not help but note the plethora of 'frivolous' productions in the French capital and observed that the 'theatre of ideas has to maintain an incessant fight for life' there.³¹ In a similar vein, an enthusiast of French fiction, while approving the tendency of young authors in France not to 'degrade' their talents by 'attempting to outvie Beaudelaire, Maupassant, and Zola in their own province', was inclined to see the latest genre of French novels, of which Georges Mareschal de Bievre's Un Mari en Loterie was a typical example, as 'somewhat foolish' efforts belonging to a 'new and innocent school of fiction'.³²

In the eyes of a number of British critics, then, a good deal of contemporary French art was lacking in seriousness and in sense of purpose. But if such was the case, then it must be said that these same critics were often quick to emphasise what they construed to be the one 'redeeming' feature of such works, that of providing readers and audiences with character sketches of the supposedly typical Frenchman. It was believed, for instance, that French fiction 'interprets the moods of society more perfectly than the English'. While in Britain 'the novel of human nature' was the 'ideal romance', in France it was those works which reflected 'the social, national, and psychological nature of the people with a perfection and promptitude having no precise analogies in this country', that attracted the largest audiences.³³ Needless to say, the characters which were invariably chosen to

31 _____, 'Some recent French and English plays', Edinburgh Review, CC (October, 1904), loc. cit.

32 H. Lawler-Wilson, op. cit., p. 877.

33 Ibid., p. 879.

illustrate this point were only those who belonged to the more respectable sections of French society. Hence, of all the characters in Octave Mirabeau's 'Les affaires sont les affaires', the one whom one British reviewer singled out for scrutiny was the wife in the play, Madame Lechat, who, we are told, 'exists in every city, town, and village in France'. Fussy, kind-hearted, economical, and unimaginative, Mme. Lechat typifies the modern middle class Frenchwoman 'who is utterly out of place and unhappy in any but the most orderly, punctual, and thrifty of ménages'.³⁴ Similarly, as regards Paul Hervieu's 'Le dédale', we are asked to consider the plight not of the heroine, but of the mother of the heroine, the staid and upright Madame Villard-Duval, whose 'convictions and traditional sentiments' are 'deep-rooted in the hearts of thousands of Frenchwomen of her type'. The marriage of this woman's daughter to a divorced man is, we are asked to believe, 'a sin against the religion, not merely of the Church, but of the family - a crime'; this because nowhere more than in France 'is the idea of la famille respected, cherished'.³⁵ Perhaps both of these women can be viewed in a sympathetic light, but by concentrating on them, rather than on other, less morally-minded characters, British theatre critics were helping to project a most favourable image of Frenchmen. Once again, the supposed serious-mindedness and rectitude of the individual, as well as the sanctity of the family were themes employed, albeit in a rather subtle fashion, to promote the image of a secure and trustworthy France.

³⁴ John F. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 732.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 736.

The British reading public was encouraged to peruse French novels and to attend French stage productions in order to achieve that most important of goals if the Entente were ever to take hold of the minds and hearts of ordinary people throughout the country, an understanding of the Gallic character and temperament. Yet not everyone favoured such indirect methods. The more obvious means of reaching this end was, of course, for people to go to France themselves, and with this in mind a number of prominent figures of goodwill on both sides of the Channel organised a series of exchange visits between civic, religious, and trade union delegations. At the head of this movement was Sir Thomas Barclay, a former jurist and by this time the Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris. In 1905 Barclay formed the International Brotherhood Alliance, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of 'international visits to each other of working men and women'. A year later he started the notion of 'municipal ententes' in which officials of leading British and French cities could visit each other and compare methods of local government.³⁶ Even before the launching of these two schemes Barclay was doing his utmost to bring the peoples of the two countries together by means of fraternal visits. As early as July 1904 he had brought more than three hundred British trade unionists to Paris to tour the factories and working class neighbourhoods of the French capital.³⁷ But it was after 1904 that the bulk of these visits occurred: a

³⁶ Sir Thomas Barclay, Thirty Years: Anglo-French Reminiscences, 1876-1906, (London, 1914), p. 298.

³⁷ The Times, 6 July 1904.

tour of British physicians to French hospitals in May 1905; a visit of London County Councillors to Paris in February 1906; a visit of Scottish Municipal Councillors in April of that year; a trip of British businessmen under the aegis of the London International Commercial Association in October 1906; and a visit of the representatives of British universities to the Sorbonne and other French academic institutions, to mention but a few. Nor was this all. Other, longer-standing organisations of Anglo-French friendship began to follow Barclay's lead. The Franco-Scottish Society, which Barclay himself had founded in 1895 and whose membership consisted of such well-known figures as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Marquis of Linlithgow, and the Canadian premier Sir Wilfred Laurier, entertained groups of Frenchmen, particularly students and academicians, throughout the year 1906 in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen.³⁸ The Society's English equivalent, the Entente Cordiale Society, founded by a W.H. Sands in 1904, performed more or less the same service south of the border, as did the various English branches of the Alliance Francaise.³⁹ The crowning event of this movement, however, was the opening of the Franco-British Exhibition in Shepherd's Bush in the spring of 1908. Started by a group of British businessmen who had been disappointed by the notable lack of impact of the Entente on Anglo-French commercial relations, the Exhibition was designed to 'display in abundance' the industries and products of the two countries in order to improve trade. Nevertheless, the

³⁸ See the Transactions of the Franco-Scottish Society, 1906, p. xv (appendix).

³⁹ Barclay, op. cit., p. 303.

social and recreative side of the Exhibition was intended to be on a scale commensurate with the commercial and business one; and, significantly, of the more than twenty palaces and exhibition halls on the site about half a dozen were devoted to Education, Science, the Fine Arts, and kindred fields.⁴⁰

Of these innumerable activities it may be said that they were well-enjoyed by those who took part and provided many ordinary British and French people with an insight into each other's life-style and cultural heritage. But taken as a whole, they did not capture the imagination of the general public in either country. For one thing, many of the British organisers of such fraternal exchanges, convinced perhaps that the Entente had already enjoyed a groundswell of support on both sides of the Channel, soon shifted the focus of their attention away from France towards Germany. Aided and abetted by some powerful industrialists like George Cadbury, the cocoa manufacturer, not to mention scores of outspoken Radicals and Socialists, these Anglo-German exchanges for a while received a good deal more publicity than the earlier Anglo-French ones. For another, such visits came to be regarded as little more than a nuisance by politicians and diplomats in both countries. Thus when in the midst of the London County Council's visit to Paris in February 1906 the Lord Provost and Council of Edinburgh proposed a similar tour of the French capital, Sir Francis Bertie urged the Foreign Office to exert its influence against the idea for fear of antagonising the French civic authorities. 'These municipal, musical, and other invasions from across the Channel will soon become ridiculous', the British Ambassador wrote.

⁴⁰ The Times, 8 May 1908, p. 8. The Exhibition remained open for nearly six months.

'Lavino says that the public takes but little interest in them. If Edinburgh sends its thirty, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bradford, Birmingham, etc., will all expect to do likewise'.⁴¹ Already foundering on the rocks of public apathy, the movement to bring the people of Britain and France closer together was almost bound to die in view of this lack of encouragement from higher circles.

3. Men of Letters and the Entente.

Of all the groups that went to make up public opinion in the Edwardian era, British men of letters provide one of the greatest sources of disappointment in their treatment of France and the Entente Cordiale. A highly intelligent, well-educated, and thoroughly cosmopolitan collection of individuals, many of whom had had occasion either to live or to travel in France, Britain's literary set of the early twentieth century might have been expected to have made a number of pronouncements about a major diplomatic occurrence of the pre-Great War period and its impact on the cultural and intellectual life of the two countries. And yet they remained comparatively silent. As will be seen, it was a silence based largely on a belief that things intellectual and philosophic counted for more than things political. Nevertheless, there were a number of literary figures who did make a reference to the rapprochement between the two countries, and it is to what they had to say that we now turn our attention.

One of the few literary figures in Britain who did voice his sentiments about the Anglo-French Entente quite clearly was

⁴¹ Bertie to Sir Charles Hardinge, 11 February 1906, F(oreign O(ffice) 800/184. William Lavino was the Paris correspondent of The Times.

Rudyard Kipling. That this writer should approve of an arrangement which amicably settled overseas disputes with a fellow colonising nation like France scarcely comes as a surprise. Kipling was a self-avowed imperialist, and one who was something of a Francophile at that. It is true that at the turn of the century when relations between London and Paris were not on a particularly good footing Kipling went through an anti-French phase.⁴² But in the main he was, as one biographer put it, 'by nature a lover of France, and of the French, who...read his books as avidly as the English'.⁴³ Kipling was reputedly fond of visiting France, and among his closer acquaintances was Georges Clemenceau, whose friendship provided Kipling with a good understanding of French politics.⁴⁴ He was equally fond, as were so many imperialists of the day, of expressing his dislike for Germany, and it is quite possibly this sentiment that explains the poet's tendency to view the 1903-4 rapprochement in terms of the current world diplomatic situation. Thus in a letter which was openly published in the Figaro to M. d'Humières, the translator of a number of his works into French, Kipling expressed himself 'in hearty agreement...on the advantages to be derived from a good understanding between France and England, not only because of immediate utility, but for the sake of to-morrow'.⁴⁵ Nine years later Kipling used the State visit of President Poincaré to London as a good excuse to publish a poem in the Morning Post,

42 In 1900 Kipling's feelings against France reached such a pitch that he wrote a story entitled 'The Bonds of Discipline', in which the villain of the plot was a French spy who disguised himself on board Royal Navy ships in order to plan a French invasion of the country.

43 Charles E. Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work, (London, 1970), p. 482.

44 Ibid., p. 483.

45 Quoted in The Times, 12 September 1904, p.4.

a poem which he paid tribute to the qualities of the French national character 'in terms far different from the conventional view'.⁴⁶ Of course, Kipling did see the Anglo-French Entente as something more than a mere weapon with which Britain could advance her interests. Culturally speaking, it seemed appropriate because it brought together two peoples who were 'reciprocally complementary in temperament and destiny, logically and in reality'. Both were 'messengers of human enfranchisement'; both had to do with 'enslaved peoples'.⁴⁷ Still, it must be said that Kipling tended to view the friendlier relations between the two countries first and foremost from a political angle, and it is chiefly for his remarks along these lines that we should remember him.

Another man-of-letters who spoke in rather plain language about the political benefits that would accrue to Britain as a result of the 1904 Agreements was the Positivist Frederic Harrison. A systematic political thinker rather than a literary genius with only a secondary interest in foreign affairs, Harrison was not likely to view the Anglo-French Entente solely, or even primarily, from the point of view of the politics of the moment. Ever since the 1860s when he, Congreve, and other leading Positivists put forth their ideas on the ideal foreign policy for Britain in the book International Policy, Harrison had become a firm advocate of diplomatic co-operation between the two Western Powers. It was to this end that he had advocated supporting

⁴⁶ Carrington, op. cit., p. 484.

⁴⁷ The Times, loc. cit.

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Napoleon III over Poland in 1863, and it was to this end that he energetically advanced France's case in the 1870-1871 war with Prussia.⁴⁸ Any event like the signing of the 1904 Convention which brought the dream of Anglo-French co-operation a step closer to reality was not only to be welcomed, but was to be regarded as a fulfillment of his near life-long campaign. This helps to explain the somewhat boastful reminder of his not long after the inception of the rapprochement that 'our body has insisted for years that the true nucleus for stable and permanent peace and progress in Europe was to be obtained by a good understanding between England and France on the basis of reciprocal obligations and interests'.⁴⁹ But if such were his views, he was also not above making comment about the consequences of the Agreements for the world at large. 'The alignment of 'Teutonic Protestant Parliamentary and industrial' England with 'Latin Catholic republican and dictatorial' France represented 'principles so various, and comprise the dominant forces so nearly', he wrote in one leader-article for the Positivist Review, 'that in any policy in which they cordially agree no element of life is likely to be sacrificed, whilst all are certain to be harmonised'.⁵⁰ The impact of the Entente on England was marked, he added in another editorial, but in France it was even more marked, enabling that nation 'to meet with any easy smile the heroics of the Kaiser...'.⁵¹ For Harrison far more than for Kipling the Entente fit into a broader scheme of things; nevertheless, like

48 Marandon, op. cit., p. 56.

49 F. Harrison, 'The Anglo-French settlement', Positivist Review, XII (1 May 1904), pp. 99-100.

50 Ibid., loc. cit.

51 Ibid., 1 June 1904, p. 129.

the latter, the former tended to see it as an anti-German instrument.

