Lukas Fallwickl

"I Know Much Better than You Do"

British Ambassadors to Austria in Conflict with their Government, 1848–1855

Abstract: In much the same way as today, nineteenth-century diplomats were expected to represent their government politically abroad and implement foreign policy as decided by their superiors. However, quite a few of them held personal views that conflicted with their instructions, causing numerous difficulties. British diplomats sent to the Habsburg Monarchy provide a prime example of this problem, with Anglo-Austrian relations strained by ideological conflicts and British ambassadors repeatedly ending up supporting the Austrian point of view. This article uses two of them, Lord Ponsonby and Lord Westmorland, as case studies, focusing on their diplomatic practice and the changing relationships with their superiors. It examines the extent of their agency, the consequences of rebellious behaviour, and their ability to influence British foreign policy according to their own convictions.

Keywords: Anglo-Austrian relations, British foreign policy, Ponsonby, Westmorland, revolution of 1848, Crimean War, diplomatic practice, diplomatic agency

Over the past two decades, New Diplomatic History has seen a strong resurgence of interest in the history of British foreign policy, with a thematic and methodological expansion of the field.[1] Although a large proportion or perhaps the majority of new accounts still follow the traditional state-centred focus on decision-making,[2] influ-

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2024-35-2-3

Accepted for publication after external peer review (double blind)

Lukas Fallwickl, Department of History, University of Salzburg, Rudolfskai 42, 5020 Salzburg, Austria; lukas.fallwickl@plus.ac.at

1 For a discussion of general trends, see Patrick Finney, Anglo-American International History after the Cultural Turn, in: Barbara Haider-Wilson/William D. Godsey/Wolfgang Mueller (eds.), Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis, Wien 2017, 231–252.

2 While this approach can still yield innovative results, it often neglects the importance of cultural aspects as well as many methodological advances of the past decades. Cf. Falko Schnicke, 'Output

ences of various cultural, societal, and material forces in foreign policy and diplomacy have been explored.[3] Yet relatively few studies concentrate on individual British diplomats, and even fewer consider their personal influence on foreign policy.[4] Especially for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they have often been ignored or neglected as merely executing orders, assuming that they did so "without offering any opinion or showing any initiative of their own".[5] As recently as 2019, O.J. Wright felt the need to remind us of the diplomats' significant role within the system, pointing out that their "individual characters and opinions […] held the potential to influence their home governments' perspectives and policy towards a foreign power".[6] Apart from being responsible for the implementation of a prime minister's or foreign secretary's decisions, their main task was to collect, process, and regularly transmit information of a political, social, economic, or military nature, "so as to ensure informed decision-making" at the ministry at home.[7] This places them at the centre in a double sense, as "both the primary organizer of foreign policy and the recipient of its directives".[8] As Falko Schnicke has argued, examining diplomatic practice can "join decision-making with the conduct of foreign policy" and further the understanding of the relationship between diplomacy and foreign policy.[9] Therefore, New Diplomatic History's focus on professional diplomats is not only suited to explore a 'culture of diplomacy' but can and should also be a vital expansion of the government-centred perspective of foreign policy.

To illustrate this with concrete examples, this article examines the conduct and communication of two nineteenth-century British ambassadors to Austria, focus-

matters more than process'? Writing the History of Twentieth-Century British Foreign Policy, in: English Historical Review 135/573 (2020), 417–434, 431–432.

3 See, for example, John Fisher/Anthony Best (eds.), On the Fringes of Diplomacy. Influences on British Foreign Policy, 1800–1945, Farnham/Burlington 2011; Keith Robbins/John Fisher (eds.), Religion and Diplomacy. Religion and British Foreign Policy, 1815–1941, Dordrecht 2010; Jason Dittmer, Diplomatic Material. Affect, Assemblage, and Foreign Policy, Durham/London 2017.

4 Jennifer Mori, The Culture of Diplomacy. Britain in Europe, c. 1750–1830, Manchester/New York 2010, which examines ca. 50 diplomats and their families, is particularly impressive. Other examples are Scott W. Murray, Liberal Diplomacy and German Unification. The Early Career of Robert Morier, Westport 2000; as well as Hugh Cortazzi (ed.), British Envoys in Japan, 1859–1972, Folkestone 2004; and several articles in Markus Mößlang/Torsten Riotte (eds.), The Diplomats' World. A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815–1914, Oxford 2008. The question of influence is most directly investigated by Keith Neilson, "Only a d…d marionette"? The Influence of Ambassadors on British Foreign Policy, 1904–1914, in: Michael L. Dockrill/Brian J. C. McKercher (eds.), World Power and Diplomacy. Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1950, Cambridge 1996, 56–78.

5 Owain J. Wright, Great Britain and the Unifying of Italy. A Special Relationship?, London 2019, 15.

6 Ibid., 17.

7 Thomas G. Otte, The Inner Circle. What is Diplomatic History? (And Why We Should Study it), in: History 105 (2020), 5–27, 13.

8 Kenneth Weisbrode, Diplomacy in Foreign Policy, 2017, in: Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.410 (2 November 2022).

9 Schnicke, Output, (2020), 432.

ing in particular on the relationship between them and their country's policy-makers in London. Lord Ponsonby and Lord Westmorland, selected for this analysis, were active in times of enormous upheaval in European politics, the revolutions of 1848/49 and the Crimean War 1853–1856, and had to mediate between two great powers whose relations were exceedingly strained by ideological differences. Darwin Bostick argues that, judging from the tenor of the popular press, the British image of Austria in the 1850s was one of "autocracy, brutal repression of peoples, servility to Russia, Catholicism and protective tariffs", as opposed to the British self-image of a "liberal, constitutional, Protestant state – the champion of liberty, the defender of oppressed peoples, the exponent of free trade".[10] The two Liberal foreign secretaries in office during the period under study (1848–1855), Viscount Palmerston and the Earl of Clarendon, were both personally committed to this antagonistic ideology and publicly endorsed it in order to maintain their popularity.[11] The result was a predominantly hostile political attitude towards the Habsburg Monarchy. This put the ambassadors in a difficult position trying to reconcile apparently opposing political and cultural norms, with the dichotomy of constitutionalism and reform versus conservative absolutism and repression at the centre of the conflict.[12]

Although diplomats "are committed to the policies and identities of their country of origin", they are also constantly "exposed to a foreign environment".[13] The latter can cause them to, over time, 'go native', that is to adopt the point of view of the government to which they are accredited. Adaptation to the local culture and constant interaction with officials and other influential locals could make them, at best, "lose touch with sentiments at home" or, at worst, "become mouthpieces of the [foreign] government".[14] Perhaps aided by personal ideals and values that could easily be aligned with Austrian policies, their perceptions and experiences in Vienna led both Ponsonby and Westmorland to increasingly switch sides in this way. While David Goldfrank points out that the heads of European missions at this time "were

10 Darwin Fran Bostick, The British Image of Austria, 1846–1878, Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois 1971, 253–254. See also Alex Middleton, Mid-Victorian Liberalism and the Austrian state, 1848–1867, in: History of European Ideas 46/5 (2020), 582–600, 586–588.

