THE ORIGINS OF AN ILLUSION:
BRITISH POLICY AND OPINION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRUSSIAN
LIBERALISM, 1848-1871

by

SCOTT W. MURRAY

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Department of History
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The massive historiography dealing with the problem of Germany's development in the first half of twentieth century has been strongly influenced by the notion that certain peculiar national characteristics led Germany down a Sonderweg, or "special path," which diverged from that of other Western European nations. However, by helping to focus scholarly attention on various political, social and intellectual developments which took place in Germany in the nineteenth century, the Sonderweg thesis has distracted scholars from examining more closely the possible impact which the interplay of international relations had on Germany's development during this pivotal period. The present study examines the extent to which British foreign policy affected the growth of authoritarianism and the decline of liberalism in Prussia during the period 1848-1871, and how certain intellectual currents in England at the time affected both the formulation and the expression of British policy regarding Prussia.

By examining both the policies pursued by British statesmen at certain key points during the period 1848-1871, and the views expressed by a group of highly idealistic British liberal commentators who watched affairs in Prussia closely during this period, I have attempted to demonstrate the following: firstly, that existing interpretations of British policy regarding Prussia have overemphasized the role of liberal idealism in the calculations of British
policy-makers, who appear instead to have consistently pursued pragmatic policies aimed at a Prussian-led unification of Germany; and secondly that it was this latter group of British commentators who provided policy-makers with a style of rhetoric which obfuscated the pragmatic considerations underlying British policy. Moreover, it was this same corpus of liberal, "Whig" commentary which laid the conceptual foundations for what was to become the standard interpretative approach to German history, particularly amongst Anglo-American historians writing since 1945 - the Sonderweg thesis. Thus, by separating the rhetoric from the actual practice of British policy, and by identifying the liberal biases which pervaded British liberal discourse on Prussia during this period, I have attempted to clarify Britain's role in the important developments taking place in Germany at this time, while broadening our appreciation of how and why subsequent scholarship on the German question has so readily embraced the notion that German history is "peculiar".
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction:
Anglo-Prussian Relations and the Sonderweg Thesis
Germany is the heart of Europe, and the limbs must adjust themselves to the heart, not the heart to the limbs.
Hans Christoph Seebohm
BRD Transport Minister, 1951.

We seek a European Germany, not a German Europe.
Hans-Dietrich Genscher
BRD Foreign Minister, 1990.

The continuing attempts by scholars to explain why Germany twice attempted in the present century to achieve world domination through military conquest has certainly been one of the most productive and controversial areas of twentieth century historiography. Indeed, even at the distance of a half century the Nazi regime’s legacy of totalitarianism and genocide, which were perpetrated under the influence of a pernicious doctrine of nationalist racism, continues to cast an unpleasant shadow over not only the changing face of modern Germany, but also the whole course of German history up to 1933. One predominant influence on this massive historiography dealing with the problem of Germany’s development in the twentieth century has been the notion that certain peculiar national characteristics led Germany down a Sonderweg, or “special path,” which diverged from that of other western European nations - a notion which has helped to focus scholarly attention on various political, social and intellectual developments which took place in Germany in the nineteenth century. The period between 1848 and 1871 is viewed by some historians, such as A.J.P. Taylor, as being of particular significance since it was during this pivotal period that German history “failed to turn”, as authoritarianism and militarism triumphed over the liberal forces in Germany, thus
establishing at the outset the political character of the German Empire which emerged in 1871.¹

This scholarship has largely ignored, however, the impact which the interplay of international relations had on these developments. The present study will examine this very question; namely, the role which Germany’s European neighbours played in the political development of Germany during that crucial period leading up to German unification in 1871. More specifically, it will examine the extent to which British foreign policy affected the growth of authoritarianism and the decline of liberalism in Prussia during the period 1848-1871, and how certain intellectual currents in England at the time affected both the formulation and the expression of British policy regarding Prussia.

Existing interpretations of the goals and consequences of England’s mid-nineteenth century German policy maintain that British policy-makers were strongly influenced by liberal idealism, but that their goal of bringing about the unification of Germany under the auspices of a liberal constitutional Prussian state was ultimately frustrated by Bismarck, who used nationalist passions to defeat German liberalism and forge together an authoritarian German Empire. What I hope to show, however, is that such liberal idealism was not of primary importance in the formulation and implementation of British policy, which sought instead to strengthen the existing authorities in Prussia in order to ensure that German unification actually took place - a policy which was largely
successful, although the decline of German liberalism was an unintended consequence.