Neither Harrison nor Kipling had a truly first-hand knowledge of France. One man who did have such a knowledge, however, was Milaire Belloc, a writer born in England of mixed Anglo-French parentage, raised and educated in France, and conscripted into the French Army, only to return to the land of his birth shortly before the turn of the century to become a naturalised British subject. Considering that Belloc had perhaps the best credentials of all literary figures in Britain to write at length about France, it comes as something of a disappointment that he had so little to say on the subject. None of his novels of the period deal with France; his column in the Radical weekly the Speaker was mainly concerned with cultural and domestic political matters, not foreign ones; and even his well-known history of the French capital published in 1907, Paris, was only a second edition of a work first printed seven years earlier and which contained no reference to recent Anglo-French developments. Nevertheless, what he did have to say was revealing. In a preface to a book written in 1904 on French Renaissance poetry, Belloc examined the current climate of opinion between the two countries. He did not believe that Britain and France were all that similar in terms of culture, intellect, and national character; and in saying this he was not expressing anything fundamentally different from the ideas of writers like Kipling and Harrison. But he did believe that the drawing together of the two countries, far from having taken place of late, had in reality been underway for a considerable period of time and that its central feature was some impersonal force which had little to do with politics. 'By a law which is

universal where bodies are bound in one system', he wrote,

an extreme of separation has wrought its own remedy and the return towards a closer union is begun. I do not refer to such ephemeral artificial manifestations as a special and somewhat humiliating need may demand; I consider rather that large sweep of tendency which was already apparent fifteen years after the Franco-Prussian War. An approach in taste, manners and expression well defined during our undergraduate years, has now introduced much of our inmost life to the French, to us already a hint of their philosophy. 52

In other words, the rapprochement between Britain and France was much more deep-rooted and considerably wider in scope than the recent professions of friendship would suggest. The Entente Cordiale, while not contradictory to this process, was basically irrelevant. Not that Belloc always dismissed the political and diplomatic elements in his analysis. 'A long peace', 'the sterility of Germany', and even 'the interesting activities of the Catholic Church', had all played their part in the phenomenon which he felt started in the 1880s.⁵³ Nor did he think that the process had by any means reached its end: 'We shall not live to see that fine unity of the west which lent the latter seventeenth and eighteenth centuries their classical repose...'.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he did feel that on the whole intellectual considerations rather than the more mundane political and diplomatic ones provided the real key to understanding the nature of the relationship between the two nations and that the phenomenon by which Britain and France had begun to draw closer together was a more protracted and subtle one than most people imagined.

Indeed, there was a marked tendency in many British intellectual and literary circles of the time not to attach much

52 H. Belloc, Avril: Being Essays on the Poetry of the French Renaissance, (London, 1904), p.xii.

53 Ibid., loc. cit.

54 Ibid., loc. cit.

importance to the Entente. Kipling and Harrison apart, there simply was not much interest in an event which seemed to herald at most a diplomatic crossroads in the history of the two nations. To cite a case in point, the various men and women who went to make up the Bloomsbury group remained quite unmoved by it. Like Belloc, they tended to think of France primarily in cultural terms, and in cultural terms well-rooted in the past at that. Contemporary France for them 'no longer lent itself to idealised views'; instead, it was the eighteenth century which was 'intact'.⁵⁵ And it was only in this rather vague context that they ever commented about the Third Republic or the position of France in the world's political arena. Thus Lytton Strachey wrote to Henry James in September 1914 that it would be almost criminal if France were to be crushed in the Great War, not because she was the ally of Britain, but because she was to his mind 'the most civilised country in the world...'.⁵⁶ Meanwhile for their part, many of the more prominent novelists of the period noticeably refrained from the campaign to portray France and Frenchmen in all but the most glorious terms. In Arnold Bennett's Whom God Hath Joined, for instance, it is a French governess, a Mlle. Souchon, who has the dubious distinction of being the one person who breaks up the otherwise happy Fearn family by seducing the son Charles. Neither John Galsworthy nor Henry James had Frenchmen or Frenchwomen playing such unlikeable roles in their novels of this time, but some of their works did help in a small way to reinforce

⁵⁵ Campos, op. cit., p. 218.

⁵⁶ M. Holroyd, Lytton Strachey: A Biography, (London, 1971), p.570.

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the image of Paris as a centre of frivolity and moral looseness. Hence Galsworthy sends the recently divorced Irene to the French capital for pleasure and enjoyment in The Man of Property, the first book of the Forsyte Saga series; and it is there that she meets the young Jolyon.⁵⁷ Similarly, it is to Paris that Strether and Waymarsh are sent in James's The Ambassadors to rescue the comparatively young Chad from what his mother fears are the clutches of depravity.

Of course, it might well be argued that many of these writers had little interest in politics of any sort; hence, it would be a bit much to expect them to reassess France in the light of the Entente Cordiale. But even the more politically conscious writers of the period were comparatively silent about the subject. Playwrights and novelists like George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, whose left-wing sympathies had induced them to take a stand on most of the main issues of the day, simply had next to nothing to say about the new-found friendship between the two Western Powers.⁵⁸ In fact, of all the left-wing writers in Britain only one, the Scottish nationalist and socialist author R.B. Cunninghame-Graham, made any direct reference to the signing of the 1904 Convention, and then it was to register his disapproval.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Campos, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵⁸ Shaw, along with Galsworthy and a few other left-wingers, did write a letter of protest to The Times in 1907 about the impending 'unnatural' understanding with Russia. (See Chapter X of this thesis for further details on this point.) The fact that he and his colleagues made no similar objection to the 1904 understanding would seem to indicate that that arrangement had their tacit approval. Indeed, as time wore on, Shaw increasingly began to clamour for a triple alliance consisting of Britain, France, and Germany, in which each of the Governments would regard an attack on one of the signatories as an attack on all three. See Mina Moore, Bernard Shaw et la France, (Paris, 1933), p. 132.

⁵⁹ In a preface to a rather well-publicised book by a Mousa Aflalo criticising the terms of the 1904 Convention, Cunninghame-Graham argued forcefully that Morocco ought to have been allowed to 'work out its own damnation' in the fashion that best pleased it.

But although most contemporary British men of letters for the most part eschewed any direct references to the Anglo-French Entente, this is not to say that the literature of the period as a whole did not contribute in some way to the discussion of international developments, indeed on occasion to the worsening of European tensions. Erskine Childers' 1903 novel The Riddle of the Sands, even though not intended to promote hostility between the British and German peoples, was nonetheless something of a first step in this direction. An anonymously written play entitled 'An Englishman's Home', which was shown before large audiences in the West End of London at the height of the naval panic of 1908-9, and a novel written not long afterwards, The Battle of Dorking, constituted veritable turning points. All of these works had invasion scares as their main themes, with the policy-makers in Berlin cast as the villains. Yet if popular novelists and playwrights had a serious message to deliver to their readers about Germany and German designs, then it must be said that they, together with a few critics writing in the periodical press, had some corresponding remarks to make about France and her policies. Thus within months of the signing of the 1904 colonial Convention a play entitled 'L'Entente Cordiale' appeared at London's Alhambra Theatre. Despite receiving mixed reviews and experiencing a rather short run, it more than managed

He then went on to accuse England of giving up to France 'that which was never hers to give' and France of gratefully receiving 'the swag from the swell mob's hand; when all the police are down the areas or are drunk'. See the preface to M. Aflalo's The Truth about Morocco, (London, 1904), pp. xiii, xv.

to drive home its main point to those who watched it - namely, that Britain and France, by virtue of having amicably settled all their squabbles, had set an admirable example to others, thereby making them the true peace-makers of the world.⁶⁰ In a similar spirit, British reviewers were capable of ridiculing any stage production, even a French one, that challenged the notion of France as a pacific-minded country pursuing her policies throughout the world with only the best and most honest of intentions. Writing about a play then showing in Paris by Jean Jullien entitled 'L'oasis' in which the heroine, a Catholic nun, forsakes her religion, marries a Muslim chieftain in the sands of North Africa, and declines to return to Europe after having been 'captured' by a group of French colonial officers, a critic in the Edinburgh Review concluded: 'There is some effective satire on European methods of "civilising" what it considers "inferior" races, but the play is drowned in verbiage and cloyed with a rather namby-pamby sentimentalism, and the total impression is of something slightly absurd'.⁶¹ And so it went on. Comparatively few and far between, writings of this sort did nonetheless emerge often enough to give the more serious-minded culture enthusiasts in Britain a very one-sided view of France.

In summary, then, one can say that there was a conscious attempt in certain contemporary literary and artistic circles in Britain to discuss France and French culture in a political context. Writers like Miss Betham-Edwards and E.H. Barker who had a strong emotional attachment to France dwelt at length on

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Punch, 9 September 1904, p. 164.

⁶¹ Edinburgh Review, 'Some recent French and English plays', CC (October, 1904), 305.

the physical attractions of that country and on the attributes of its people in the hope of extending the friendship between the two Powers to the grassroots level; certain men of letters, albeit only a few, like Rudyard Kipling and Frederic Harrison spoke warmly about the 1904 Convention and regarded it as a natural outgrowth of the 'complementary' aspects of their history and culture; in scores of specially written articles a host of critics reinforced these impressions with remarks of a similar nature; and even the odd play or book was devoted to this notion. And yet, for all these efforts, the establishment of the Anglo-French Entente cannot be said to have forged any significant new cultural ties between the two countries. True, there took place at the outset of this period a series of exchange visits between ordinary working people, and in 1908 there opened in London a major exhibition showing the social and cultural as well as the commercial aspects of British and French life. But both of these phenomena were comparatively short-lived and exerted no real impact on the very people they were designed to attract. The same can be seen even in the literary tastes of the British reading public. The sizeable increase of books printed in the British Isles dealing with France that occurred simultaneously with the growth of improved relations between the two Governments tapered off within a few years, and by 1910 there was a 'slight fall' in the 'selling appeal' of France, with a 'slow decline beginning in 1913'.⁶² Precisely why all this should happen is difficult, though not impossible, to explain. The half-hearted attitudes of the men promoting the exchange visits and exhibitions played its part, as did the refusal of many of the

62 Campos, op. cit., p. 241.

more prominent men of letters to regard the Entente as anything more than a development of secondary importance in the history of Anglo-French relations. The real explanation, however, undoubtedly lay in the rather arid political nature of the rapprochement itself. Started by a handful of men on both sides of the Channel and concerned almost exclusively with colonial and diplomatic questions, the Entente could not in the final analysis capture for long the hearts and minds of the people of Britain without constant encouragement from higher circles. And this, we have seen, the politicians and diplomats were unwilling to provide.

CHAPTER IX

ANGLO-FRENCH-RUSSIAN AFFAIRS AS SEEN BY THE BRITISH PRESS, 1903-1907

That the Entente Cordiale might one day have a beneficial effect on Anglo-Russian relations was a possibility which had not escaped the attention of most contemporary observers of foreign affairs. France was now the friend of Britain as well as the ally of Russia, and with these two Powers at odds over the war then raging in the Far East, it was both natural and desirable that she should try and bring them closer together. As the Westminster Gazette put it, 'It will be a help both to Russia and to ourselves if the good offices of France are available now and hereafter to remove the dangerous kind of friction which has threatened more than once since the war began'.¹ And in August 1907, less than two years after the hostilities in Asia came to a halt, this hope was more than fulfilled with the signing of an Anglo-Russian Convention similar to the one signed by Britain and France in 1904. How did this 1907 Convention come about? Did the French in fact play an important role in the reconciliation? Or did the impetus come primarily from the British and the Russians themselves? The answers which the British press gave to these questions are of interest; for many newspapers did not comment without having first made some startlingly inaccurate statements about the current diplomatic scene. The Dual Alliance, they averred, was a dying force in European politics, and Britain

¹ Westminster Gazette, 9 April 1904.

in coming to terms with France could accelerate its dissolution. Even when it became readily apparent that the Franco-Russian connection was not dead and that the French were steadfastly working towards a new diplomatic alignment between London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, the newspapers did not always fully appreciate the significance of the situation. Many of them believed that French foreign policy was motivated more by a desire to spread peace and goodwill than by any urge to isolate Germany.