11 David Brown, Palmerston and Austria, in: Lothar Höbelt/Thomas G. Otte (eds.), A Living Anachronism? European Diplomacy and the Habsburg Monarchy, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2010, 29–48, 41–43.

12 Matthias Schulz, Internationale Politik und Friedenskultur. Das Europäische Konzert in politikwissenschaftlicher Theorie und historischer Empirie, in: Wolfram Pyta (ed.), Das europäische Mächtekonzert. Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongress 1815 bis zum Krimkrieg 1853, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2009, 41–57, 54–55.

13 Markus Mößlang/Torsten Riotte, Introduction: The Diplomats' World, in: Mößlang/Riotte, World, 2008, 1–20, 18.

14 Geoff R. Berridge, Diplomacy. Theory and Practice, 4th edn., Basingstoke/New York 2010, 107–108 (quotations p. 107).

usually sympathetic to the country where posted",[15] the two ambassadors definitely went further, resulting in problematic and sometimes dysfunctional relationships between them and their superiors – a conflict particularly apt to illustrate the role of diplomats in British foreign policy.

These two case studies of diplomatic practice and professional relations will address, on a more general level, the following questions: What consequences for a state's foreign policy could arise from the opposition between implementers and policymakers? What happened when diplomats 'went native' and supported their country of residence, especially in critical times such as revolution or war? Moreover, regarding the gradual alienation in nineteenth-century Anglo-Austrian relations, the question is whether the British ambassadors' position played a moderating or aggravating role. The main source material used is the private and informal correspondence every envoy maintained with his foreign secretary, which is unpublished and has only rarely been consulted to date, although it often far exceeds the official despatches in terms of relevance, detailed information, and freely expressed opinions.[16] Since this analysis focuses very closely on two individuals, a brief introductory section will be devoted to their biographies. Both belonged to the nobility, which traditionally dominated the British diplomatic service;[17] however, there were also differences in their careers and backgrounds, especially regarding their political affiliations.

Arbitrary dealings: the diplomatic career of Lord Ponsonby

John Brabazon Ponsonby (1770/71–1855) came from a highly influential Irish Whig family. Between 1797 and 1802, he served as an MP in the Irish House of Commons and in the first Parliament of the United Kingdom, with his father William, 1st Baron Ponsonby, and his uncle George being successive leaders of the Whigs in both Parliaments. After succeeding his father as 2nd Baron in 1806 (later created 1st Viscount Ponsonby in 1839), he took to diplomacy rather late in life, probably forced to look for additional income. Lord Ponsonby was appointed envoy to Argentina in 1826 and to Brazil in 1828. When the Whigs came to power in 1830, his influence suddenly increased as his brother-in-law, Earl Grey, became prime minister. The new government sent Ponsonby on a special mission to Brussels in connection with the London Conference on Belgian independence and the question of a new Belgian

15 David M. Goldfrank, The Origins of the Crimean War, Harlow 1994, 28.

16 Cf. Sabine Freitag/Peter Wende (eds.), British Envoys to Germany, 1816–1866, vol. 1: 1816–1829, Cambridge 2000, xix.

17 See Raymond A. Jones, The British Diplomatic Service, 1815–1914, Bucks 1983.

monarch. In this capacity, he first gained some notoriety for high-handedness as a diplomat. However, Grey publicly praised Ponsonby's conduct on his return.[18]

In 1832 Lord Ponsonby was promoted to ambassador at Constantinople, a post he would retain for nine years. During this time, he developed a strong relationship with his superior, long-term Foreign Secretary Palmerston – H.G.C. Matthew calls Ponsonby "an effective if controversial executor of Palmerston's policy" in the East.[19] Their opposition to the expansion of Russian power united them; however, Ponsonby often proved dangerously hard to control. At times, he decided not to follow his instructions when he disagreed with them and afterwards "magnanimously forgave Palmerston for his mistaken ideas and strongly urged him to reconsider his policy".[20] During the Eastern Crisis of 1839–1841, Ponsonby's virulently anti-Russian attitude became problematic. On several occasions he acted against his instructions, often to the detriment of the mediation aims of the temporarily allied powers Britain, Austria, and Russia.[21] In January 1841, the British ambassador in Vienna sent an urgent warning to his brother, Prime Minister Melbourne. He presented evidence of Palmerston's connivance in Ponsonby's actions, which threatened to break up the alliance of the great powers, and shed some light on their cooperation. Palmerston would add to his despatch, which the cabinet had approved, a private letter with his thoughts on the question, often diverging from the official instructions. Ponsonby then "crumples up his instructions and takes the apparently mere gossiping letter for his guidance", Beauvale complained.[22] It seems that the foreign secretary put up with Ponsonby's arbitrary dealings as long as the outcome was sufficiently favourable to his own aims and he could use the ambassador to circumvent the cabinet. When the Whig government fell in August 1841, Palmerston privately thanked Ponsonby for the "able and most successful management" of his affairs.[23] Soon after, Ponsonby was dismissed but five years later, when Palmerston returned to office, he re-entered the service. In August 1846, at the age of about 76, Ponsonby took over the Vienna embassy.

18 George Clement Boase (revised by Henry C. G. Matthew), Ponsonby, John, Viscount Ponsonby, 2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22499 (27 September 2022); Arthur Aspinall, Ponsonby, John Brabazon (c. 1770–1855), of Imokilly, co. Cork, 1986, in: History of Parliament, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/ponsonby-john-brabazon-1770-1855 (27 September 2022); John Ponsonby, The Ponsonby Family, London 1929, 75.

19 Boase/Matthew, Ponsonby. The passage is not included in Boase's original entry from 1896.

20 George Henry Bolsover, Lord Ponsonby and the Eastern Question (1833–39), in: The Slavonic and East European Review 13 (1934), 98–118, 108.