Several factors are responsible for the fact that previous scholarship has failed to recognize this important dimension to nineteenth century British foreign policy. One of these is the general, although erroneous assumption made by Anglo-American historians writing since the First World War that all British policy-makers in the mid-nineteenth century actively pursued policies aimed at facilitating a liberal solution to the German question since only this would guarantee the presence in central Europe of a "western, parliamentary and predominantly Protestant" bulwark against "Russian despotism, French encroachments and the spread of Catholic influence." Another equally important factor, however, was British liberal commentary on Prussia during this crucial period. As will be shown, the idealised view of Prussia which British liberal commentators on Prussia maintained during this period provided British statesmen with a style of rhetoric which obfuscated the pragmatic considerations underlying British policy. At the same time, these commentators' almost unanimous lamentations about Bismarck's suppression of the liberals' goals overrode criticisms of the limited impact British policy might have had. Moreover, it was this same corpus of liberal commentary which laid the conceptual foundations for what was to become the standard interpretive approach to German history, particularly since 1945 - the Sonderweg thesis. Ironically, it is this same thesis which has induced scholars to look almost exclusively to
internal factors when searching for the source of liberalism's weakness in Germany. As a result, few scholars stopped to consider either the pragmatic, non-ideological motives which shaped British policies during this period, or the extent to which such policies actually affected these portentous developments in nineteenth century Germany.

What follows, therefore, is an examination both of the policies pursued by British statesmen at certain key points during the period 1848-1871; and the views of British liberal idealists, who clung tenaciously to an unmitigated and increasingly unjustified optimism regarding the political future of Prussia. It is due to the apparent centrality of Prussia in German unification that both of these two groups took a strong interest in Prussian affairs during this period. The first group, comprised of those who actually formulated British policy with respect to Prussia, maintained that nothing ought to be permitted to threaten the security and stability of the Prussian state, at least until such time as Germany was consolidated. The second group, comprised of various members of the educated liberal elite - judges, journalists, minor diplomats, M.P.'s - engaged in actively voicing the opinion that the evolution of Prussia into an English-style constitutional parliamentary state was inevitable, an idealistic opinion which was based on an exclusivist "Whig" perspective of German affairs.

First, therefore, we must examine the actual course of British policy regarding Prussia in order to rectify previous misinterpretations of the motives behind this policy, and to
consider the extent to which these policies affected the course of Germany's political development prior to 1871. But no study of British policy regarding Prussia during this period would be complete without a follow-up examination of the views of the second group, which not only provided policy-makers with a style of rhetoric well-suited to the demands of British politics, but which also formed the basis of an interpretive approach to Germany which persists even today. The extent to which British policy-makers contributed to the failure within Germany to find a liberal solution is still an open question. But the misperceptions of British idealists undoubtedly contributed to the belief at the time, and indeed since, that Germany's "departure" from the liberal-democratic tradition of the West was a disastrous, if temporary development within the wider European context.

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Before going on to examine these diplomatic and intellectual contours to mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Prussian relations, a closer look at that historiographical tradition - the Sonderweg thesis - which has hitherto exercised such a profound influence over the scholarship on modern Germany is first necessary in order to determine whether it is indeed possible to fit this question of Anglo-Prussian relations into the larger debate regarding the course of German history in the twentieth century.
Although the idea of a German Sonderweg originated in Germany itself, this notion that there exists a significant difference between German and "Western" thought, and that the political and social consequences of this difference have set Germany apart from the other nations of Western Europe, has been most fully developed since 1945 by Anglo-American scholars seeking to explain that "intellectual conundrum", the origins of National Socialism. Hajo Holborn's claim that the "split between Germany and the West will of necessity always be an important theme for historians," has been borne out by the massive effort exerted in this direction, and by the pervasiveness of this theme in the historiography on Germany written since 1945."

In attempting to account for Germany's "persistent failure to give a home to democracy in its liberal sense," - the idea which lies at the heart of the Sonderweg thesis - historians have divided themselves into two general groups that can be distinguished from one another by the date which each assigns to Germany's "departure" from the mainstream of Western thought. In the first can be found those scholars who maintain that, because of certain peculiarities in the German national character, Germany has always warred against the West. The work of such scholars as Rohan O'Butler and A.J.P. Taylor, although more subtle and convincing than Sir Robert Vansittart's tirades in 1941 against the German "butcher-bird", nonetheless reaffirmed that there existed a "traditionally and typically German" line of thought, and that as a result, the Germans had
experienced "everything except normality" throughout their history. Nor did this questionable argument, which holds that the German revolt against the West stemmed from the "barbaric Saxon" embedded in the breast of every German, disappear as the animosity against Germany slowly faded after 1945; it has since been elucidated, often by inference, in numerous works devoted to finding the origins of the Nazi phenomenon.