Although it was widely hoped in Britain that improved ties with Russia through France might eventually be realized, few people believed in the early days of the Entente Cordiale that any such development was imminent. To a large extent, this pessimism can be attributed to the poor state of Anglo-Russian relations at the time. During the recent Boer War, Russian newspapers and journals took part in the general campaign waged by the Continental press of poking fun at British military reverses. Later, when it became apparent that the tide was being turned, the Russian Government seriously considered Kaiser Wilhelm's proposal of forming in concert with France a Continental League to isolate Britain. But it was in Asia, for decades the arena of imperial rivalry between the two Powers, that Anglo-Russian animus had really intensified. Anxious to extend her influence over as large an area of that continent as possible, Russia deliberately stepped up her expansionist drive at a moment when Britain was unable to offer much resistance; the military occupation of Manchuria, increased financial investments in Persia, and repeated attempts to establish direct relations with the Amir of Afghanistan and

the Dalai Lama in Tibet, were all undertaken while Britain was preoccupied in South Africa. Britain meanwhile had concluded an alliance with Japan in January 1902, leaving her free to counter Russian forwardness in Central Asia while the latter Power did the same in the Far East. All in all the situation was not encouraging, and the war that erupted between Russia and Japan in February 1904 made matters worse. For now even if all other colonial problems were to disappear, Britain still could not come to terms with Russia except by the betrayal of her Oriental ally. With this in mind, many organs of opinion in Britain chose to treat the subject of a future Russian Entente with circumspection. They welcomed the idea in principle but pleaded that diplomatic considerations had for the time being rendered any such reconciliation impossible. In the words of The Times, an Anglo-Russian rapprochement was as yet 'premature' but 'of no little interest and significance'.²

1. Attitudes towards the Dual Alliance

There was another factor which prompted the press to think that an Anglo-Russian understanding was still a long way off. This was the worsening state of affairs which the French themselves were experiencing with the Russians. For nearly a decade, the press in Britain had looked upon the alliance that dominated the relations of these two countries as a comparatively stable force in European politics. True, it was recognized that there were moments - the Fashoda crisis in 1898, for example - when the lack of full support of the one partner for the policies of the other added an element of coolness to the relationship. But the frigidity produced during such episodes

² The Times, 16 April 1904; see also Daily Chronicle, 25 March 1904, for similar sentiments.

was thought to be short-lived; in Britain, the general feeling had been that an arrangement which boosted Russia's financial credit and restored France's diplomatic prestige was too useful to both sides to wither away as a result of any minor rifts. By 1903, however, many people in Britain were having second thoughts about the durability of the Dual Alliance. In part, this can be attributed to the new wave of oppressive measures which the Tsarist régime was enforcing throughout Russia. In March 1903, Nicholas II issued a manifesto crushing Finnish autonomy and placing the Finns under the military rule of the redoubtable General Bobrikoff; in May of that year, Government-inspired anti-Semitism led directly to a large-scale pogrom of Jews at Kishineff; while throughout the summer of 1903, reports kept coming in of the continuing bad treatment of the Armenians and the harsh repression of labour agitation that was taking place in most of Russia's major cities. The widespread revulsion with which French public opinion greeted the news of these developments did not go unnoticed in Britain. Each speech in the Chamber of Deputies and each leader-article in the French press that condemned the course of events in Russia was treated as evidence of the mounting distaste in France for the 1894 Convention. Commenting on some particularly anti-Russian remarks made by one French editor shortly after the Jewish massacres, the Birmingham Daily Post concluded:

there is a limit, apparently, to French tolerance, and that limit was passed at Kishineff. It is curious, to say the least of it, that a people so strongly imbued with anti-Semitic prejudice, as was shown in the notorious Dreyfus case, should be so deeply moved now by the reports of the outrages of which Jews were the victims, but the fact appears to be beyond a doubt... M. Le roy-Beaulieu says the policy of Russia towards Finland, one of the most interesting and thoroughly civilised States in Europe, has already made the alliance sickening. The recent massacres may render it loathsome. 3

Nor had the disenchantment been setting in from just one side of the alliance. In Russia as well as in France, certain sections of public opinion had become openly critical of the domestic and foreign policies of its ally. As early as April 1903, a war of words had broken out between French and Russian newspapers about the timid programme of reform~~ing~~ which Austria and Russia had jointly proposed for Macedonia; at one point in the exchange the officially-inspired Novoye Vremya accused France of trying to supplant Russia as the leading protector of the Balkan Slavs.⁴ Even more significant, prominent Russian newspapers and journals of conservative persuasion began to berate daily the French Government for its 'anti-Christian' role in the disestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church and in the secularization of the French Army after the Dreyfus affair.⁵ To many people in Britain, it suddenly looked as if the Russians and the French were rapidly moving towards a breach, if not an outright dissolution, of

3 Birmingham Daily Post, 22 May 1903. Le roy-Beaulieu was the editor of the influential Economiste Francais. He was also one of France's most distinguished economists and had ardently defended since the 1890s the policy of extending loans to Russia. Hence, it would be reasonable for British newspapers to treat his anti-Russian outbursts as significant.

4 Reported in The Times, 6 April 1903, p.6.

5 Reported ibid; 26 May 1903, p.5.

the Dual Alliance.

British Radicals and Socialists in particular held this view, believing that the estrangement between France and Russia reflected something more deep-rooted than the recent press polemics suggested. As they saw it, the antagonism was fundamentally an ideological one. The two Powers - the one a progressive democracy, the other an immobile autocracy - had established between themselves a bond which was inconsistent with their differing forms of government. The result was an 'unnatural' alliance imposing certain conditions on them both which they otherwise would not have accepted. By encouraging small as well as large investments in Russian stocks and securities, it in effect induced many ordinary Frenchmen - 'the sincerest of Republicans' - to take sides with the Russian bureaucracy in its struggle against the people; it tied France to the whims and vagaries of an unstable Tsarist foreign policy; while at the other end of the connection, it secured the financial dependence of a reactionary Russian Government on a nation whose more advanced political ideas were looked upon with fear and suspicion at St. Petersburg. The current hostility between France and Russia, wrote the Clarion, amounted to a 'gulf of Governmental antipathies ... widening daily under the influence of the Combes Ministry's democratic and anti-clerical tendencies'.⁶ Possibly this explains why many left-wing journals like the Labour Leader were doubly pleased with the signing of the 1904 Entente; for as a result of it they could see France 'awakening from the nightmare of her alliance with Russia'.⁷

⁶ Clarion, 23 October 1903.

⁷ Labour Leader, 25 November 1904.

But if the Labour Leader sounded optimistic about the chances of drawing the French away from the Russians, then it must be said that there were others who struck an equally pessimistic note. J.L. Garvin, at this time a leader-writer for the Daily Telegraph as well as a columnist for the Fortnightly Review and one of the most outspoken students of foreign affairs, was one of the first to express doubts. For him it was inconceivable that any 'competent politician' could contemplate even for a moment the substitution of the Entente Cordiale for the 1894 Alliance as the corner-stone of French foreign policy. France, he said, 'is prepared to make the friendship with England her second interest. But the unshaken maintenance of the alliance with Russia will continue to be made under all circumstances at present calculable her first interest. Her genuine wish is to see both interests permanently harmonized, but if she must choose, even with a sigh, she will unhesitatingly sacrifice the former to the latter'.⁸ The Times was inclined to agree, arguing that 'a strong France without the Russian alliance is, under existing conditions, impossible.'⁹ Whether or not Garvin and The Times echoed the prevailing sentiments in Britain on this question is difficult to say. For despite their numerous assertions to the contrary, the newspapers did at times reveal an inner belief that France and Russia were still firmly attached to one another. Thus in the early days of the

⁸ Calchas (J.L. Garvin), 'The Latin rapprochement and Anglo-Russian relations', Fortnightly Review, LXXIII (June 1903), 954. Garvin, needless to say, was a staunch Tory and in time was to become a mouthpiece for Lord Northcliffe as editor of the Observer.

⁹ The Times, 12 April 1904.

Far Eastern conflict, when Russia suffered a string of defeats, some wondered if the French might be tempted to intervene lest the war dangerously weaken Russia's resources. Already by 11 February 1904 the Scotsman was warning that 'the French people, whether as political allies or as financial creditors, cannot look with equanimity on the confusion of Russia'. Earlier the Spectator voiced doubt that the French would join in the fray at Russia's side. Still, as the Spectator could not altogether rule out a French intervention, it felt impelled to say that any such action would force Britain to honour her obligations to Japan made in the 1902 Alliance.¹⁰ Indeed, it was this prospect that led the Observer to clamour for a speedy conclusion of the Anglo-French colonial negotiations then in progress. Only by coming to a written understanding, it argued, could Britain and France prevent the Far Eastern War spreading to Europe.¹¹

As the Russo-Japanese War progressed, however, such fears about being dragged into the conflagration gradually subsided. Undoubtedly the quick proclamation of neutrality made by the French Government in February 1904 had done much to allay the anxiety. So too did the announcement of the Foreign Office on 16 March that the talks with the French, temporarily interrupted by the outbreak of hostilities, were about to resume. For it now seemed that the two Governments had heeded newspaper advice and were intent upon making good use of the favourable diplomatic climate to ensure that the war

¹⁰ Spectator, 15 December 1903.

¹¹ Observer, 6 March 1904.

remained localized in the Far East.¹² But even more decisive perhaps was the remarkable manner in which the French were reacting to the reports that kept coming in from the front of successive Japanese victories. Rather than rallying to the cause of their ally, as some newspapers feared they might do, the French seemed to be doing just the opposite. French military leaders began to criticize openly their ally's war effort.¹³ Leading French banks, hitherto only too willing to issue loans to Russia, suddenly grew reluctant to export any more capital.¹⁴ Nor was this all. Upon hearing of the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre at St. Petersburg in January of that year, French public opinion burst into a new wave of anti-Tsarist feeling. The French press, led by Clemenceau in the Aurore and Jaurès in the Humanité, quickly condemned the Russian Government for the atrocities. And in Paris, Socialists and prominent intellectuals like Anatole France organized meetings to promote sympathy for the general strike in Russia.¹⁵

12 Fall Mall Gazette, 16 March 1904; also Birmingham Daily Post, 18 March 1904; and Daily Chronicle, 25 March 1904. But at the same time the newspapers took care to remind their readers that, in striving to settle all outstanding colonial questions, the British and French Governments had been motivated more by a prudent wish to avoid quarrels than by any desire to keep out of the Far Eastern dispute. As The Times wrote on 4 March 1904, the Entente 'extends to the people on both sides of the water, and the people here, as in France, are congratulating themselves on the fact that it was firmly cemented before the present troubles arose in the Far East'.

13 In May 1904, a Lt.-Col. Rousset, whom the Paris correspondent of The Times describes as 'one of the most prominent and authoritative French military writers', wrote an article in the Gaulois in which he severely criticized General Kuropatkin's strategy at the time of the battle of the Yalu. See The Times, 11 May 1904, p.5.

14 In March 1905, the Russian Government managed to extract another £20 million loan from the French, but only on the understanding that this would be the last 'for some time to come'. See ibid., 8 March 1905, p.5.

15 Reported ibid., 30 January 1905, p.3.

In Britain, newspapers were now more ready to acknowledge the view that the Franco-Russian Alliance was a waning force in European affairs. Some even believed that it was on the verge of breaking up. The Daily Chronicle, in summing up the significance of the reaction in France to the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, wrote that 'there is little reason to doubt that the unnatural alliance is doomed'.¹⁶ Others, however, drew a more cautious conclusion. The ties which bound France and Russia together, they agreed, were weakening; but this did not necessarily mean that the end of the 1894 alliance was at hand. For the French knew that to sever the bonds with their ally would be to risk provoking the Russian Government to default on its payment of the interest on the foreign debts. Dissolution, moreover, would leave France vulnerable to an attack by Germany. As a result, France, they conjectured, would probably continue her present policy of refusing to issue any more loans while Russia was at war with Japan and while she was suffering from internal disorders. This was a stand which was reasonable enough not to alienate the Russians; yet at the same time, it was harsh enough to induce the governing classes in Russia to consider suing for peace in the Far East and concede important reforms at home.¹⁷

Of course, none of this is to suggest that the press in Britain was necessarily pleased with the manner in which the French had dealt with the Russians during the war. By and large it was, but on one or two occasions there were expressions of disapproval concerning the excessively

¹⁶ Daily Chronicle, 8 February 1905.

¹⁷ Spectator, 28 January 1905; also Economist, 8 April 1905.

benevolent neutrality which the French were thought to have bestowed upon their ally. These arose in connection with the differing interpretations which the British and French Governments placed on the duties of neutrals vis-à-vis the sheltering and coaling of belligerent vessels. Most countries were of the opinion that ships of war should be granted asylum in a neutral port for a period lasting no longer than twenty-four hours at a time and, further, that they should be supplied with only enough coal to enable them to reach the nearest port of their country. This had been the position of the British Government since 1862, when the prospect of having to fuel steamships during the American Civil War first made the coaling of belligerent ships a potentially dangerous issue. Other governments were to follow suit, including the Russian and the Japanese, both of which adopted the British practice at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898. But not so the French. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, they had consistently refused to acknowledge either of these regulations, arguing that neither a prolonged stay in a port of call nor an unlimited supply of coal sufficiently aided a ship of war to constitute a breach of neutrality. And not long after war erupted in the Far East, the French Government issued a Neutrality Circular reiterating this position.

On the fact of it, such differences of opinion ought to have produced few difficulties. After all, the French interpretation had already stood the test of previous wars without leading to any unfortunate complications. Moreover, both the Russians and the Japanese recognized the 'twenty-four hour' rule. As long as the two warring Powers practised what

they preached, therefore, the possibility of France's 'peculiar' views leading to trouble was remote. But the Russians did not live up to their word. Not long after hostilities commenced, Admiral Wirenius, the commander of a Russian naval squadron in the Mediterranean, anchored his ships in the French East African port of Jibuti for several days in an attempt to store a number of provisions, including coal. In January 1905, the Russian Baltic Fleet under Admiral Rozhdestvensky spent several weeks at Diego Suarez, the chief French port in Madagascar. Four months later, he had an even longer stay at Kamranh Bay in Cochin China before moving on to engage the Japanese Fleet in the Far East. Worse still, reports from Saigon had it that the Russians had virtually converted Kamranh Bay into a base of operations. The French port, it was said, was being used by the Russians as a starting point from which they could inspect passing steamers in the South China Sea for contraband.¹⁸

The news of such abuses provoked a good deal of disquiet in Britain. True, care was taken in high circles to point out that French neutrality regulations, while obviously working to the advantage of the Russians, were nevertheless legitimate. Legal specialists reminded everyone that the French rules were not in contradiction to the dictates of international law; there were as yet no restrictions on the amount of time which belligerent ships could spend in a neutral port nor on the amount of coal with which they could be supplied.¹⁹ And in

¹⁸ The Times, 5 May 1905.

¹⁹ T.E. Lawrence, War and Neutrality in the Far East (London, 1904), pp. 120-122. See also the letter of T.E. Holland, Professor of International Law and Diplomacy at All Souls College, Oxford, to The Times, 21 April 1905.

