PART I
CHAPTER I

THE INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND (1815–1830)

I. CASTLEREAGH, CANNING AND WELLINGTON

From 1815 to 1830 three statesmen controlled the foreign policy of England: Castlereagh, 1815–1822; Canning, 1822–1827; Wellington\(^1\), 1827–1830.

Castlereagh was Pitt’s right-hand man during the negotiation of the Irish Union in 1800; and in 1805, the year of Austerlitz and Trafalgar, the dying statesman made him Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. In 1812 Castlereagh became Foreign Secretary, and at the Congress of Vienna (1814) he was England’s senior plenipotentiary. This was the hey-day of his fame. After 1815 his unpopularity in domestic affairs obscured his services as Foreign Minister. He was not the originator of the Government’s domestic policy, but, as leader of the House of Commons (the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, being in the House of Lords), he was its mouthpiece; and whether he had to defend the unpopular\(^2\) Income Tax, as in 1816, against the nation’s “ignorant impatience of taxation”\(^3\), or to move the suspension of Habeas Corpus, he was impervious at all times to criticism and threats. But the strain of office told upon him and in August 1822 he committed suicide, even as had the brewer, in 1815, and Romilly, the lawyer, in 1818.

On hearing of his death Byron gloated and delivered himself of epigrams:

So Castlereagh has cut his throat!—the worst
Of this is—that his own was not the first.

Byron also wrote an epitaph—but we must pass on.

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\(^1\) In the reconstructed Tory Ministry of 1828, Wellington was Prime Minister and Aberdeen Foreign Secretary.

\(^2\) An Irishman (in England—the tax was not imposed in Ireland till 1853) wrote on his assessment paper: “Take notice, I have cut the throats of all my horses, I have shot all my dogs, I have burnt all my carriages, I have dismissed all my servants except my wife, and therefore I conceive I cannot be liable to any assessment whatever”—William Smart, Economic Annals (1801–20), p. 469.

\(^3\) This was the expression which the Opposition accused him of using. See Hansard, 3rd S. xxxiii. 228 and 458.
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George Canning was a man of brilliant parts, brilliant as a scholar at Eton and Christ Church, brilliant as an orator, brilliant as a wit. "He saw everything in a flash, he divined the weak point of an opponent or a policy in a second"\(^1\), but he was sensitive and ambitious and a mocker of men. Quarrels (including a duel with Castlereagh), resignations, refusals loomed large in his life; and the greater part of his work was crowded into the last five years. Like Huskisson, he was a liberally-minded Tory. The two represented in turn the port of Liverpool (which perpetuates their memory in the streets and docks named after them), and acquired an insight—in Huskisson’s case an unrivalled insight—into the mind of commercial England. Huskisson, Shipping and Navigation are inseparable associations; but the figure of Canning is more elusive. His jests we know full well.

Pitt is to Addington
As London is to Paddington.

So Canning wrote, and covered the “Doctor” (for Addington’s father was physician to the Earl of Chatham) with immortal ridicule. His rhyming despatch of 31 January, 1826, is the one cheery item in the dull complexities of the Navigation Laws and the fungus-like growth of tariff discriminations which had overspread that once massive code. It ran:

Separate Secret and Confidential. (In Cypher.)

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 31st, 1826.

Sir,

In matters of Commerce the fault of the Dutch is offering too little and asking too much. The French are with equal advantage content—so we clap on Dutch bottoms just 20 per cent. Chorus, 20 per cent., 20 per cent. Chorus of English Custom House Officers and French Douaniers. English, “We clap on Dutch bottoms just 20 per cent.”; French, “Vous frappez Falk avec 20 per cent.”

I have no other Command from His Majesty to convey to your Excellency to-day.

I am, with great truth and respect,

Sir,

Your Excellency’s
Most obedient humble servant

H. E.


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\(^1\) H. W. V. Temperley, *Life of Canning*, p. 263.

\(^2\) Version in *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, 1. p. 438.
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Canning died in 1827 after being Premier for only four months, and he was buried, as he would have desired, at the foot of the grave of Pitt.