The second group is comprised of those historians who locate the philosophical origins of Germany's Sonderweg in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and who then describe the political and social manifestations of this "departure" from the West as they began to appear in Germany during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the first instance, it is believed both the weakness of the Judeo-Christian tradition of natural law in Germany, and a general acceptance of the Hegelian metaphysical conception of the state prevented the ideas of the Enlightenment from penetrating into the politically-fractured German community. Hence, it is held, the Romantic revolt against the rationalism of both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution struck a deep chord in Germany, and this was reinforced throughout the nineteenth century by the historicist tradition in German historiography which increasingly came to reject the principal tenets of liberalism. Moreover, the liberal reforms of Prussian aristocrats became confused after 1806 with the struggle against Napoleon, and thus began the fatal subordination of liberalism to German nationalism. Mortally
weakened by all of these developments, and by the absence in the Vormärz period of a "numerous and powerful middle class that would be attached by both material interest and accompanying temperament to a practical political movement" of liberal reform, German liberalism failed to seize the moment in 1848.  

From the belief that they had to rely on Prussian arms to achieve their ends - a consequence of the 1848 revolutions - sprang the German liberals' growing fascination with power. This was to be the final nail in the coffin of German liberalism, as middle class preoccupation with economic issues, and Bismarck's whirlwind victories ensured that most German liberals would complacently accept the Iron Chancellor's solution in 1871 of a pseudo-constitutional-parliamentary German Reich which satisfied German desires for both unity and the preservation of authority.

This is, of course, only a highly simplified synthesis of the main points comprising this group's interpretation of Germany's Sonderweg as it began to appear in the nineteenth century; naturally, much of the Sonderweg literature concentrates on developments in the twentieth century, since it is here that Germany's "departure" from the liberal-democratic traditions of the West was most tragically manifested. Nonetheless, this summary demonstrates how, as Blackbourn and Eley have described it, "successive historiographical currents flowed with sufficient force in one direction to cut out a fairly deep bed."
Upon closer examination, however, it appears that this attempt to identify the source of liberalism's inability to establish itself in Germany, which is in turn offered as an explanation for Germany's authoritarian and militaristic tendencies in the twentieth century, is itself based upon several erroneous assumptions. The most obvious of these stems from an overanxious desire to identify the continuities existing in German history, which has sometimes resulted in the anachronistic transposition of characteristics of the late Wilhelmine and Nazi eras onto the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And as has been amply demonstrated by the two scholars cited above, the attribution of a German Sonderweg to Germany's failure to pass through a Western-style bourgeois revolution like that of 1688 and 1789, which in turn resulted in the coexistence in Germany of modern economic structures with pre-modern political and social structures, raises important questions about the validity of both the Western "model" and Germany's "failure" to experience such a revolution.

But it is the most fundamental assumption underlying this interpretation of Germany's past that is of most interest to us here; i.e. the belief that there exists a universal pattern of "liberal-democratic" development - best revealed in the histories of England and France - which is applicable to all countries (as opposed to the belief that all nations have their own Sonderweg, and that each experiences a wholly unique pattern of organic, individual development in response to varied
circumstances). Hence the liberal bias of these Sonderweg historians finds them evaluating Germany's past exclusively through a set of political and moral preconceptions in which progress and English-style parliamentary democracy are considered normative. When applied in the wake of two world wars, this approach was sure to produce results in which the development of German liberalism would appear to have gone awry, which in turn focused attention on those aspects of the German liberal movement which did not conform to the "Western" pattern - inordinate respect for the authority of the state and the monarchy, a fondness for abstract philosophizing, political immaturity, and an extremely powerful attachment to the idea of national unity.