21 Cf. ibid., 106–113. For a recent in-depth analysis, see Miroslav Šedivý, Metternich, the Great Powers and the Eastern Question, Pilsen 2013, especially chapters 18, 23, 27, and 29.

22 British Library (henceforth: BL), Add MS 60476, Beauvale to Melbourne (private), Vienna, 17 January 1841.

23 Durham University Library (henceforth: DUL), GRE/E/481/11, Palmerston to Ponsonby (private), n.p., 26 August 1841.

"[A] man of large views": the revolution of 1848

Although there were few signs of conservative tendencies in Ponsonby's earlier life, given his socialization and strong network in Whig circles, he "underwent something of a conversion on his transfer from Constantinople to Vienna", as Paul W. Schroeder observes.[24] He soon began to defend Austrian policies as well as the conservative Austrian chancellor Prince Metternich, Palmerston's ideological 'nemesis' of over 15 years, against the latter's criticism.[25] When a wave of liberal revolutions swept across Central Europe in the spring of 1848, the majority of British diplomats posted to various states of the German Confederation "reacted positively to developments in the first phase of the revolution"[26] – as did Palmerston, who hoped for the constitutional reforms he had been incessantly advocating abroad for years.[27] Ponsonby, however, treated the revolutionaries in Vienna with contempt and initially refused to go into detail about their demands in his reports. Four days after the Austrian government had fallen and Metternich had taken flight, he wrote to the Foreign Office:

> "I have not troubled Your Lordship with details of the occurrences which took place in the Streets, nor with reports of the speeches of Students and other Orators. The commonplaces which figure in such displays are familiar to all, and my report of them would be only tedious and tiresome."[28]

Over the subsequent months, his disdain for the revolutionary party in Vienna grew ever stronger, perhaps culminating in a despatch in June, in which he accused the current premier Baron Pillersdorf of wanting to "put an end to Monarchical power" as well as being an instrument of the "Ultra Democratic Party", and stated that

> "the students themselves, who ape the worst of the French, are also instruments used by men whose designs are not to give liberty and to maintain it in Austria, but to destroy Austrian power. […] Those who in fact do direct some honest dupes and foolish enthusiasts at Vienna are animated by hatred of Austria and also by a strong interest. […] I believe it to be the interest of

24 Paul W. Schroeder, The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848, Oxford 1994, 781.

25 Ibid. Schroeder aptly summarizes the relationship between Metternich and Palmerston: They "hated each other, needed each other as enemies, and played off each other for propaganda and prestige purposes." However, "they were not seriously fighting one other; each was bent on protecting and consolidating his own turf; and each ignored ideological differences when it suited him" (ibid., 726).

26 Markus Mößlang/Torsten Riotte/Hagen Schulze (eds.), British Envoys to Germany 1816–1866, vol. 3: 1848–1850, Cambridge 2006, 2.

27 Günther Heydemann, Konstitution gegen Revolution. Die britische Deutschland- und Italienpolitik 1815–1848, Göttingen/Zürich 1995, 341–342; Jonathan Parry, The Politics of Patriotism. English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886, Cambridge 2006, 146–150.

28 The National Archives (henceforth: TNA), FO 7/347, Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 54, Vienna, 17 March 1848.

England, that Austria should continue to be a considerable Military power: I am therefore anxious to see the Imperial authority preserved […]."[29]

Ponsonby's abrasive tone was unusual for official despatches, which tended to read very formal and restrained, as they were often forwarded to members of the cabinet or the Queen and might later be published. It is therefore fitting that fellow diplomat Lord Augustus Loftus characterized him as "a man of large views, of a strong and decided will, and with a courageous and firm maintenance of his opinions".[30] Just a few weeks before the despatch cited above was sent, the ambassador had proven his allegiance to the "Imperial authority": When new riots threatened to break out in Vienna in mid-May, Emperor Ferdinand I and his family fled to Innsbruck, and Ponsonby decided to follow them, as a political statement against the Austrian ministry he detested.[31] Two and a half months later, the only diplomats still remaining with the Emperor were he and the Russian ambassador Count Medem, with whom he was on very friendly terms – contrary to his position in the 1830s.[32]

Palmerston's primary objective regarding Austria's revolutionary troubles was to support all forces that were working towards the secession of Lombardy and Venetia, as he wanted to see "the dead hand of Austrian conservatism removed from Italy and replaced by a single, liberally governed, northern Italian state".[33] Such a state should create a more effective buffer between France and Austria, whose spheres of interest were in competition on the Italian peninsula. Ponsonby, by contrast, early on expressed his hope for Austria to be able to retain all of its Italian territories.[34] When contemplating a possible congress to mediate in the Italian question, Palmerston intended to send Lord Normanby, the ambassador in Paris who took an equally anti-Austrian stand as himself in the matter. However, Queen Victoria, who abhorred the thought of the Austrian Emperor's lawful possessions being annexed by Piedmont-Sardinia, objected that "Lord Ponsonby would do much better" and almost mischievously added that she was "always much pleased with the frankness with which he states his opinions to Lord Palmerston".[35] The latter replied that he had "great esteem and regard for Lord Ponsonby, who […] has displayed on all

29 Ponsonby to Palmerston (confidential), No. 212, 18 June 1848, cited in Mößlang/Riotte/Schulze, Envoys, 2006, 412.

30 Augustus Loftus, The Diplomatic Reminiscences of Lord Augustus Loftus 1837–1862, vol. 1, London 1892, 129.

31 Mößlang/Riotte/Schulze, Envoys, 2006, 6.

32 Ibid., 417; Domokos Kosáry, Hungary and International Politics in 1848–1849, New York 2003, 492.

33 Saho Matsumoto-Best, Palmerston and Italy, in: David Brown/Miles Taylor (eds.), Palmerston Studies, vol. 2, Southampton 2007, 79–97, 84.

34 Southampton University Library (henceforth: SUL), MS62/PP/GC/PO/572, Ponsonby to Palmerston (private), Vienna, 24 May 1848.