Parliament, both Balfour and Lansdowne were at pains to stress that the unlawful provisioning of the Baltic Fleet at Kamranh Bay had been the work of private individuals rather than of the local French authorities.²⁰ Yet despite these soothing observations, public opinion in Britain was still not satisfied with France's behaviour. Everything taken into account, it continued to show an excessive predisposition to favour the Russians: French neutrality laws remained unchanged; while those who illegally supplied the Russians went unpunished.²¹ The French, moreover, displayed an almost callous indifference to the feelings of the Japanese. Considering that Japan might choose at any moment to invoke the casus foederis against France, thereby involving Britain in a war with the Dual Alliance, this attitude seemed particularly alarming. As Valentine Chirol, Foreign editor of The Times, complained to that paper's Paris correspondent: 'The French are always impressing upon us the necessity of our considering Russian susceptibilities. They might with advantage themselves consider Japanese susceptibilities. Altogether the policy of France with regard to the Far East is not at the present moment quite reassuring'.²²

Whatever the criticisms that had been directed against the French, they were more than offset by a genuine sympathy for the awkward predicament which France had been put into, by the professions of good faith made by the French Government, and by a firm belief that a repetition of such incidents was unlikely. This last point was based on a major new development

²⁰ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXLV (9 May 1905), 1351-1352 and H. of L. CXLV (9 May 1905), 1268-1269.

²¹ Daily Chronicle, 21 April 1905; also Birmingham Daily Post, 9 May 1905.

²² Chirol to William Lavino, 29 December 1904, The Times Archives F(oreign) L(etter) B(ook), vol. V, 6-7ff.

that had taken place in the Far East. In late May 1905, Admiral Togo and his squadron annihilated the Baltic Fleet in a crucial battle off the island of Tsushima in the Sea of Japan. As might be expected, the news of this decisive defeat was greeted with some relief in Britain; for a reoccurrence of Russian naval infractions in neutral ports was now impossible.²³ But in France the reaction was somewhat more pronounced. French newspapers, anxious that this latest military reversal might lead to a financial débâcle in Russia, took up the cry that the Tsar should conclude peace. In the French Chamber, there ensued a prolonged debate on foreign affairs in which Delcassé was strongly rebuked for having maintained a close partnership with St. Petersburg. A week later, it was announced that the French foreign minister had resigned and was being replaced by Rouvier, the current premier who was not known for his pro-Russian sentiments. To many people in Britain this sequence of events meant primarily one thing: France and Russia were drifting further and further apart. If a number of newspapers like the Daily Express denied that the two Powers had as yet been unfaithful to one another, they could not help but note that, in view of all of Russia's misfortunes, 'it is scarcely a matter for wonder if the invective launched against M. Delcassé ... should find an echo in quarters where it has hitherto passed unheeded'.²⁴ The Birmingham Daily Post

²³ Economist, 3 June 1905.

²⁴ Daily Express, 7 June 1905.

was less equivocal in its assessment of the proceedings. France, it said, was in the process of reconstructing her entire foreign policy. For a long time she had been ready 'to appraise afresh the value of the Russian alliance as a national asset'. And now that the battles of Mukden and Tsushima had destroyed for a while to come Russia's credibility as a worthwhile ally, a reappraisal was certain.²⁵ There is room for these views, even if events in Morocco provided a more plausible explanation for Delcassé's fall; and at the time a number of people in Britain subscribed to them. Subsequent developments, however, soon changed this line of thinking.

2. Impact of the first Moroccan crisis on these attitudes

Between 1903 and the spring of 1905, most organs of opinion in Britain, when writing about the Dual Alliance, dwelt primarily upon the economic aspects of that arrangement. In so doing, they had fully exposed the pathetic state of her finances which made Russia dependent on France, while largely ignoring the military exigencies which made France equally dependent on Russia. Thus when the Tangier crisis did reveal the other side of the coin, many newspapers were hard put to explain why the French had panicked by overthrowing their foreign minister. As has been seen, some like the Birmingham Daily Post and the Daily Express attempted to do so in terms of the dislike felt in France for the Russian connection. As they saw it, the pressure emanating from Berlin was a factor of only secondary importance behind the cabinet reshuffle.²⁶

²⁵ Birmingham Daily Post, 14 June 1905.

²⁶ Ibid., loc. cit.; and Daily Express, loc. cit.

Others conceded that the Russian collapse in the Far East did leave France anxious in the face of German aggressiveness but added that French fears had quickly subsided in the light of British diplomatic support.²⁷ Indeed, in some quarters it had already been claimed that the French might actually prefer an alliance with Britain to one with Russia; for unlike the Russians, the British could both guarantee France's overseas empire and give her more than adequate naval protection in Europe.²⁸ But with the positive response of the Russian Government to President Roosevelt's mediatory efforts in the Far East and with rumours running wild in July 1905 that the forthcoming meeting between the Kaiser and the Tsar at Björkoe portended a new Russo-German alignment, the newspapers adopted a new tune: Delcassé's fall was ascribed entirely to German machinations; while Russian support for France became an urgent necessity if the equipoise in Europe were to be maintained. 'The balance has been partly redressed by the good understanding with this country', stated the Daily Chronicle; 'but the Russian alliance must remain the cardinal factor in France's external policy, and thus the revival of Russia is a principal French interest'.²⁹ Those who had preached all along the strength of the Dual Alliance now harped on its immutability with even greater fervour. The Times, for example,

²⁷ Economist, 10 June 1905.

²⁸ Morning Post, 9 January 1904; also Spectator, 27 February 1904. What prompted this extraordinary assertion was the outbreak of the Far Eastern War, which raised the possibility of France having to choose between her friendship with Britain and her alliance with Russia. Of course, not everyone shared this opinion; nevertheless it did, if from a different angle, tend to reinforce the view of Socialists and some Radicals that Britain could detach France from Russia.

²⁹ Daily Chronicle, 23 September 1905. See also Glasgow Herald, 4 July 1905 for similar sentiments.

almost outdid itself in trying to put across this point. Several times during the summer of 1905 it reiterated the thesis that the maintenance of France's Great Power status was too much in Russia's 'permanent interest' for the Dual Alliance to lapse into obscurity.³⁰

Yet for all their talk about the unhappy condition of the Dual Alliance, the newspapers had never really given up the notion that France would have an important part to play in the reconciliation of Britain and Russia. Even while Franco-Russian relations had been at a very low ebb, the press remained confident that France still had enough influence at the court of St. Petersburg to help effect such a change. Of course, with the war in the Far East producing all sorts of complications between the two Powers, the most that could be expected from the French for the time being was an offer of good offices in order to prevent the conflict from spreading further afield. And when in 1904-05 war between

³⁰ The Times, 5 and 20 June and 5 September 1905. The attitude of The Times towards the Franco-Russian Alliance is curious. The Foreign editor of the paper, Valentine Chirol, had learnt from informed sources that all was not well between Paris and St. Petersburg. As far back as June 1904, one unidentified French informant had told him of the deplorable impression which Russian reverses in the Far East had been making in French military circles. Later, the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, had spoken privately but frankly to him about the growing coolness in Franco-Russian relations. After a holiday in Egypt, Chirol stopped off in Paris on his way home in March 1905 to meet leading members of the French Government. While there, he saw Loubet, Rouvier, Delcassé and Etienne, the head of the parti colonial, all of whom vowed that no more Russian loans would be floated in Paris until peace was made. And a prominent figure in the Crédit Lyonnais verified this to him while in London in early June 1905. Chirol himself, moreover, had mentioned more nails being driven into 'the coffin of the Dual Alliance' in connection with France's efforts to establish a court of arbitration in Paris immediately after the Dogger Bank incident. (See Chirol to Sir Charles Hardinge, 16 June 1904; 10 August 1904; 1 November 1904; 20 March 1905; and 6 June 1905. The Hardinge of Penshurst Papers, volume VII. Cambridge University Library.) Still, The Times never publicly qualified its earlier judgment that the Franco-Russian Alliance was 'a factor of great importance in the politics of Europe'. See The Times, 11 April 1904.

Britain and Russia had been narrowly averted, the newspapers were inclined to take the view that it was France who had preserved the peace. In July 1904, for instance, they credited her with the speedy release of the Malacca, a P. and O. liner which the Russians boarded and seized without justification in the Red Sea. Delcassé and Bompard, the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, were both thought to have spent a good deal of time impressing upon the Russians the need to consider British susceptibilities.³¹ Likewise, the peaceful settlement of the potentially explosive Dogger Bank affair in the autumn of 1904 was also widely attributed to French diplomatic efforts. Once again it was the Quai d'Orsay, this time working behind the scenes in order to secure a special Commission of Inquiry dealing with the incident, that had saved the day.³² Nor were French activities along these lines confined to the duration of the war. Even after hostilities in the Far East had come to a halt, the French continued to act as a pacific mediator between Britain and Russia. The only difference was that whereas hitherto the French had been content to ease the tension in Anglo-Russian relations, they now undertook the more arduous task of bringing the two Powers into diplomatic alignment. At Algeciras, the French succeeded in getting the British and the Russians to adopt a common outlook with regard to the Moroccan question. Shortly afterwards, French bankers were busily persuading their British counterparts in the City to help float a £90 million loan to Russia. And in the summer of 1907, France had a hand in the series of diplomatic agreements which in effect regulated Britain's and

³¹ The Times, 23 July 1904.

³² Daily News, 28 October 1904; also Daily Chronicle, 3 April 1905.

Russia's positions in the Far East.³³ Given these developments and France's role in them, it is no wonder The Times acknowledged at the time of the Russian Convention that 'France, ever since the entente, has thrown the whole of her diplomatic weight into the scales to bring her ally and her friend together'.³⁴

But if the newspapers made such observations, they were of two minds concerning the desirability of this particular course of events. Insofar as France was smoothing over difficulties between London and St. Petersburg, they could delight in the fact that certain annoying squabbles had been honourably and fairly terminated without disturbing the tranquillity of Europe. 'She has mediated between two angry friends and pleased them both', wrote the Manchester Guardian gratefully of France after the Hull incident; 'she has lived up to her new reputation as the peacemaker of European politics'.³⁵ On the other hand, insofar as France was trying to fuse the Entente Cordiale and the Dual Alliance together, the press, or a fair-sized portion of it at any rate, could regard it as singularly pernicious that she was 'penning Germany in', thereby creating resentment in Berlin and opening the door to future troubles.³⁶

33 In June 1907, France and Japan signed an understanding in which they both promised to respect each other's territorial possessions in the Far East. A month later Russia, with French encouragement, came to a similar agreement with Japan. As Britain and Japan had already promised to guarantee each other's Far Eastern possessions in their renewed 1905 treaty, this meant that four Powers - Japan and the future members of the Triple Entente - had co-ordinated their diplomatic activity in this quarter of the globe.

34 The Times, 2 September 1907.

35 Manchester Guardian, 7 November 1904.

36 Nation, 1 June 1907.

Of course, not everyone in Britain thought that this last development foreboded ill. Indeed for some newspapers, particularly Conservative ones, a Triple Entente consisting of Britain, France, and Russia was of positive value. At a time when naval and military strength dictated the course of international relations, it often became necessary, or so they argued, for weaker nations to combine in the hope of maintaining peace. And 'if France, Russia, and England agree that there shall be no disturbance of the European peace, the peace of Europe will not be disturbed', they added assertively.³⁷ Still others, notably that most influential voice of British Liberalism, the Westminster Gazette, greeted France's diplomatic manoeuverings for an entirely different reason. As that paper saw it, the recent overtures towards Russia indicated that Europe was on the verge of the long-awaited millenium of international harmony and co-operation. The French, it claimed, were simply acting as a bridge between the British and the Russians. Later, when the moment was more opportune, the British would reciprocate by performing the same service for the French and the Germans. It was all conceived as part and parcel of a general peace movement which was beginning to accrue to the benefit of the world at large.³⁸ These varying

³⁷ Daily Telegraph, 13 April 1906. In fact, this sentiment was but a less offensive expression of the more familiar anti-German theme voiced in the contemporary right-wing press. The Spectator was making the same point, only more bluntly, when it wrote on 7 February 1903: 'If we choose to compromise our differences with Russia, as we have already compromised them with France, Germany is spellbound, and cannot move by a hairbreadth. ... Our true policy is to join France and Russia in making a ring around Germany and isolate her as the mischief-maker of the world'.

³⁸ Westminster Gazette, 8 August 1905 and 29 June 1906.

interpretations of French diplomacy reflect well the naive and simplistic notions which newspapers like the Westminster Gazette sometimes entertained when considering the problems that beset pre-World War I Europe. More fundamentally and more importantly perhaps, they reveal once again the wide chasm that separated left and right-wing opinion in Britain on the matter of Entente diplomacy. Differences arose not only over the motivations that lay behind British and French policies, but also over the prospects that these policies augured for the future of Europe.