The Duke of Wellington needs no introduction, but a machine gunner returning to economics may perhaps be allowed this thought—Wellington in the end outmatched his opponents, as decisively as Foch outmatched Ludendorff. To resist the tirailleurs he created outpost troops of Light Infantry, who excelled the French sharp-shooters at their own tactics. He evaded the weight of Napoleon's artillery bombardments (and Napoleon was the greatest artillery general of all time) by skilful concealment of his troops behind the crest, and with his battalions deployed in a firing line of two ranks he mowed down Napoleon's advancing columns. He was able to do all these things because he had mastered, even better than its author, the meaning of Napoleon's maxim that "in war fire power is everything, the rest is of small account". Therefore Wellington's infantry was trained to fire straighter and faster than any infantry in Europe.

The year of Waterloo was the zenith of Wellington's career, as it was of Castlereagh's, and his conservative opposition to domestic change brought on him some of the odium which worried Castlereagh into suicide; but he weathered this, as he weathered every difficulty of his life, and, when he died in honour in 1852, it could be said of him that he had never deserted his Sovereign in a difficulty, and that in three great constitutional crises—Catholic Emancipation 1829, the Reform Bill 1832, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws 1846—he had saved his country from disaster and his fellow Peers from making fools of themselves.

Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense1.

1 Tennyson: Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.
2. THE HOLY ALLIANCE AND THE QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE

The Congress of Vienna rearranged the map of Europe and prescribed the terms of peace. But how was this peace to be kept? Two solutions were propounded, the one ideal, the other practical.

The ideal was enunciated by the Czar of Russia in the Holy Alliance, whereby the Sovereigns of Russia, Prussia and Austria bound themselves “agreeably to the words of Holy Scripture which commends all men to love as brothers, to remain united in the bonds of truth and indissoluble brotherly love; always to assist one another; to govern their subjects as parents; to maintain religion, peace and justice. They consider themselves but as members of one and the same Christian family commissioned by Providence to govern the branches of one family. They call on all Powers who acknowledge similar principles to join this Holy Alliance”.

To England’s representative this was a “piece of mysticism and nonsense”; and in the event the Holy Alliance proved a loud-sounding nothing.

The practical solution was the one followed. It was a European Concert based on the alliance of the four great Powers on the winning side. Into this concert France was admitted three years after Waterloo; for by 1818 the Army of Occupation had been withdrawn, and France, aided by English financiers, had given guarantees for her remaining debts to the Allies.

The professed object of the Quadruple Alliance was to keep the peace, but under Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, and notwithstanding the opposition of England, it became the champion of reaction, maintaining the peace of Europe by stifling the efforts of the peoples of Europe to secure constitutional reform.

Thus in 1820 it sanctioned the intervention of Austria in Italy for the purpose of restoring the autocracy of Naples. “States”, it ordained, “which have undergone a change of government due to revolution, the result of which threatens other States, ipso facto cease to be members of the European Alliance”. In
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which case “the Powers bind themselves...if need be by arms to bring back the guilty State into the bosom of the Great Alliance”¹. In 1822 it authorised France to suppress the liberal revolt in Spain, and in 1826 it favoured France’s design of extending its repressive activity to Portugal. The Greek War of Independence was repellant to Austria, but Phil-Hellenic sentiment in England and France made intervention against Greece impossible, with the result that in 1827 England and France, joined by Russia, pledged themselves to secure the autonomy of Greece, and in 1831 the terms of her independence, boundaries and constitution, were agreed upon and guaranteed by them.

3. THE POLICY OF ENGLAND

On the main issue England’s policy was consistent throughout these years. She worked for peace, favouring the rôle of conciliator, but she would not allow herself to be dragged into intervention on the side of reaction, and she was prepared to oppose intervention by other Powers up to the point of intervening on the other side.

Thus Castlereagh pronounced the domestic revolution in Spain (1822), “a matter with which, in the opinion of the English Cabinet, no Foreign Power has the smallest right to interfere”. Canning continued Castlereagh’s policy in more assertive fashion. Whereas Castlereagh tried to use the Alliance as an instrument for maintaining peace between the Powers, Canning advertised England’s opposition to continental reaction by flouting the Alliance and taking a line of his own. Metternich described him as “the malevolent meteor hurled by an angry Providence upon Europe”. His rejoinder to the intervention in Spain was the recognition of the independence of the revolted Spanish Colonies in South America. As he said in Parliament on December 12, 1826, “I called the New World into

¹ Castlereagh protested against this doctrine, arguing that the guarantees of Vienna (1814) were territorial and did not extend to internal questions. The guarantees given by the Covenant of the League of Nations are similarly confined.
existence to redress the balance of the Old”¹. The next year he
defied the alliance of the Great Powers even more openly by
sending a British force to Lisbon to protect the Constitutional
party in Portugal against the intrigue of the Powers².