35 Queen Victoria to Palmerston, n.d., cited in Brian Connell, Regina vs. Palmerston. The Correspondence between Queen Victoria and her Foreign and Prime Minister 1837–1865, London 1962, 100.

occasions and wherever employed an ability and zeal which fully entitle him to your Majesty's good opinion". However, he objected that "there are from time to time peculiar employments for which every able man is not equally well suited" and that "many considerations" would make Ponsonby less suited for this occasion.[36]

It is clear from this exchange that the foreign secretary saw Ponsonby as unable (and unwilling) to enforce his Italian policy. This was perfectly understandable, considering the content of a private letter he had received from Vienna about two weeks earlier, in which the frankness of opinion the Queen alluded to is excessively demonstrated:

> "It is evident you do not give credit to what I have told you about this Country. You deceive yourself. I know much better than you do what is the Fact, and the time will come when my despatches will prove to the world that it is so. If you do not take care you will produce a War, meaning to preserve Peace. […] Peace may be preserved for the present, but not by the way you go to work. […] You cannot bully Austria into concessions."[37]

The ambassador further added that his superior's opinions and arguments counted for less than nothing at the Austrian court.[38] The war Ponsonby worried about was the possibility of a French intervention against Austria on behalf of Piedmont-Sardinia (as it would happen in 1859). By the end of the year, that was a risk Palmerston was actually willing to take in order to drive the Habsburgs out of Northern Italy.[39] Astonishingly, he did not react badly to this audacious letter, which for many other diplomats would surely have meant the end of their career. Instead, he lauded Ponsonby for being a man of uncompromising honesty – a response that seems to prove Matthew's claim that Ponsonby was "one of the few in the diplomatic corps who could match Palmerston for will" and that "the latter respected him for it".[40] However, as was often the case, he did not believe Ponsonby and went on to refute all of his arguments.[41]

A problematic ambassador again: the 1848/49 war in Hungary

With the Viennese revolution put down by the forces of Prince Windischgrätz in October 1848 and with Count Radetzky's army holding the nationalist insurgents

36 Palmerston to Queen Victoria, n.d., cited in ibid., 101.
37 DUL, GRE/E/481/52, Ponsonby to Palmerston (private), Vienna, 15 September 1848.
38 Ibid.
39 George J. Billy, Palmerston's Foreign Policy: 1848, New York 1993, 142.
40 Boase/Matthew, Ponsonby.
41 DUL, GRE/E/481/13, Palmerston to Ponsonby (private), Broadlands, 22 September 1848.

as well as the Sardinian invaders at bay in Northern Italy, the Austrian military was able to begin a counter-revolutionary campaign against Hungary in December. In this conflict, too, Ponsonby was a staunch supporter of the Habsburgs and hostile to the Hungarian revolutionaries. In this case, however, his views were largely concurrent with the aims of his superior. Palmerston, in contrast to his stance on Lombardy-Venetia, wanted Hungary preserved under Habsburg rule so as not to jeopardize Austria's great power status and therefore its role in his 'balance of power' policy.[42] Yet his hopes for a liberal reorganization of Hungary after an Austrian victory as well as his appeal to avoid any "acts of cruel severity" against the insurgents should be deemed unrealistic.[43]

Their agreement in principle notwithstanding, Ponsonby's convictions soon proved problematic again. In the first few months of the civil war, his reports consisted almost exclusively of official statements of the Habsburg army and government cut from newspapers, on which he offered little commentary other than showing his pleasure about battles won by the Austrian troops.[44] Displeased by this one-sided information, Palmerston, in July 1849, appointed Joseph Andrew Blackwell as a special agent to report on the war, while Ponsonby was on leave of absence in England. It was hoped Blackwell "might have means of obtaining and of transmitting […] more correct and detailed information as to the important Events which are now passing in Hungary than Her Majesty's Government could by their ordinary Sources of Intelligence receive".[45] Not only was this an almost direct criticism, the choice of personnel was, too: As a dedicated liberal Hungarophile, Blackwell was the exact opposite of Ponsonby.

From a Scottish middle-class background and married to an Austrian, Blackwell had worked as a journalist before becoming a diplomatic agent reporting on the sessions of the Hungarian Diet in the 1830s and 1840s. He had an excellent network among reform-oriented Hungarian politicians and had tried to get a British consulate established at Budapest in 1842 and 1844, but Metternich would not allow it. When Count Batthyány, head of the Hungarian revolutionary government, personally asked for Blackwell to be made consul in 1848, Ponsonby actively sabotaged

42 In a speech to the House of Commons in July 1849, Palmerston took a fundamental stand on his Hungarian policy: "The political independence and liberties of Europe are bound up, in my opinion, with the maintenance and integrity of Austria as a great European power; and therefore anything which tends by direct or remote contingency, to weaken and to cripple Austria […], must be a great calamity to Europe, and one which every Englishman ought to deprecate, and try to prevent" (cited in Thomas Kabdebo, Joseph Blackwell's Last Hungarian Mission, 1849, in: East European Quarterly 20/1 (1986), 55–73, 71).

43 DUL, GRE/E/481/14, Palmerston to Ponsonby (private), Carlton Gardens, 21 January 1849.

44 See, for example, despatches Nos. 9, 28, 52, 72 in TNA, FO 7/365 and Nos. 96, 98 in TNA, FO 7/366.

45 TNA, FO 7/364, Palmerston to Magenis (confidential), No. 29, Foreign Office, 2 July 1849.

this by not forwarding the message to London – a further example of his considerable room for manoeuvre and his penchant for not shying away from using it for his own political goals. However, when Blackwell later confronted Ponsonby and went to London to submit the proposal himself, Palmerston dismissed it anyway, as he was committed to not aiding the Hungarian revolution in any way.[46] Still, he evidently considered Blackwell's pro-Hungarian stance and the information he could provide to be a valuable counterweight to Ponsonby in 1849. The appointment was part of a late attempt at mediating between the warring sides, with the notion of possibly making use of Blackwell as an intermediary – at this point, Palmerston could no longer ignore the clamour of the British press in support of the Hungarians and the concerns of fellow politicians.[47]

Ponsonby – with great reluctance[48] – followed his instructions of pressing the Austrian government for peace negotiations up until mid-August 1849, when the Hungarian army was finally defeated by the joint effort of Austrian and Russian troops. The ambassador seems to have been under the optimistic misconception that, "if victorious, the Austrians will give some constitution to Hungary, with a view to the establishment in that country of as much contentment as they may be able to produce". Yet he also saw the Magyars as already "fast sinking into comparative insignificance", much disliked by the many minorities in their kingdom, and warned that "by hostility on the part of England" the Austrians might be forced to "consider Russia as their only friend".[49]

Hostility, however, was exactly Palmerston's course when he heard about executions, floggings, and other cruelties, going against his official advice to the Austrians to show restraint and conciliation towards the subdued insurgents in Hungary and Italy. "The Austrians are really the greatest Brutes that ever called themselves by the undeserved name of civilised Men", he wrote to Ponsonby privately in September, urging him to "constantly bear in mind the Country & the Government which you represent" and to "maintain the Dignity and Honor of England by expressing openly and decidedly the Disgust which such proceedings excite in the public Mind in this

46 Kabdebo, Mission, (1986), 57; Kosáry, Hungary, 2003, 474–475, 491–492.

47 Kabdebo, Mission, (1986), 61–63. While the newspapers still tended to support the Emperor against the Hungarians in 1848, a profound change in opinion occurred from the spring of 1849 onwards, caused by Hungarian propagandists in Britain as well as by Russian intervention and other factors. Stylized as fighters for constitutionalism against despotism, British support for the Hungarian revolutionaries continued throughout 1850 and 1851. For a detailed examination, see Bostick, Image, 1971, 67–97.