The British press, then, had a clear idea about how the Triple Entente came into being, even if it was not sure about the significance of the new alignment. Looking back at the diplomatic activity both preceding and following the August 1907 Convention, it could not help but note that 'in all the recent approaches to Russia, French diplomacy has been the mediator and the go-between'.³⁹ Thus summarizing the origins of the triplice, the newspapers had demonstrated their ability to account for important new developments that arose on the diplomatic scene in Europe. Yet this had not always been the case. At the time of the first Moroccan crisis, they had been at a loss to explain the dismissal of the French foreign minister Delcassé, an embarrassment which can largely be traced to the hasty conclusions they had drawn earlier about the quarrels between France and Russia. The Dual Alliance, they had contended, was in the process of dissolution; and in saying this most

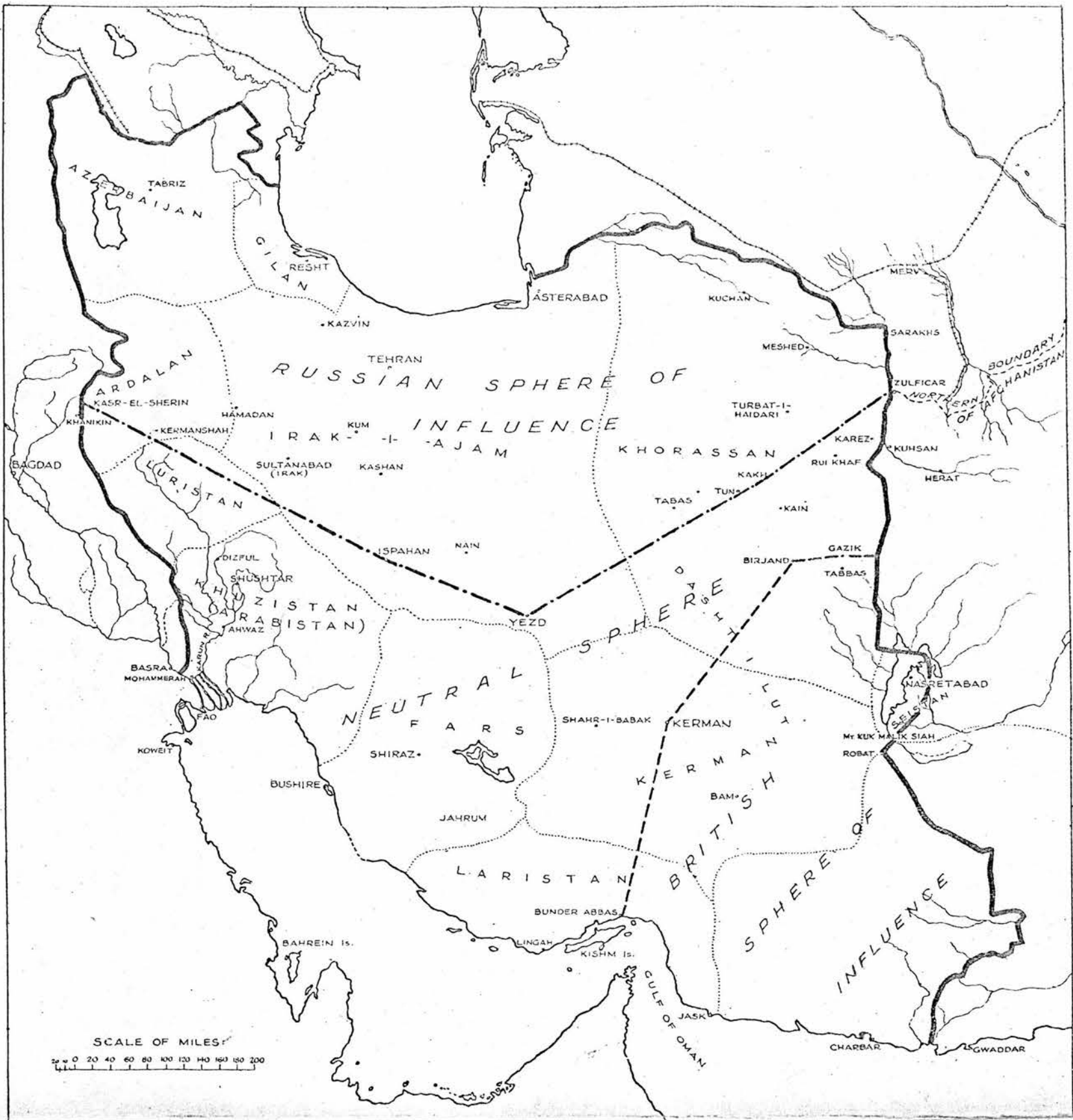
39 Nation, 13 June 1908.

newspapers fostered the impression that France was no longer in need of the Russian army as a counterpoise to the Triple Alliance. Admittedly the relations between the various Powers had been undergoing change to such an extent that no one could be sure what the future held in store for any part of the existing alliance system in Europe - a plausible excuse for thinking that the French might one day be able to make do without the Russians. In Italy, a new wave of irredentist feeling had arisen as a result of Austria's suppression of student disturbances in the Hapsburg provinces of Trent and Trieste; the Italians were now more responsive to French diplomatic advances. In the Balkans, the joint Austro-Russian proposals for Macedonian reform in 1903 paved the way for a new, albeit short-lived, spirit of co-operation between Vienna and St. Petersburg. And last but not least, Great Britain had just emerged from her 'splendid isolation' to enter into a rapprochement with France. Conceivably, therefore, the signs of estrangement between France and Russia might be construed as one part in the more general configuration of this process. But as an assumption, made while Europe was still adhering to the same balance of forces, it could only lead the newspapers to make some untenable claims. The assertion that Britain could detach France from Russia as a result of the 1904 Entente was one of these claims. And it was quickly dispelled by the near catastrophe that erupted in the spring of 1905.

SKETCH MAP OF PERSIA
 ILLUSTRATING THE SPHERES
 — DEFINED AS —
 RUSSIAN, NEUTRAL AND BRITISH,
 BY
 ANGLORUSSIAN AGREEMENT
 OF AUGUST 31ST 1907.

BOUNDARIES OF PERSIA
 OF RUSSIAN SPHERE
 OF BRITISH SPHERE

..... given are those ordinarily used in the text.



CHAPTER X

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN ENTENTE, 1907-1908

Few people who read the newspapers seriously in Britain in 1907 could have been surprised by the announcement on 31 August that Britain and Russia had reached a major settlement of colonial differences. For several years the press had been telling the public that an Anglo-Russian rapprochement was a goal of French as well as British foreign policy, and with the flurry of diplomatic activity between London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, the public must have realized that its consummation was not far in the offing. But if the signing of the 1907 Convention failed to catch British opinion unawares, it nevertheless did manage to provoke a public furor the like of which has rarely been equalled in British diplomatic history. Socialists attacked it for associating Britain with a repugnant Tsarist autocracy; Radicals opposed it because of its anti-German implications; and many moderate Liberals disliked the Anglo-Russian Convention because of the adverse impact it had on the reform movement in Persia. Of these criticisms more will be said later. First, the outcry it produced in right-wing circles will be considered; and in order to do this a little needs to be written about the agreement itself.

1. The 1907 Convention: its terms and its critics

The terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention were published in Britain on 26 September 1907, nearly a month after the signing of the accord was originally announced. In comparison with the

earlier Anglo-French Agreements it was a short arrangement, even though it divided much of Central Asia into spheres of influence. The most important division occurred in Persia, where the Convention delimited the growing and hitherto undefined Russian and British spheres. The Russian sphere was fixed north of a line starting at Kasr-el-Sherin near the border with the Ottoman Empire and passed through and included the towns of Ispahan, Yezd, and Kakh and ended 'at the point on the Persian frontier at the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers'. The British sphere was established as running south of a line starting from the Afghan frontier by way of and including the towns of Gazik, Birjand, and Kerman and ending at Bunder Abbas. The two Powers pledged not to seek any new political or economic concessions in each other's sphere and promised equal advantages to any foreign concessions already in existence in their respective spheres. The region of Persia situated between the Russian and British spheres was designated as a neutral zone in which the subjects of both Powers or of any third Power were free to establish new concessions. In addition, Britain and Russia gave the customary recognition of Persian integrity and independence.

The remainder of the Convention dealt with Afghanistan and Tibet. There too the guiding principle behind the agreement was the creation of buffer zones in order to separate British and Russian territory in Asia. With regard to the former country, Russia recognized it as essentially a British preserve. She promised not to send any political agents to Afghanistan and not to have any dealings with that country except through the medium of the British Government. The

arrangement did, however, grant the Russian Government the right to communicate directly with the Amir and his authorities in order to settle local border questions of a non-political character arising between the two countries. Britain for her part promised not to alter the political status quo of Afghanistan and agreed to let Russia enjoy along with herself full commercial opportunities there.¹ As for Tibet, both Governments recognized that country as being under the suzerainty of China. They agreed to refrain from seeking any new economic concessions in Tibet, to respect its territorial integrity, and to enter into negotiations with that country only through the offices of the Chinese Government. British and Russian subjects of the Buddhist faith, however, were allowed to enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and other representatives of Buddhism in Tibet.²

As was the case with the Anglo-French Agreements, the terms of the Russian Convention drew a great deal of opposition in Britain. In 1907 as in 1904, many people believed that the Government had been worsted in the bargaining for territories and concessions. Unlike 1904, however, the most critical discussion of the details of the new Convention did not take place in the press. Of course, some of the newspapers favouring a forward imperial policy in Asia did deliver a few pungent

¹ Article V of this part of the Convention stipulated that this arrangement would not come into force until the Amir of Afghanistan had given his consent. It should be noted, however, that the Amir's subsequent refusal to do so had little effect on preventing the implementation of the agreement.

² Accounts and Papers: State Papers, CXXV (1907), Cd. 3750.

attacks on the terms. The Scotsman and the Daily Graphic, for example, both took the Liberal Foreign Secretary Grey to task for sacrificing too much in all three areas covered by the agreement.³ But they were more the exception than the rule, and it was in Parliament that the real focal point of opposition to the terms of the 1907 Convention lay.

Of the men in Parliament who expressed doubts about the arrangement, Lord Curzon, the former viceroy of India, Earl Percy, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the late Balfour Government, and H.F.B. Lynch, the Liberal member for Ripon and a businessman with important commercial ties in Persia, figured most prominently. Curzon's opposition to the Convention stemmed almost entirely from the disastrous impact he believed it would have on Britain's imperial position throughout Asia, particularly India. It prompted him to say in early 1908 that Anglo-Russian agreement was 'the most far-reaching, the most important treaty... concluded by the British Government during the past fifty years' - quite a remark, considering the scope and magnitude of the Convention with France a few years earlier.⁴ In the Lords, Curzon delivered an impressive speech based on his personal knowledge of Central Asia, in which he berated point by point virtually every provision of the agreement. He began by demanding an explanation for the disproportionately large sphere of influence which the Convention accorded Russia in the north of Persia. The preamble to the Convention, he pointed out,

³ See Scotsman, 20, 25, and 26 September 1907; and Daily Graphic, 3 and 20 September 1907.

⁴ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of L., CLXXXIII (6 February 1908), 1023.

allocated this sphere to 'certain provinces of Persia adjoining, or in the neighbourhood of the Russian frontier...'; but in effect the Russian zone extended southwards to regions which could not be properly fit into this description. The boundary of the Russian zone in the west, for example, commenced at Kasr-el-Sherin, a town more than four hundred miles away from the Russian frontier. It also included Ispahan, where the Russians had little trade, and Yezd, a city in the centre of the country where Russia had no interests at all. On both geographic and economic grounds, therefore, the Russian sphere was too large.⁵

But what made this portion of the Convention particularly disagreeable to Curzon was its allocation of the most promising areas for the future economic development of Persia to the Russian zone. Out of the eleven trade routes in the country, seven were in the Russian sphere. Likewise, eleven of the twelve largest cities in Persia - including the capital Teheran - were located within its boundaries. The British sphere in the south, on the other hand, was small, sparsely populated, and unproductive. Only half the size of its Russian counterpart and consisting largely of desert, it contained but one town of any importance, Kerman, and but one trade route. Every argument put forward for granting Russia a large sphere of influence in Persia could be advanced with even greater legitimacy on behalf of Britain. At Ispahan, it was Britain and not Russia who had built up a thriving trade for over a century. At Yezd, a British Indian colony had been established

⁵ Ibid., 1005-1006.