Wellington, the soldier, was less bellicose than Canning. In
1822, in the Spanish broil, he laid down, as our representative
at the Congress of Verona, that “while there was no sympathy
and would be none between England and Revolutionists and
Jacobins”, England must insist on “the right of nations to set
up over themselves whatever form of government they thought
best”. In 1828 he insisted on the withdrawal of the English
troops from Portugal; and he based his action on the profound
experience which he had obtained of Spanish and Portuguese
affairs during the Peninsular War. He objected to the British
Army being used as a cat’s paw in Peninsular quarrels, and he
objected equally to England being turned by Portuguese
refugees into an insurgents’ den.

The support given to the cause of Greek independence led
to friction with Turkey, from whom Greece had revolted.
England unexpectedly found herself in a state of war with
Turkey, when in the October of 1827 the allied fleets destroyed
the Turkish fleet in Navarino Bay. But in the Russo-Turkish
War, which developed out of this, when the Turk proclaimed a
Holy War and Russia accepted the challenge, England resumed
her traditional rôle of friendship with Turkey and assisted in
securing the final independence of Greece, less from enthusiasm
for the cause of Greece than from the desire to have at the gate
to the East a genuinely independent kingdom, and not one which,
while nominally a part of the Turkish Empire, might be an out-
post of Russia. Therefore friendship with the “sick man”,
infidel and tyrant though he was, was deemed preferable to
concerted action against him, which might end by killing him.

¹ Hansard, 3rd S. xvi. 397.
² Canning’s intervention was in accordance with an old treaty obligation,
and official records show that Castlereagh was prepared to intervene in the
same sense in 1821.
4. THE U.S.A. AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

In the Western Hemisphere there was fortunately no longer any conflict of interest between England and her revolted daughter, the United States of America. In 1823 it was rumoured that France was anxious to extend her intervention from the Old World to the New. England bluntly said “no”, and was backed by the United States. On December 2, 1823, President Monroe, with Secretary Adams behind him, sent to Congress the famous message, which is the origin of the Monroe Doctrine. The message declared:

With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European Power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it— [the reference is to South America]—and whose independence we have on great consideration and on just principles acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European Power, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.

America’s duty was summed up by Jefferson thus: “Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs....Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of anyone, or all on earth; and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world”.

To this policy America was faithful in the decades that followed, departing from it only when Germany’s methods of warfare and the threat which Germany’s methods implied to all free Governments on both sides of the Atlantic made it impossible to separate the affairs of Europe from the affairs of

1 Cambridge Modern History, vii, p. 369.
2 J. B. Henderson, American Diplomatic Questions, p. 321. The Monroe Doctrine, as enunciated in 1823 went further than Canning liked in the assertion of America’s separateness from Europe. Its scope was greatly extended in the course of the century; and now by Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations it has been officially recognised in international law.
The steady insistence on "hands off America" was an unalloyed benefit to all the peoples of the New World, and the United States were ready to admit that it demanded from them a quid pro quo. Indirectly, indeed, the Monroe Doctrine did interfere with the policy of Europe in Europe; for the cooperation of Great Britain and the United States in the liberation of South America weakened the Holy Alliance in Europe, and making the New World safe for democracy made the Old World less secure in its legitimism. But in the matter of direct action America recognised that she was pledged to non-intervention in Europe. This standpoint, and the length of time it was consistently upheld, threw light on America's policy during the recent War. At first a few of us thought, and thought wrongly, that America, though she knew she ought to enter the War, was holding back from considerations of profit and the fear of unfavourable reactions on her internal peace. Then later, not merely a few, but many of us thought that when she was clearly moving towards war she moved too slowly, encumbered by a democratic publicity which made decisive action impossible. We learnt our mistake in this matter too, when we saw how once war had been declared by her, she adopted instantly the system of national service at which we had shied for two acrimonious years. But what we can also see now, as students of history, is that America was restrained, for a time, by an unwillingness to go back on the instinctive policy to which she had definitely committed herself in 1823 and which since 1823 she had faithfully observed.

5. TO-DAY AND ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

To-day, as a hundred years ago, we have before us an ideal and a fact: the Covenant of the League of Nations and Peace. But the two are not divorced. The working out of the ideal is