48 "I see no good in continuing to urge on this Government things which it is determined not to do, for I see no means by which it can be forced to change it's [sic] conduct" (TNA, FO 7/369, Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 194, Vienna, 14 August 1849).

49 Ibid.

Country".[50] This line of policy towards Austria did not sit well with Ponsonby. He grew increasingly resistant and independent once again, refusing to carry out some instructions he deemed useless or delaying them "so long as I thought the mode I adopted worked well".[51]

Prince Schwarzenberg, the Austrian premier and foreign minister, rebuked Palmerston's late efforts to meddle in support of the Hungarians by pointing out that whenever a rebellion broke out in Ireland or elsewhere in the British Empire, its government did not hesitate to cause a bloodbath in order to secure their rule – without Austria stating its opinion on these suppressions. The foreign secretary soon found an opportunity to retaliate by openly opposing the Austrian and Russian demands for the extradition of Hungarians who had fled to the Ottoman Empire, including the leader of the revolution, Lajos Kossuth.[52] It was at the beginning of this new conflict, which would strain Anglo-Austrian relations for several years, that Palmerston finally lost his patience with Ponsonby's recalcitrance and pro-Austrian stance, sharply reprimanding him in November 1849: "I hear from many Quarters that you oppose instead of furthering the Policy of your Government, and that you openly declare that you disapprove of our Course. No diplomatist ought to hold such Language as long as he holds his appointment."[53] He never received an answer to this allegation and the private correspondence between the two ceased completely, while official despatches were still written in a cool manner of 'business as usual'. Ponsonby continued at his post for several more months, until Schwarzenberg downgraded the Austrian embassy in London to a mission in May 1850 as a statement on the deteriorated relations. Reciprocally necessary action in Vienna provided an opportunity to recall and retire the octogenarian British ambassador.[54]

His conduct finally took on a more public dimension, when Palmerston, following the government practice of the so-called Blue Books,[55] released diplomatic correspondence about Hungary to Parliament in August 1850.[56] Although a redacted selection, it made Ponsonby's positions clear enough. Charles Pridham, a British journalist and supporter of the Hungarian cause, had travelled to Austria and Hungary in 1849 for a first-hand report on the war and had met the ambassador in Vienna. Referring to their conversation, he stated in his travelogue two years later:

50 DUL, GRE/E/481/14, Palmerston to Ponsonby (private), Panshanger, 9 September 1849.
51 SUL, MS62/PP/GC/PO/612, Ponsonby to Palmerston (private), Vienna, 25 September 1849; ibid., MS62/PP/GC/PO/614, Ponsonby to Palmerston (private), Vienna, 17 October 1849 (quotation).
52 Kosáry, Hungary, 2003, 559–560.
53 DUL, GRE/E/481/14, Palmerston to Ponsonby (private), Foreign Office, 27 November 1849.
54 TNA, FO 7/377, Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 118, Foreign Office, 16 May 1850.
55 See Harold W. V. Temperley/Lillian M. Penson, A Century of Diplomatic Blue Books, 1814–1914, Cambridge 1938.
56 N.N., Correspondence relative to the Affairs of Hungary 1847–1849, London 1850.

"[A]s his despatches have since been made public, it will be no breach of confidence on my part to observe that his Lordship's opinions were diametrically opposed to those of nineteen-twentieths of the British people […]."[57] Implicitly putting much of the blame for Britain failing to politically support Hungary on Ponsonby was definitely to Palmerston's advantage, as British public opinion was still decidedly pro-Hungarian in 1850/51.

Thus, Ponsonby's personal ideals did by no means remain solely a private matter, but rather, through his diplomatic function, took on a much larger political and public scope. As this first case has shown, examining local diplomats as separate from the London headquarters can uncover significantly independent roles. Furthermore, the substantial impact of Ponsonby's and Palmerston's personal relationship as well as the ambivalence between their synchronous communication through both private and official correspondence are examples of the complexity of diplomacy that New Diplomatic History takes into its scope.

A puzzling replacement: Lord Westmorland in Vienna

A successor was finally found in John Fane (1784–1859), 11th Earl of Westmorland, who arrived in Vienna in October 1851 as the new head of the British mission.[58] The son of a long-term Tory cabinet member, Lord Westmorland (styled Lord Burghersh until the death of his father in 1841) had been a Tory MP from 1806 to 1816, while simultaneously pursuing a successful career in the military. Fighting in the Peninsular War, he served as aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington in 1809. Burghersh married Wellington's niece, Lady Priscilla Wellesley-Pole, in 1811 and, at that time, already tried to gain diplomatic employment, hoping for Austria. Retiring from the army three years later, he received the post of envoy to Tuscany, which he then held for 16 years.[59] In 1830, as opposed to Ponsonby's rise at the same time, the Whig government dismissed Burghersh, and the family lived in London, quite short of money but in close connection to Lady Burghersh's famous uncle. When Sir Robert Peel's Conservative ministry took power in 1841, Westmorland became envoy to Prussia, probably through Wellington's patronage. The previous incumbent Lord Wil-

57 Charles Pridham, Kossuth and Magyar Land, or, Personal Adventures during the War in Hungary, London 1851, 37.

58 TNA, FO 7/391A, Westmorland to Palmerston, No. 1, Vienna, 14 October 1851.

59 K. D. Reynolds, Fane, John, eleventh earl of Westmorland (formerly Lord Burghersh), 2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9137 (19 October 2022); R. G. Thorne, Fane, John, Lord Burghersh (1784–1859), of Apethorpe, Northants, 1986, in: History of Parliament, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/fane-john-1784-1859 (19 October 2022).

liam Russell, brother to the Whig leader Lord John Russell, complained about being displaced by "that great fool",[60] who he thought received the post only as a source of income.[61]

Such criticism notwithstanding, Westmorland's conduct in Berlin must have been known to be satisfactory, since Palmerston privately wrote to Lady Westmorland in 1846 that "[t]he Queen and Her Ministers think that it would be very conducive to the interests of the Crown" if her husband remained at his post under the new Whig ministry. Palmerston further assured her that regarding policy Westmorland "would receive no instructions which he could feel any repugnance to execute" and mentioned that the two of them were old friends going back to their schooldays at Harrow.[62] Apparently content with the diplomat's work and their cooperation, the foreign secretary decided to transfer Westmorland to Austria five years later. Considering the recent experience with Ponsonby, this choice remains somewhat puzzling. In view of Palmerston's ideological approach to foreign policy in general and his anti-Austrian line in particular, it would have made more sense to install a committed liberal rather than a known conservative. Consequently, the lack of confidence from his liberal superiors was to become a major difficulty for Westmorland in Vienna.