'in connection with the Persian community of Parsees'. The least that could have been expected, Curzon argued, was a British sphere commencing at these two points where the Russian zone ended. Worse still, the south-western portion of the country had not been included in the British sphere. Ever since the 1880s Britain had enjoyed exclusive navigational rights along the Karun River, and at the nearby port of Bushire, British enterprise had been in operation since the mid-eighteenth century. Yet with regard to this region, the Convention failed to give Britain the same paramount position it had secured for Russia in the north. On the contrary, the incorporation of the south-west of Persia into the neutral zone left Britain 'no better off than the latest new-comer' to that area of the country.⁶

Curzon was equally formidable in condemning those clauses of the Convention pertaining to Afghanistan and Tibet. With regard to the former country, he complained that Britain gained nothing, not even the Amir's consent to the arrangement. She promised not to threaten or allow Afghanistan to threaten the Russian frontier. But Russia, who for some time had been building a strong military position on her side of the Afghan border, made no similar pledge. Britain accorded Russia equality of opportunity in all of Afghanistan, but the Russians kept the much sought after markets of Khiva and Bokhara, two vassal states to the north of the Afghan frontier, closed to British traders. Moreover, Russia's recognition that Afghanistan lay outside her sphere of influence was next to worthless; it was a statement that had been made and broken

⁶ Ibid., 1006-1009,

innumerable times since the 1860s. No less incomprehensible to Curzon were the concessions which the Government had made concerning Tibet. Only recently Britain had gone to great expense to stake her claim there by despatching a military expedition to Lhasa. To put both Powers on an equal footing in Tibet, a country which was geographically much closer to British India than to Russia, was an 'absolute surrender'. To agree to consult the Russian Government about the best means of evacuating the Chumbi Valley, a matter which was of no concern to St. Petersburg, seemed 'almost a humiliation'.⁷

Curzon's role as leading critic of the Anglo-Russian Convention in the House of Lords was assumed in the Commons by Earl Percy. Like Curzon, Percy was disturbed by the apparent unfairness of the agreement. He too, if in less detail, voiced complaints about an arrangement that seemed to give Russia a better deal than Britain in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Percy was also unhappy about the slim prospects that it offered of settling permanently Anglo-Russian friction in this part of the world. By contrast to the accord with France, the Russian agreement fell far short of being comprehensive. Both in the Near and the Far East difficulties between the two Governments remained outstanding.⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1015-1017, 1019-1022. On 7 September 1904, Britain and Tibet signed a convention in which it was agreed that British forces would occupy the Chumbi Valley until Tibet paid off in three annual instalments a £50,000 indemnity imposed on her as a result of clashes between Tibetan forces and the Younghusband expedition earlier that year. Curzon's remark refers to an annex of the 1907 Convention, in which Britain promised Russia 'a friendly exchange of views' if the occupation had not been terminated by the end of the three years.

⁸ Apparently Percy considered meaningless the 1907 diplomatic agreements between France, Japan, and Russia which seemed to have brought London and St. Petersburg together in the Far East.

And whereas the 1904 Convention settled disputes in such a manner as to give Britain and France freedom to pursue their own policies in different parts of the world, the Convention with Russia merely left them to prosecute rival policies in each of the countries affected. Add to this a notable lack of that cordial spirit which accompanied the French Entente, and it would not be difficult to cast doubts about the chances of a long-lasting Anglo-Russian settlement.⁹ Needless to say, there were others who voiced the same fears. Already Curzon had warned the Lords not to expect the Russians to adhere too loyally to the terms of the Convention: in Afghanistan, they would probably use their commercial agents for political intrigues; and in Tibet, they would no doubt re-employ Dorjief and other Buddhists to undermine the little influence that Britain did enjoy there.¹⁰ And the Daily Graphic, in stressing the importance of honour and good faith in diplomatic agreements, commented that there was 'no country which has a blacker record in this aspect' than Russia.¹¹ But

9 Ibid., H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 462-464. Percy was not alone in his observation that the Anglo-Russian Entente, unlike the Anglo-French Entente, had not come about as a result of any particularly friendly feelings between the two countries. The Glasgow Herald, for example, noted in its editorial of 30 July 1907 that while the Anglo-French agreement 'was as much the effect as the cause of the entente cordiale', the negotiations then going on between Britain and Russia were 'to no appreciable extent traceable to a popular demand in Great Britain for an understanding with the Imperial Government'.

10 Ibid., H. of L., CLXXXIII (6 February 1908), 1018, 1022. Dorjief was a Mongolian lama who for several years before the 1904 Younghusband mission had worked on behalf of the Russians to counteract British influence at the court of the Dalai Lama.

11 Daily Graphic, 3 September 1907.

it was his reference to the French Entente that distinguished Percy somewhat from the others. By constantly comparing what he considered to be a dubious agreement signed by a Liberal Government with a more satisfactory one concluded by a Conservative Government, he seemed to be drawing party politics into the discussion.

H.F.B. Lynch voiced still other concerns about the Convention. Lynch was one of the heads of Lynch Bros., a family enterprise which ran steamers on the Karun River and operated a number of road concessions in the interior of Persia. As such, it was perhaps only natural that he should protest against an arrangement which placed severe limitations on the growth of British trade and commerce in that country. Insofar as he was personally affected, two of his firm's roads in Persia had been placed entirely within the Russian sphere. Another terminated in that sphere.¹² True, by the terms of the Convention all existing British concessions in the Russian sphere were guaranteed; but as Lynch quickly pointed out, the terms also prohibited the establishment of any new British concessions there. Thus the addition of further facilities to his firm's roads in the north of Persia such as the laying of a light railway, for instance, could only come through Russia. Even if the Russians proved amenable, the tendency would almost certainly be for these concessions to become Russian. British and Indian trade in Persia, he told the Commons, was bound to

¹² The two roads which had been placed from end to end in the Russian zone ran from Kum to Teheran and from Kum to Sultanabad. The third ran from the Karun to Ispahan.

suffer as a result of the Convention.¹³

But although the extent of his personal interests in Persia made Lynch speak out against the commercial clauses of the Russian agreement, the main fire of his criticisms was directed elsewhere. As a Liberal who cherished the ideal of self-determination for all peoples, Lynch's primary concern was that Anglo-Russian diplomacy did not conflict with Persia's aspirations for independence. The preamble of the 1907 Convention, he acknowledged, did promise to respect Persian integrity. But the same pledge had been made to both Egypt and Morocco, and it had not spared them domination by two of the Great Powers.¹⁴ Not that Lynch invariably opposed European intervention in colonial areas, but in this particular case he felt it to be definitely wrong. Persia was one of the few 'backward' countries with a 'reasonable chance' of working out its own salvation. The growth of the Constitutionalist movement was proof of this.¹⁵ For

¹³ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 544-546. No doubt Lynch was also worried about the Germans as well as the Russians. German capitalists and investors had been opening up markets in Mesopotamia for some time now, and the fear was real in Britain that they would be lured further east by the terms of the 1907 Convention, which placed the southern entrances to a number of Persian trade routes in the neutral sphere. See, for example, the letter of Colonel C.E. Yate, the former Chief Commissioner of Baluchistan, to The Times, 2 September 1907, on this possibility.

¹⁴ Ibid., 548.

¹⁵ The Persian Constitutionalist movement was both reformist and nationalist in motivation and for several years had been engaged in an intense struggle with the Shah to secure a parliamentary democracy for the country. After considerable agitation, it did manage to force Muzaf-far-ud-Din Shah to concede shortly before his death a new constitution, which came into being in October 1906 with the convening of the Mailis, or National Assembly. In December 1907, the Constitutionlists, with popular support from the provinces, overcame a threat of the new Shah, Muhammed Ali, to close the Mailis. Their defiance was short-lived; for in June 1908 the Shah's troops bombarded the parliament building and had many of the leading reformers arrested. But for a while, it did appear that the Constitutionlists had the upper hand, and it would have been reasonable for Lynch and other Liberals to have been optimistic about their chances of success.

Britain to conclude an agreement which ran counter to the hopes and interests of this movement was morally objectionable. For Britain to do so with Russia, 'the arch-enemy of even elementary liberties in Asia', was 'a blunder from which British Statecraft - and British Liberalism - will find it hard to recover'.

'Revolutions', Lynch warned, 'could not be carried on with kid gloves; and a provision which made Russia the arbiter in so vast an area was tantamount to handing over the Persian reform movement to the tender mercies of a foreign despotism'.¹⁶

Lynch's warnings and fears about the effects of the Convention in Persia were widely echoed in the Liberal press. In Radical newspapers and journals, the consensus of opinion was that Britain had jeopardized the regeneration of Persia by placing the capital Teheran and other centres of the reform movement in the Russian sphere. The Russian Government, these organs argued, could never tolerate the democratization of Persia, if only because of the dangerous repercussions such a development would have on the opponents of the régime at home. Already there had been anti-Tsarist uprisings in the provinces

¹⁶ Ibid., 547, 550. See also Lynch's letter to the editor of The Times, 10 September 1907, p. 5. This emphasis which Lynch placed on a 'backward' country's political maturity to oppose intervention in one instance and then favour it in another was also employed by other Liberals. The Radical weekly the Nation, for instance, justified its endorsement of French ambitions in Morocco on the grounds that 'it was hard to believe there was any alternative' but was against British and Russian interference in Persia because in that country 'there was hope of a national resurrection'. (See Nation, 7 September 1907.) But as Howard Weinroth astutely observes, the real criterion of the Radicals on this matter was the international political climate. The Radicals might have sympathized with the Persians when Europe was calm in 1907, but they disregarded the nationalist feelings of the Moroccans in 1905 and 1911 when imperialist rivalries threatened a major war. See H. Weinroth, 'British Radicals and the Agadir crisis', European Studies Review, III, no. 1 (1933), 49.

of the Caucasus. Should the liberal forces become ascendant in neighbouring Persia, they might act as an inspiration for the rebels on Russia's side of the border.¹⁷ Some felt that it was not only Russia's confiscation of the spoils that impeded Persia's proper course of development. The Nation, for example, opposed 'any partition whatsoever, for any delimitation of foreign spheres of influence must reduce the integrity and independence of Persia to diplomatic fictions.'¹⁸ Indeed, it was said that the Persian Liberals themselves had taken this line.¹⁹

But whilst the Liberal 'Left' pointed out all this, there was another, equally pressing fear at the back of their minds. The Convention, they maintained, would also have an undesirable impact on internal events in Russia. Coming as it did on the heels of the dissolution of the Duma, the agreement would create the impression - both in Russia and elsewhere - that Britain was supporting the reactionary autocracy in its efforts to stifle reform. And this in turn was likely 'to prejudice the Russian people against us when they are strong enough to offer us the national alliance to which we look forward'.²⁰ Indeed, many were afraid that it might have the effect of bestowing upon Tsarism something more

¹⁷ Daily Graphic, 16 September 1907. The Daily Graphic was in fact a Conservative newspaper, but its editor, Lucien Wolf, was a Liberal.

¹⁸ Nation, loc. cit.

¹⁹ Manchester Guardian, 1 October 1907.

²⁰ See the letter written by a group of prominent left-wing figures to the editor of The Times, 11 June 1907, p. 5. Amongst those who signed the letter were J. Ramsay Macdonald, Justin McCarthy, G.B. Shaw, John Galsworthy, J.A. Hobson, and T. Fisher Unwin.

than an apparent gesture of British goodwill. Pointing to the form which the Dual Alliance had taken since its inception in 1891, they envisaged a situation in which an Anglo-Russian Entente would lead to extensive British financial commitments to Russia in exchange for Russian diplomatic support in Europe. Already Britain and France had jointly floated a loan to St. Petersburg as a reward to Russia for the help she had given at Algeciras. Now that the British and the Russians had reached a major settlement of colonial disputes, more loans could be expected. And Radicals contended that the larger the Russian debt, the greater Britain's interest in seeing that the existing régime survived intact. The effect of a British Entente on the Russian Government, lamented the Daily News,

Must be to increase its prestige, and above all to improve its bargaining powers. From the time of the Crimean War down to the spring of 1906 no Russian loan was placed in England. In 1906 the mere expectation of an entente sufficed to induce the City to subscribe to Count Witte's great loans. If the mere expectation of an entente achieved so much, what would the reality effect?...Little by little we are drifting into the position of France, and financial interests will tie our hands so fast that no Government will venture to take account of anything that happens in Russia..... And yet we all know, all Europe knows, that without foreign loans the autocracy must in the end succumb in its struggle with the people. 21

Such sentiments, of course, were not confined to one section of the Liberal party. If Radicals voiced reservations about this aspect of the Convention, Socialists expressed anger. In a rare pronouncement on foreign affairs, the April 1908 conference of the Independent Labour Party at Huddersfield denounced the agreement with Russia as equivalent to 'giving

21 Daily News, 17 May 1907.

an informal sanction to the course of infamous tyranny which has suppressed every semblance of representation and has condemned great numbers of our Russian comrades to imprisonment, torture, and death'.²² Others who either sympathized or identified with certain persecuted minorities in Russia were also hostile to it. Lucien Wolf, the moderately Liberal editor of the Daily Graphic, found that he could not approve of any arrangement with a Government that mistreated fellow Jews.²³ And in London, Bernard Pares helped establish a new Russian Committee, an organization which was 'well disposed to all Russians animated by the desire to improve the conditions of their motherland'.²⁴ In the opinion of virtually all these groups, it would have been far better if Britain had waited for government in Russia to take a more constitutional turn before making any settlement. This would have had the advantage of keeping Britain in a favourable light in the eyes of Russian public opinion without risking her position in Asia. Russia, they maintained, was too weak after the Far Eastern War and the 1905 revolution to threaten British India for a generation to come.²⁵

Faced with all this opposition, the Government found defending the Convention a difficult task. Indeed, to many of the criticisms they had no adequate reply. True, with regard to Persia, they did point out that Russia was gaining

²² William Stewart, J. Keir Hardie: A Biography (London, 1921), pp. 261-262.

²³ Max Beloff, Lucien Wolf and the Anglo-Russian Entente, 1907-1914 (London, 1951), pp. 3-4.

²⁴ Howard S. Weinroth, 'British Radicals and the balance of power, 1902-1914', Historical Journal, XIII, 4(1970), 666.

²⁵ Daily News, 6 June 1907; also Nation, 8 June 1907; and Socialist Review, I (April, 1908), 90-91.

enough ascendance there to warrant granting her a large sphere of influence in the north. 'One would hardly have expected Ispahan and Yezd to fall within the category of Persian provinces in close proximity to the Russian frontier', conceded The Times. 'Nevertheless...it would have been difficult for this country to oppose her in any of these regions, except at a risk disproportionate to the interests we have at stake there...'.²⁶ But at the same time very little was said to comfort those who feared Russian disloyalty in all three countries covered by the agreement. Still less of an explanation was offered as to why the Persian Gulf had not been formally incorporated into the terms.²⁷ Instead, the Government constantly drew attention to the one concrete advantage which the Convention did gain for Britain - the sealing off of Seistan and its environs from a Russian military advance southwards. By comparison, the welfare of local British commercial interests seemed to be at most of secondary importance. 'It is the strategical position which makes the agreement desirable and essential', Grey told the Commons, 'and when you study the strategical position you

²⁶ The Times, 25 September 1907. See also Morning Post, 26 September 1907; Spectator, 28 September 1907; and Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 486-488, 515-516, for similar views.

²⁷ One of the chief complaints about the 1907 Convention was its failure to keep the Persian Gulf out of Russia's reach. Curzon and others pointed out that by its terms Britain was debarred from opposing Russia's construction of a railway system running from the north through the neutral sphere down to the ports on the Gulf, where the Russians would be well poised for a strike against India. See Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of L., CLXXXIII (6 February 1908), 1010-12; also P. Landon, 'Views on the Anglo-Russian agreement - I. relative loss and gain', Fortnightly Review, LXXXII (July-Dec., 1907), 730.

will find that the key to the whole of it is Seistan'. Expert opinion, he declared, had placed the 'highest value' on reaching an agreement of this sort as a means of guaranteeing the security of India. And now that this had been effected, the Liberal Government would be able to honour its pledge to stem the increase in military expenditure in this part of the world.²⁸ Above all, the Convention was a particularly valuable contribution to peace. For not only had it settled a number of important disputes, but it had done so at a time when the internal disorders of Persia might conceivably have led to a British or Russian intervention in that country, thereby raising the spectre of renewed friction between the two European Powers.²⁹

28 In point of fact, military opinion in Britain was divided about the importance of Seistan to the defence of India. Grey is said to have based his remarks on a memorandum presented at a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence in March 1906 by Major William Robertson, then working in the Intelligence Division of the War Office. The purpose of the memorandum was to inform the Government of the military considerations involved in making an entente with Russia, and Robertson came to the conclusion that Persia, particularly the south-eastern corner of it, was 'the crux of the whole question' as regards the safety of India. (See Keith Robbins, Sir Edward Grey: A Biography (London, 1971), p.161.) A year later, however, the War Office issued a survey of the military resources of the Russian Empire in which it was argued that, in the light of recent Russian railway construction from the Caspian Sea and Samarkhand to the Afghan border, an invasion of India - if it were to take place at all - was now much more likely to come through Afghanistan rather than through Persia via Seistan. (See Beryl J. Williams, 'The strategic background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907', Historical Journal, IX, 3(1966), 363-364.) Thus the Foreign Secretary's claim that the Convention had succeeded in removing the military threat to India could only be true if the Russians acted in good faith in Afghanistan. And this, as has been seen, some people regarded as highly unlikely. For Grey's remarks, see Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 481-482.

29 Ibid., H. of L. CLXXXIII(6 February 1908), 1042 and H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 494.

By thus emphasizing its strategic and pacific benefits, the Government was able to win considerable support for the Convention. In Parliament, the endorsement which it received from leading members of the Opposition managed to offset the arguments of imperialist stalwarts like Curzon and Percy. Former Prime Minister Balfour had his reservations about the commercial clauses of the arrangement but agreed that it nevertheless constituted 'a new and genuine addition to the defences of India'; while for his part, Lansdowne expressed confidence in the Lords that Russia would be loyal to both the spirit and the terms of the agreement.³⁰ Other Conservatives like Lord Cromer, the former Governor-General of Egypt, welcomed the Convention for yet another reason. As they saw it, this arrangement marked a new phase of European imperialism in which all the major colonizing nations would come together in order to check those nationalist and 'seditious' forces unleashed by the recent victory of yellow Japan over white Russia in the Far East. Just now Britain and Russia had come to terms, but other Powers were bound to follow suit. For the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on the minds of Asians had been such that all nations with possessions in the East would have to 'exercise even greater care, watchfulness, and circumspection than, perhaps, at any other period of their history'.³¹ As the Pall Mall Gazette put it: 'We, and Russia, and every European Power that has a finger in the Asiatic pie, have to remember that the time is coming when

³⁰ Ibid., H. of L., CLXXXIII (6 February 1908), 1334-1335 and H. of C., CLXXXIV (17 February 1908), 552.

³¹ Ibid., H. of L., CLXXXIII (6 February 1908), 1026.

it may be necessary, Before all things, to sustain the solidarity of all European interests in Asia against the possible denial of the rights acquired by the European Powers in that continent'.³² It implored the Government to be prepared for the challenge.

Meanwhile, the Government was getting some much-needed support from its own Liberal press. The Economist greeted the arrangement for putting to rest for once and for all the 'Russian bogey' in Asia. Both Morley and the Government of India, it said, could now get on with the task of cutting the cost of defending the North-West Frontier.³³ The Westminster Gazette repeated the words of Grey and Asquith that the entente was a boon to international peace. Indeed, for that newspaper the gain to Europe was so great that to have foregone a good understanding between London and St. Petersburg in order to clear the nation's conscience about associating with a reactionary Power would have been 'to sacrifice the greater morality to the lesser'.³⁴ And a leading Liberal Imperialist paper, the Daily Chronicle, tried to dispel fears that the agreement would have an adverse impact on conditions in Russia. Any settlement concerning only Asian frontiers could not have much effect in these directions, it argued.³⁵ Taken together, these arguments did not remove all left-wing doubts about the Convention, but they did help to pacify many of its erstwhile opponents in the Radical press. The Manchester Guardian, while

³² Pall Mall Gazette, 7 February 1908. See also The Times, loc. cit., for similar sentiments.

³³ Economist, 28 September 1907.

³⁴ Westminster Gazette, 2 September 1907.

³⁵ Daily Chronicle, 24 September 1907.

deprecating 'any steps which made it easier for the Russian Government to finance its counter-revolution', nevertheless conceded the force of these views. 'We do not want to prejudice the settlement of our neighbour's internal affairs', ran its leader article of 2 September 1907, 'but we do want to avoid quarrels with our neighbour'. Similarly, the Nation promised to reserve judgment till it had seen the effect the arrangement would have on the reduction of military expenditure.³⁶ For the time being, at least, the Anglo-Russian Convention would not be an emotionally divisive issue in Britain.

Nor did it appear in subsequent months that the agreement would ever again become a source of major controversy. For despite the continuing quarrel in Persia between Muhammed Ali Shah and the Constitutionals over matters of reform, the Russians had refrained from intervention. Indeed, there were moments when it seemed as if they had chosen an active policy of co-operation with Britain. In December 1907, when the Shah's threat to close the Majlis resulted in protests and demonstrations throughout the country, the Russian and British legations in Teheran jointly conferred with the Persian ruler and dissuaded him from taking such a step. That the Russians had, for once, abstained from interfering on behalf of the Shah against the reformers was attributed by large sections of the British press to the arrangement made four months earlier. The Scotsman, for example, hailed Russia's behaviour as 'the first substantial fruit of the Anglo-Russian Convention',³⁷ to which the Spectator hastened to add that without that arrangement, the likelihood

³⁶ Nation, 28 September 1907.

³⁷ Scotsman, 25 December 1907.

of an Anglo-Russian war would have been much greater.³⁸

2. Persia, the Balkans, and Great Power politics produce more doubts

But for some, such optimism ended quickly when developments in the spring of 1908 made it obvious that Russia had no intention of allowing the Persians to settle their own affairs. In April, the Russians fabricated a border incident supposedly involving nomadic Persian tribes in order to begin a series of military raids into Azerbaijan province under the guise of punitive expeditions; in June, Colonel Liakhoff, the Russian commander of the Shah's Cossack Brigade, took a leading part in forcibly breaking up the Mailis; while earlier Hartwig, the Russian minister at Teheran, had been engaged in secret negotiations with Muhammed Ali to strengthen Russia's grip on Persian finances. In Britain, there were varied reactions to these developments, or what was known of them. As far as the Government was concerned, Russia had done nothing to violate the terms of the 1907 Convention. When pressed in the Commons about the role Liakhoff and his subordinates were playing in the Persian capital, Sir Edward Grey replied that they were merely acting in their capacity as bodyguards of the Shah and not as Russian agents.³⁹ To The Times, the troubles on the Perso-Caucasian border were yet another example of Oriental disrespect for European 'rights' and interests. 'The Russian frontier guards', it wrote, 'have been compelled to regard the Persian brigands in very much the same light as that in which we regard the Pathan tribes on our Indian frontier. They have watched them with armed vigilance, and, when provoked, have

³⁸ Spectator, 28 December 1907.

³⁹ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXCI (27 July 1908), 976.

struck back'.⁴⁰ British Radicals, however, had other ideas about the Russian moves. Immediately after the coup against the Persian National Assembly, the Daily News pointed out that Russia's record throughout the crisis had been one of 'alternate menace and intrigue'.⁴¹ A few days later, the Manchester Guardian voiced the same concern, only more explicitly. If the Russian officers continued their activities unimpeded, it wrote, there would be 'an end of (Russia) neutrality and sooner or later of Persian independence'.⁴² It was, in fact, these doubts about Russian activities that gave birth to the Persia Committee in the House of Commons. Spurred on by the allegations of E.G. Browne, the Persian scholar and Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, a number of Radical M.P.s banded together with the intention of bringing pressure to bear on the British Government to safeguard Persia against Russian encroachments.⁴³

But if the Anglo-Russian Convention was producing the complications in Persia that many Radicals had anticipated, its effect in Europe went far beyond their worst expectations. Already within twelve months of its signing, steps which unquestionably helped rehabilitate the Russian autocracy had been taken in the name of promoting friendlier relations between

40 The Times, 25 May 1908.

41 Daily News, 24 June 1908.

42 Manchester Guardian, 27 June 1908.

43 Browne was living in England at the time he made his accusations, but he based them on information he had received from close friends in Persia, some of whom were important figures in the reform movement. He charged the Russians with massing troops along the Persian frontier, anchoring a warship off the Persian Caspian port Enzeli in order to intimidate the Constitutionalists in nearby Resht, and suppressing two leading liberal Muslim newspapers which had been circulating in the Russian sphere. (See Edward G. Browne, 'The Persian crisis: a reply', Fortnightly Review, LXXXIV (July-Dec. 1908), 696; also his letter to the editor of The Times, 17 September 1908, p.4.) As for the Persia Committee, it acted as a pressure group both in Parliament and outside. H.F.B. Lynch was its chairman in the Commons, where its ranks included some Labour as well as Radical Liberal members. Professor Browne headed its extra-parliamentary wing.

London and St. Petersburg. Almost immediately after the signing of the compact, the City commenced negotiations with French banks for issuing more loans to Russia.⁴⁴ And in May 1908, it was announced that Edward VII was planning a trip to the Baltic port Reval, where he would meet his nephew Nicholas II on state business. The news of the proposed visit provoked a furore in Radical and Socialist circles. H.N. Brailsford, the leader-writer for the Nation, complained that it introduced an element of 'emotional cordiality' into Britain's hitherto formal and correct relationship with the autocracy.⁴⁵ In Parliament, Keir Hardie said the visit would condone the atrocities for which the Tsar's Government, and the Tsar personally, must be held responsible'.⁴⁶ Yet to many left-wingers, the King's forthcoming visit portended something even more ominous than closer links with a repressive régime. For them, it was the latest of a growing number of indications that the true purpose behind entente diplomacy was not to settle distant colonial questions or promote world peace but rather to encircle Germany and diminish her power and prestige on the Continent. In the autumn of 1905, the affair of the Delcassé revelations had alerted them to the possibility that the Anglo-French Agreements amounted to something more than a friendly understanding.⁴⁷ In 1906-7, the repeated statements

⁴⁴ Daily News, 18 February 1908.

⁴⁵ H.N. Brailsford, 'Liberalism and the Russian Government', Socialist Review, I (July, 1908), 337.

⁴⁶ Hansard, Parl. Debates, Fourth Series, H. of C., CXC (4 June 1908), 253.

⁴⁷ In October 1905, French foreign minister Delcassé made a series of disclosures to Stephanie Lauzanne, editor of the Matin, alleging that, at the time of the Moroccan crisis, the British Government had offered to give France full naval support and to land one hundred thousand men on the Schleswig-Holstein coast should war break out with Germany. Lauzanne subsequently published the allegations in his paper, and a major uproar

of Grey and the Foreign Office about the necessity of re-establishing Russia's 'position and influence in the councils of Europe' led them to suspect that there was more than met the eye to the approaching Anglo-Russian Entente as well.⁴⁸ And now in 1908 Edward VII, accompanied by Admiral Fisher and Sir John French, was paying an official visit to Russia to meet the Tsar and his military leaders, a meeting which followed closely on the heels of French President 'allières' visit to London. True, as yet there was no definite connection between these events, but as the Daily News noted, much of the French press had linked them together and discussed them in an anti-German context. 'Only those who prefer to be misled', it said, could be satisfied that the Reval visit had no ulterior purpose.⁴⁹ Along with other left-wing organs, it pleaded with the Government to have the King cancel the trip.