"[T]he state of things here annoys me beyond all measure": the question of political 'refugees' in the early 1850s

The early 1850s saw one of the lowest points in Anglo-Austrian relations. After the Austrian victory over the Hungarians, Palmerston again resorted to publicly staging his hostility towards the Habsburg Monarchy. He acted in opposition to Prince Schwarzenberg on all fronts, in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland as well as in the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, the Austrian general Julius Haynau, infamous for his brutality in the Hungarian war, visited London in 1850 and was assaulted by English workers, after which Palmerston initially refused an official apology. A year later, just when Westmorland arrived at his new post, Hungarian revolutionaries were allowed to take refuge in Britain, and Lajos Kossuth toured the country, being welcomed enthusiastically by huge crowds. In response to these insults, the Austrian govern-

60 Cited in Reynolds, [John] Fane.

61 Ibid.; K. D. Reynolds, Fane (née Wellesley-Pole), Priscilla Anne, countess of Westmorland, 2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9140 (19 October 2022).

62 Palmerston to Lady Westmorland, 8 July 1846, cited in Rose Weigall (ed.), The Correspondence of Priscilla, Countess of Westmorland, New York 1909, 81–82.

ment did not send a delegation to the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852.[63] While the British government could afford any provocations, its Austrian counterpart was unable to retaliate accordingly, knowing that "Britain could do [Austria] far more harm than she could ever do Britain in return", which kept Austrian policy towards Britain "basically cautious and appeasing".[64] Nonetheless, Westmorland found himself in an unpleasant position during his first few months, constantly besieged about the Hungarians' propagandist publications and conspiratorial actions in Britain. Emperor Francis Joseph personally complained to him about them being "permitted to menace the established Order and tranquillity of other Countries", and Schwarzenberg threatened to "adopt Police and Passport regulations" that would "create very great inconvenience" for travellers from Britain.[65]

Prime Minister Russell and cabinet colleagues forced Palmerston out of office in December 1851, but with his support in Parliament he soon brought down the Whig government in return.[66] The following Tory ministry of 1852 with the Earl of Malmesbury as foreign secretary adopted a decidedly conciliatory course towards Austria, trying to repair the damage done by Palmerston and indeed managing to improve relations. However, with only ten months in office, this remained a short episode and Malmesbury's friendliness towards the Habsburg Monarchy resonated very badly with British public and parliamentary opinion. For the same reason, the Tories could not budge on the extradition of the refugees either, as it would have been politically untenable. However, a few conservative newspapers and MPs showed sympathy for the Austrian position in the matter.[67]

The conflict about the refugees flared up again with new force in February 1853, when the Hungarian János Libényi attempted to assassinate the Emperor. Consequently, public hostility towards the British heightened in Austria. Britain "is looked upon as the focus, from which not only every revolutionary movement in other countries is propagated but murder & mutiny fomented & encouraged. This feeling is intense & generally spread throughout the population", Westmorland lamented.[68] On the night of the failed attempt, the police had to prevent the ambas-

63 Brown, Palmerston and Austria, 2010, 42–43; Paul W. Schroeder, Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War. The Destruction of the European Concert, Ithaca 1972, 8, 11.

64 Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 10. On the appeasement by Schwarzenberg and Buol, see Roy A. Austensen, Count Buol and the Metternich Tradition, in: Austrian History Yearbook 9–10 (1973–1974), 173–193, 183–184 and note 40.

65 TNA, FO 7/391B, Westmorland to Palmerston, No. 53, Vienna, 13 December 1851; ibid., Westmorland to Palmerston, No. 63, Vienna, 23 December 1851.

66 David Brown, Palmerston. A Biography, New Haven/London 2010, 327–328, 335.

67 Cf. Geoffrey Hicks, Peace, War, and Party Politics. The Conservatives and Europe, 1846–1859, Manchester/New York 2007, 77–80, 85–86.

68 Bodleian Library Oxford (henceforth: Bodl.), MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Russell (private), Vienna, 21 February 1853.

sador's house from being vandalized.[69] He was cautiously supportive of the Austrians, stating that "no well thinking man in England would wish to see the doctrine of mutiny & assassination encouraged from our Shores", therefore "our desire must be to put an end to it, if we have the means".[70] The new Whig foreign secretary, the Earl of Clarendon, agreed in principle about condemning the actions of Kossuth, Giuseppe Mazzini, and others who tried to incite rebellions in the Habsburg Monarchy from London, but he would do nothing about it. Westmorland felt it was "most distressing" that the case was "daily and hourly" laid before him in Vienna.[71] Caught between the entrenched fronts, he was neither able to make his government move against conspirators nor to persuade Count Buol, the new Austrian foreign minister since Schwarzenberg's sudden death in 1852, to accept this inaction, which led to exasperation: "[T]he state of things here annoys me beyond all measure."[72] Repeatedly advocating the Austrian position and not succeeding in placating Buol certainly did not improve the ambassador's standing at home.

Conflicting opinions: the Crimean War of 1853–1856

Britain's coalition government, which the Conservative (Peelite) Earl of Aberdeen had formed at the end of 1852, included strongly anti-Austrian Whigs like Clarendon, Palmerston as home secretary, and Russell as minister without portfolio. The latter two guided the inexperienced Clarendon's foreign policy, often causing dissent within the cabinet.[73] Schroeder identifies their attitude towards Westmorland as one of the trouble spots in Anglo-Austrian relations on the eve of the Crimean War, as the ambassador was kept on

> "despite his advanced age, High Tory principles, and Russell's and Clarendon's utter lack of confidence in him. He was a better envoy than they gave him credit for, but the fact that they would allow Britain to be represented by someone they repeatedly termed a foolish old woman indicates the slight value they placed on a rapprochement with Austria."[74]

Westmorland's explanations about the Austrian government disapproving of Russia's menacing actions in the East and about Buol's peace efforts stood no chance

69 Ibid.
70 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 27 February 1853.
71 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 1 March 1853.
72 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 30 March 1853.
73 Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 11–12.
74 Ibid., 12.

against the leading Whigs' conviction that Austria was Russia's invariable ally. In October 1853, after months of largely futile negotiations at conferences in Vienna and Olmütz, the ambassador became increasingly irritated by the lack of credence given to his reports and by baseless allegations coming from London. When Clarendon accused Buol of considering a renewal of the Holy Alliance treaty, Westmorland dismissed the notion as impossible to have happened without him becoming aware of it, and confidently challenged the foreign secretary to produce proof of this.[75] To further charges about Buol and the Emperor being prepared to join Russia against Britain and France, he responded that such projects did not exist, "but that need not in any way interfere with your search after better information, send it to me & you may rely upon my making the use of it you may desire. In the meantime I shall proceed as if mine was the most correct."[76] Unlike Ponsonby, Westmorland, although annoyed, usually adhered to his instructions and seemed to try his best to execute policies he did not personally endorse.

Meanwhile, Clarendon considered to send Earl Granville, a Whig cabinet member, to Vienna "as coadjutor to our faithful but feeble Westmorland",[77] but Aberdeen dismissed the idea. Palmerston, on the other hand, perhaps recalling Ponsonby's 'defection', blamed the political climate of Vienna in a letter to Russell:

> "Westmorland and Bourqueney [the French ambassador] are good men in their way, but neither of them are up to the mark for Conference functions. Moreover the very atmosphere of Vienna is unhealthy, and I doubt whether even you and I should not find ourselves paralyzed by the Political Miasma of the Place."[78]

After the British government had "knowingly pushed Austria's peace efforts aside in order to start the war"[79] that Westmorland and most other ambassadors had actively tried to avert,[80] both Russia and the Western powers vied for Austrian support. As predicted by Westmorland, Buol and Francis Joseph decided against Russia, opting for a cautious alignment with Britain and France in January 1854. At first, this caused great enthusiasm among the British public and in the cabinet. However, Clarendon did not want the Austrians to be full allies, but rather tried to induce them to launch an offensive, which would have them bear the whole force of a land

75 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 18 October 1853.
76 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 1, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 23 October 1853.
77 Clarendon to Aberdeen, 11 October 1853, cited in James B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852–1855. A Study in Mid-Nineteenth Century Party Politics, Cambridge 1968, 193.
78 Palmerston to Russell, 24 October 1853, cited in ibid., 205.
79 Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 136.
80 Goldfrank, Origins, 1994, 279.

war with Russia as a kind of mercenary, without being granted any political or territorial guarantees by the West.[81]

This put Westmorland in a position of having to obtain an impossible aim and, consequently, whatever he achieved over the following months was not good enough for his superior. An additional problem was that – although himself a former soldier – he was fundamentally interested in re-establishing peace by diplomatic means, like Buol and the conciliatory but rather powerless Aberdeen. The dominant war party around Palmerston, however, favoured military victory.[82] In October 1854, while the British and French were already fighting in the Crimea, and during lengthy negotiations for a treaty of alliance with Austria, Westmorland voiced his discontent to Clarendon:

> "Your last letter […] conveys the impression of dissatisfaction with my conduct […] which is most painful to me and I must say wholly undeserved. I have served you vigilantly, zealously and honestly – I will add successfully, for I am conscientiously certain that I have obtained from this Government every favorable result which it could have been in the power of any man in my situation to accomplish […]."[83]

Furthermore, he reported that Buol was still hoping to finally disprove the strong British mistrust of him, but that he himself had done nothing to encourage that expectation. "As I have already told Count Buol my position has been so much injured with my own Government by some of the proceedings which have lately taken place that I can in no way be answerable for the opinions you may hold", he added gloomily.[84] Westmorland realized that with the British press being hostile to Austria once again, the tone of his reports did not keep pace "with the opinions of those who saw in Austria a betrayer of every thing which good faith, honor & honesty render sacred […]." Yet, he would stand firmly by his views: "[U]pon my conscience I must say I have not seen that which could inspire me with such opinions & I believe that in the end & through many difficulties, my judgement will be formed to be the most correct."[85] In this conviction of knowing better – although not worded as harshly – and of being redeemed by the course of history, he showed similarity to Ponsonby in 1848.

81 Winfried Baumgart (ed.), Englische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs, vol 2: 11. Dezember 1853 bis 1. Dezember 1854, München 2006, 49–50; Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 135–136.

82 Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 194; Muriel E. Chamberlain, Lord Aberdeen. A Political Biography, London 1983, 478–479, 499–500; Brown, Palmerston. A Biography, 2010, 370–371; Baumgart, Akten, 2006, 40–42.

83 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 12, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 4 October 1854.

84 Ibid.

85 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 12, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 18 October 1854.

In reaction to a severely critical article in the *Times*, published just when the alliance treaty was signed on 2 December 1854 and therefore causing repercussions in Vienna, Westmorland again set out to defend the Austrian conduct. On the dominant question of why the Austrians had not yet joined the fight, he wrote to Clarendon, as he had done before "& I believe even ad nauseam", that "they never supposed you meant them to fight ag[ains]t the whole Russian Empire alone, without your support or indeed some support from Prussia & Germany".[86] They had helped the Western powers by amassing 300,000 troops at the border to Russia, thereby binding up at least 100,000 Russians on the other side. Moreover, they had pressured the Czar into evacuating the occupied Danubian Principalities. However, "you were too far from them in the Crimea to enable them to cooperate with you", while invading the Russian plain alone would be potential suicide.[87] Although he would not admit it to Westmorland, Clarendon was fully aware of the services the Austrians had rendered to the allied war effort.[88]