This storm over the royal visit to Russia had scarcely passed when the eruption of a major crisis in the Balkans in the autumn of 1908 provided the Government's foreign policy critics with fresh cause for concern. Initially, British public opinion was united in its approach to the episode. Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria's repudiation of Turkish suzerainty were condemned in every quarter of the press as two ill-conceived acts which threatened to upset a

ensued in Britain, France, and Germany. Lansdowne and the Foreign Office immediately denied that any such offer was made. Nevertheless, suspicions remained in some Radical circles that the Government had made some sort of secret military commitment to France.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Brailsford's letter to the editor of The Times, 10 September 1907, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Daily News, 10 June 1908.

precarious status quo in this quarter of Europe. Likewise, Turkey's appeal to the Great Powers to help redress the situation met with almost universal sympathy in the newspapers.⁵⁰ But when in mid-October Grey and his French and Russian counterparts, Pichon and Iswolsky, announced their intention to press for a European conference in spite of Austro-German objections, differences began to emerge. On the whole, Conservative and Liberal newspapers supported the Anglo-French-Russian Note. It promised to secure compensation for Turkey, they said, and besides Grey, by reaffirming Britain's adherence to the Treaty of Berlin, had cast the nation in the role of protector of international law.⁵¹

Certain Radical organs, on the other hand, found little reason to be happy. While not denying that the Foreign Secretary's efforts to find a solution constituted an act of great statesmanship, they were worried by the long-term effects of his policies. The Nation, for instance, was afraid that by co-operating with the Russians in the Balkans, the British Government was in danger of overlooking the menace that St. Petersburg posed to the recently established Young Turk régime at Constantinople. 'Russian public opinion is rather anti-Austrian than pro-Turkish', it warned, 'and it is so because it is Pan-Slavist'.⁵² The Daily News was worried by 'the grouping of the Powers in two closely-knit leagues'. A Triple Entente confronts a Triple Alliance, it noted, 'and

⁵⁰ Daily Telegraph, 6 October 1908; also Daily News, 7 October 1908; and Morning Post, 10 October 1908.

⁵¹ Westminster Gazette, 8 October 1908; also Pall Mall Gazette, 16 October 1908; and Daily Telegraph, 5 November 1908.

⁵² Nation, 24 October 1908.

between the two there is no place for any independent or uncommitted body of opinion'.⁵³ Precisely how Europe got itself into this state of affairs was a matter about which the Radicals did not agree. For the Manchester Guardian, the rivalry was more apparent than real; it laid the blame on those who had first mooted the idea of a conference 'as though Europe consisted not of a Concert but of two hostile groups of Powers', adding that 'the bad feeling thus engendered still persists'.⁵⁴ Others maintained that the unswerving and often blind loyalty of each of the major Powers to its friends and allies had long ago made this type of confrontation a likelihood. In this case it was Germany who had rushed forward to side with Austria; but, they reminded their readers, Britain's support for France in Morocco and even her slender excuses to cover Russian behaviour in Persia had also helped to close the ranks.⁵⁵ On one point, however, the Radicals fully concurred: Britain could not offer any effective mediation between the two sides; for she had now become too closely identified with the Franco-Russian group.

Thus by the end of 1908 British public opinion was still not altogether assured about the Anglo-Russian Entente. If the passage of time had silenced those who earlier had criticized the terms of the 1907 Convention, it had done nothing to allay the anxieties of those who worried about the

⁵³ Daily News, 20 November 1908.

⁵⁴ Manchester Guardian, 27 November 1908.

⁵⁵ Nation, 14 November 1908.

moral and diplomatic implications of that arrangement. On the contrary, fear was as great as ever in Britain that the Convention had jeopardized Persian and Russian parliamentarianism and hindered the chances of a permanent Anglo-German reconciliation. And this fear was to remain widespread throughout the next several years of crisis and tension before the outbreak of the Great War.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The diplomatic rapprochement known as the Entente Cordiale which took place in the early years of the twentieth century had from the moment of its inception the endorsement of the bulk of the British people. Even before the successful State visit of King Edward VII to Paris in the spring of 1903 a number of people had been agitating for better relations between London and Paris, but in its wake this number grew appreciably so that by 8 April 1904, the date on which the famous colonial Convention was signed, there was hardly any informed person in Britain who had any strong objection to improved ties with France. At first much of this agitation amounted to little more than a prudent desire to avoid quarrels, as was reflected in the very widespread call both in newspaper and political circles first for an arbitration treaty and then for a comprehensive settlement of outstanding colonial disputes as the ideal goals to be reached in the relations between the two countries. Not long afterwards, however, such agitation increasingly took on the form of a wish to see genuine friendship established with the French, and it was with this aim in mind that Sir Thomas Barclay started the notion of 'municipal ententes' and promoted a series of exchange visits between ordinary working Englishmen and Frenchmen.

Needless to say, many of these people who had such high expectations of the Entente were pleased with the course which Anglo-French relations took over the next few years, but there were others who were not. Some right-wingers in Britain, a number of whom had never completely reconciled themselves to the 'losses' involved in the 1904 Agreements, noted a certain

ruthlessness and determination in French imperialism which they felt came at Britain's expense and hence was contrary to what they construed to be the proper spirit of the Entente. British businessmen found to their dismay that the diplomatic understanding between the two Governments had done nothing to lower French tariffs or create an 'Open Door' policy in France's overseas empire, while several City financiers discovered to their disillusionment that the rapprochement had done nothing to put an end to the intrigues and sharp practices of their French counterparts in various parts of the world. Britain's military and naval leaders and defence strategists, while not exactly unhappy with the general direction which relations between the two countries had taken since 1903-4, did nevertheless entertain throughout these years deep suspicions about France's long-term aims and, indeed, on occasion expressed annoyance with France's behaviour, particularly during the Russo-Japanese War. Meanwhile, the Left in Britain was becoming increasingly uneasy about the very closeness of Anglo-French relations and openly wondered whether the Entente had got converted into an alliance.

Looking back over the whole matter, it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. Too many people drew too many different, and, at times, conflicting interpretations about the function and purpose of the Anglo-French Entente for everyone to be satisfied. To Conservatives and Liberal Imperialists it was a development which bolstered Britain's position in the world and helped the nation meet the challenge of Weltpolitik. To Radicals and Socialists, on the other hand, it was a watershed in the history of the Powers which marked the decline of imperialist rivalry as a major factor in international relations

and which heralded a series of diplomatic agreements eventually culminating in world peace. To businessmen and francophiles in general it was a wide-encompassing arrangement designed primarily to remove all grievances and antipathies between the peoples of the two countries. But to the civil servants and high-ranking Foreign Office men it was first and foremost a diplomatic event whose less political side was at times a nuisance which threatened to harm the basically happy relationship between London and Paris. Given these diverse and sometimes opposing constructions placed upon the Entente, it was virtually impossible for any British Government, whether Liberal or Conservative, to try and steer relations with France along a certain path without causing offence to some section of the British public at home. Admittedly, the Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman, and Asquith Ministries might well have retained a more open mind than they did when listening to the views of these newspapers and other organs of opinion which deplored the anti-German direction which the Entente was taking. But this is not to deny the fundamental delicacy of their position vis-à-vis the various sections of public opinion.

Not that there was ever much danger of this dissatisfaction leading to widespread demands for a renunciation of the Entente. In the first place, many of those who had voiced the greatest dissent blamed misguided statesmen and politicians on both sides of the Channel, and not the Entente itself, for any shortcomings or drawbacks in Anglo-French relations. This was particularly true of businessmen and the various exponents of a more pacifist foreign policy in Britain, both of whom went over the

heads of their governors by establishing contacts with their equivalents in France to try to secure what they felt to be the original and proper aims of the rapprochement. In the second place, the very manner in which the various writers and editors approached foreign affairs in their books and articles made such a possibility remote. Far from presenting France in a completely impartial and unbiassed light, they insisted upon portraying her as the ideal country with which to enter into diplomatic partnership. French foreign policy, they told their readers, was essentially cautious and pacific; French political institutions they said were stable and secure; while the French people they constantly referred to as serious-minded, hard-working, and reliable. Confronted with the delivery of these and similar themes virtually every day, even the most isolationist-minded and Francophobic of British newspaper readers must have been tempted to regard the Entente as a blessing.

Of course, editors, journalists, and individual writers did have some difficulty in correlating these themes with what was actually happening on the other side of the Channel. On specific occasions of considerable moment, most notably, the labour disturbances of 1906-7 and the sudden overthrow of the Combes and Rouvier Ministries, they were able to make such a correlation, but, as we have seen, only thanks to the most subtle manipulations of argument. Other events, in particular, the rather nervous dismissal of M. Delcassé in the spring of 1905, they were at a loss to explain, much as they had been proved wrong about the future of the Dual Alliance. Nor could they really account for the widely differing approaches made in the two countries to tackle highly similar 'problems' like the rise

of Socialism or the threat posed to the State by established religions. Instead, writers merely pointed out these differences and argued that they made for interesting, if not necessarily instructive, comparisons with events at home. Similarly, they were never able to tell their readers in specific terms how two peoples of such differing temperaments could be drawn together into an enduring partnership. Rather, they contented themselves with echoing the age-old saying that 'opposites attract' and that, far from being inconsistent, these differences were of a complementary and co-ordinating kind. Indeed, the flattering image which they so persistently sought to portray of France was more often than not fraught with imperfections and made up of half-truths.

Many of these remarks apply to the Anglo-Russian Entente as well. Once again imperialists berated a British Government for exchanging too much for too little with a foreign Power; once again Radicals and Socialists expressed fears that the country was following a course that was bound to alienate and antagonise Germany; and once again businessmen complained that in certain overseas areas, most notably in Persia, the country with which Britain had entered into agreement had not behaved fully in the spirit of the original compact. Yet for all these similarities there was a fundamental difference between the Anglo-French understanding and its sequel of three years later. The former was made between two Powers of basically similar types of government whose peoples, thanks to their close geographical proximity, had long exerted a major influence over each other in numerous fields. The latter arrangement could make no such claims. As a result, whenever sympathisers with the Government

and its foreign policy tried to justify the existence of the Anglo-Russian understanding they could only do so in terms of strategic and financial considerations, not for reasons of political and cultural affinities. The distinction is an important one; for it meant that newspapers could not bolster the standing of the Anglo-Russian Entente with a series of underlying and highly inter-related themes, as they had done in the case of the French Entente. Equally, it lent credence to the belief that the 1907 understanding was an 'unnatural' arrangement with no rational explanation, unless it was designed to encircle Germany. And it was this belief, coupled with the warnings of certain well-organised groups about the adverse impact of the 1907 Agreements on the welfare of Persian and Russian parliamentarianism, that goes a long way towards explaining why the Russian Entente was considerably less popular than the French Entente in Britain.

TABLE 1: Value of cross-Channel trade between Great Britain and France, 1899-1908

	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908
Imports from France into the United Kingdom (in £1,000s.)	53,000	53,618	51,213	50,642	49,347	51,107	53,072	51,640	54,760	47,184
Exports from the United Kingdom into France (in £1,000s.)	15,283	19,977	16,472	15,587	15,800	15,254	16,142	20,444	23,496	22,321
Total exports from the United Kingdom into France (in £1,000s.) ²	22,277	25,877	23,700	22,275	23,146	21,702	23,232	29,920	35,320	31,716

TABLE 2: Index of the most staple exports from the United Kingdom into France and their value, 1899-1908

Item and value (in £1,000s.):	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908
Woollen Mfgs. and Yarn	1,861	1,665	1,336	1,935	1,932	1,778	1,621	1,866	1,952	1,925
Metals (chiefly iron and copper)	1,790	1,502	1,303	1,029	979	933	1,375	1,939	2,062	1,948
Coals	3,448	6,993	5,199	4,378	3,878	3,534	3,401	4,799	6,444	6,413
Cotton Mfgs. and Yarn	647	851	965	961	914	924	1,006	1,310	1,692	1,390
Machinery	1,376	1,753	1,456	1,439	1,429	1,330	1,399	1,846	2,064	2,054
Chemicals	585	644	460	543	943	988	859	—	—	—

1 All figures quoted in this Appendix are from the Statesman's Yearbook, 1902-1910.

2 The goods in this column comprise raw materials and foodstuffs from the various parts of the Empire that were manufactured or processed in Britain before being exported to France, as well as ordinary British exports to France.

3 Indicates no figures available.

APPENDIX (continued)TABLE 3: Approximate percentage of British exports to France of the total value of British exports, 1900-1908.

YEAR	TOTAL VALUE OF BRITISH EXPORTS	TOTAL VALUE OF BRITISH EXPORTS INTO FRANCE	PER CENT
	£	£	
1900	354,373,754	25,877,453	7.30
1901	347,864,268	23,700,820	6.81
1902	349,238,779	22,275,721	6.38
1903	360,373,672	23,146,730	6.42
1904	371,015,321	21,702,405	5.85
1905	400,120,895	23,232,663	5.81
1906	453,355,251	29,920,000	6.60
1907	517,977,167	35,320,000	6.82
1908	456,727,521	31,716,000	6.94

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