The situation of the British and French governments trying to pressure Austria into an attack and trying to evade Austrian peace efforts due to their military goals persisted into 1855, "with Westmorland almost as much the target of abuse as Buol".[89] Nevertheless, a peace conference was agreed to be held in Vienna and Russell arrived as British negotiator in early March. Westmorland seized the opportunity of someone else taking over and in April voiced his wish to retire from public service.[90] In light of Palmerston's earlier remark about the city's "Political Miasma", it is ironic that Russell quickly became favourably inclined towards Buol's proposals and sympathetic to the Austrian position. His cabinet colleagues, now led by Palmerston as new prime minister, were shocked and heavily attacked him.[91] Clarendon complained that Russell seemed "more completely nobbled by Buol and Co. than poor old Westmorland" to him.[92] After the conference had failed and the ministers departed, Westmorland clearly felt vindicated by the fact that the once staunch anti-Austrian Russell "left Vienna with very different impressions" about Austria and its policy.[93] He told Clarendon plainly: "[A]s I think my opinions & statements meet but with little credence from you I will not trouble you with a report of them", but he hoped that Russell's opinion would count more in London. For this reason, Westmorland further admitted, he would withhold some of Clarendon's communi-

86 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 12, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 5 December 1854.
87 Ibid.
88 Clarendon to Stratford (private), 30 October 1854, cited in Baumgart, Akten, 2006, 728.
89 Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 246.
90 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 27, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 15 April 1855.
91 Paul Scherer, Lord John Russell. A Biography, Selinsgrove/London 1999, 247–248.
92 Clarendon to Cowley, 6 April 1855, cited in ibid., 249.
93 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 27, Westmorland to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 28 April 1855.

cation to Buol, which he considered too damaging, until the former would have had time to confer with the returning Russell.[94]

The ambassador went on leave to Britain in June 1855 and stayed there; he was officially recalled and retired in October. As his successor, Clarendon chose Sir George Hamilton Seymour, former British envoy in St. Petersburg until the outbreak of the war. He expected that Seymour might be rejected by Buol, which would then enable a "cessation of all relations with Austria, and the great applause thereat of the British Public",[95] but that did not happen. Soon, a familiar cycle seems to have begun all over again. Less than two months after Seymour's arrival, Palmerston admonished him in a private letter: "I am sorry to perceive by your recent communications […] that the relaxing atmosphere of Vienna has begun to take effect upon you. Pray put a little starch into your neckcloth".[96] In response to this, Seymour angrily offered his resignation for the first of several times in a tenure of only two years.[97]

Conclusion: taking the diplomats' agency seriously

In essence, Ponsonby and Westmorland were (or came to be) in plain political opposition to their Whig foreign secretaries. Apart from their defence of conservative Austria, they represented various principles of Tory foreign policy: Ponsonby, for example, by favouring the preservation of the established order and abstaining from support for liberal causes abroad; and Westmorland by prioritizing peace and conciliation with all foreign powers, no matter their form of government.[98] It cannot be said with certainty whether this was due to their personal predisposition or their experiences in Vienna, as one started out as a Whig and the other as a Tory. However, the common result was that they often sounded like a mouthpiece of the Austrian government in their correspondence. The strong anti-Austrian bias in Palmerston's and Clarendon's foreign policy, on the other hand, besides being fuelled by their concern for public opinion, rested much more on ideology than on evidence. This is demonstrated by the disbelief they regularly showed towards the ambassadors' reports on Austrian conditions, intentions, and policies. After Westmorland's retirement, Clarendon stated that the Western powers "ought to proceed on the *principle*

94 Ibid.

95 Clarendon to Elliot, 30 October 1855, cited in Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 320.

96 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 46, Palmerston to Seymour (private), London, 24 January 1856.

97 Bodl., MS Clar. dep. c. 46, Seymour to Clarendon (private), Vienna, 5 February 1856.

98 See Angus Hawkins, 'A calm, Temperate, Deliberate, and Conciliatory Course of Conduct'. Mid-Victorian Conservative Foreign Policy, in: Jeremy Black (ed.), The Tory World. Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679–2014, Abingdon 2015, 167–184.

of distrusting Austria".[99] However, the political and diplomatic realities of a continental power could be seen more clearly on site, as partly shown by Russell's short-term 'conversion' in Vienna. Constantly undermining a state that was supposed to be a vital part of the British policy of a European 'balance of power' did more harm than good to this policy,[100] which the diplomats realized and tried to prevent.

Regarding their role in British foreign policy, Ponsonby's and Westmorland's positions were evidently obstructive to the implementation of their superiors' policy decisions. In Ponsonby's case, one could even speak of acts of sabotage, considering the ignored instructions, autonomous decisions, and the final confrontation with Palmerston about his behaviour. Westmorland's case is more complex, as he pledged that he was doing his best, yet the lack of trust placed in him meant that he was not taken seriously and was never fully taken into confidence regarding his superior's policy objectives. In the end, his frustration became great enough that he also resorted to the means of direct resistance. Therefore, whether knowingly or unknowingly, both undermined their government's policy towards Austria. The foreign secretaries' reaction to this was to plan or employ circumvention strategies by additionally sending agents or emissaries they thought could be relied upon in terms of political ideology. Picking up Wright's statement quoted at the beginning, the two ambassadors' "potential to influence their home governments' perspectives and policy"[101] was certainly close to none, because their reports and recommendations were the opposite of what their superiors wanted to hear and were therefore neither believed nor followed. Their power lay much rather in their independent agency, as it is astonishing for how long they could go on and how much they could do without being dismissed. Even the tenure of the subversive Ponsonby ended more by timely coincidence than by Palmerston's intent.

In contrast, the ambassadors' role within Anglo-Austrian diplomacy must be judged more positively, as they actively worked to improve relations and to establish a better understanding (from their point of view) of Austrian positions. They tried to mitigate harsh communications from their government, and the good personal relations between Westmorland and Buol as well as between Ponsonby and the Imperial family certainly had some compensating effect. Therefore, had the two of them actually represented the British government's policy more forcefully in Vienna, the ongoing alienation would have been expedited.

In conclusion, for future studies on diplomatic practice, especially of the nineteenth century, the examination of a diplomat's political orientation and individual

99 Clarendon to Palmerston, 21 November 1855, cited in Schroeder, Austria, 1972, 324.
100 Bostick, Image, 1971, 254.
101 Wright, Great Britain, 2019, 17.

values is a rewarding field. Their degree of personal support either for their government's policy or for their country of residence's government can be a decisive variable in their conduct. With private diplomatic correspondences yet largely unused, it is possible to add new insights to traditionally established narratives of interstate relations. On a more general level, the New Diplomatic History approach of focusing on diplomats, their actions, and inner motives, rather than treating them as static and instrumental, allows for their autonomy to be demonstrated, as amply shown above. Taking the diplomats' independent agency more seriously into account is central to a more extensive understanding of foreign policy.