What is significant about this is that criticisms remarkably similar to these appeared in mid-nineteenth century British evaluations of contemporary Prussian and German liberalism, evidence of the extent to which English-speaking proponents of a German Sonderweg are still holding biases common a century ago amongst British liberal idealists. As will be shown later, however, these nineteenth century British commentators on German liberalism, rather than regarding such deviations from the British norm as evidence of a malignant cancer growing in the body of the German liberal movement, considered them merely to be temporary aberrations - a reflection of the unbounded liberal optimism of the period in which they were writing.
One might easily misinterpret such similarities as proof that the Sonderweg historians' assertions are simply accurate restatements of observations made by first-hand observers in England a century earlier. What is actually demonstrated here, however, is that in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries German circumstances have been measured exclusively against a British norm in a classic application of the "Whig" interpretation of history; i.e., the tendency to write "on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasise certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is a ratification if not a glorification of the present." Indeed, some of the "Whig" historians cited above even fell victim to what Butterfield described as the "pathetic fallacy" - i.e., the practice of "abstracting things from their historical context and...organising the historical story by a system of direct reference to the present." For example, Koppel Pinson describes Germany's "classical humanist tradition" of the late eighteenth century as part of the "noble" intellectual tradition of the Weimar Republic, while Hans Kohn's treatment of Germany's divergence from the West is informed throughout by his understanding of West and East as these concepts existed in post-1945 Europe, i.e., the West of NATO and the EEC vs. the Eastern communist bloc.

It is, of course, easy to criticize a longstanding historiographical tradition like the Sonderweg thesis. Finding answers for the questions that originally impelled its
proponents to formulate such a thesis is not so simple however. For unless we are prepared to accept that National Socialism was an "accident", or alternatively, that it was the inevitable outcome of Germany's perverse national character, we are left facing the fact that National Socialism emerged from the ruins of the Weimar Republic, and that the demise of Weimar was in turn dictated, in part at least, by the weakness of the German liberal tradition, irrespective of whether or not that tradition conformed to any "Western" model. Thus the decision by Sonderweg theorists to concentrate on the fortunes of German liberalism in the nineteenth century is a good one, even if the Whig biases of these historians has induced them to seize almost exclusively upon German liberalism's deviations from the Western model as evidence of developmental weaknesses within the movement.

There are, however, two other important issues which have been largely overlooked by this scholarship on Germany's Sonderweg. The first of these is the vitality of the German liberal movement in the nineteenth century. Although several Sonderweg theorists have implicitly recognized this strength, much more common is the tendency to anticipate German liberalism's decline by portraying it as being inconsequential after 1848. However, the studies of Sheehan, Snell and Schmidt, which have attempted to "take into proper consideration the vitality of both German liberalism and democracy" in the nineteenth century, reveal that the German liberal movement, at least until 1867, was still an important force in German
The point here is not to suggest that things would have turned out differently for Germany had not German liberalism surrendered/been defeated in the nineteenth century; that is a moot point. Moreover, nineteenth century German liberalism undoubtedly contained strong expansionist and ethnocentric elements, neither of which were conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in Europe. But if we are to properly examine all of the possible factors affecting Germany’s political development in that important third quarter of the nineteenth century, then we must shake this notion that a decline of liberalism in Germany was predestined by the "peculiarity" of German history up to 1871. Hence any appreciation of the magnitude of German liberalism’s decline during this period can only come about through a recognition of its actual strength prior to such decline.

But there still remains to be explained the growing preponderance, in Prussia at least, of authoritarianism and militarism after 1862, and the virtual "capitulation" of liberalism after 1867, despite any political vitality it may have possessed prior to that time. This then brings us to the second issue overlooked by most Sonderweg theorists, and that is the extent to which external forces, rather than simply internal weaknesses, may have contributed to this particular situation - a situation described by Sheehan as having "narrowed liberals’ choices and often precluded alternatives that might have enabled them to save themselves and their ideals."
As has already been suggested, the subject of Germany's relations with its European neighbours, specifically within the context of the rise of authoritarianism and the decline of German liberalism in the period leading up to unification, has been largely neglected by historians (although the attitudes of foreign powers to certain other issues, such as Bismarck's wars and Germany's consolidation, have been amply studied). Admittedly, it is extremely difficult to accurately gauge the impact which the policies of foreign countries had on political affairs in Germany - the continuing historical debate over the actual effect on Germany of British and French policies of appeasement in the 1930's is testimony to this. Such difficulties, however, are not insurmountable. And indeed, Germany's immediate neighbours, France and Russia, must be considered obvious candidates for a study of this kind. An argument can certainly be made that, despite the rich liberal heritage of the French enlightenment, the distasteful memories of Germany's occupation by French revolutionary armies bolstered support for conservative and reactionary forces in Germany at least until 1848, and that the ambitious, and frequently threatening foreign policies of Napoleon III ensured that nationalist passions would continue to outweigh liberal considerations in Germany in the period after 1850. And Russia, homeland to the architect of the ultra-reactive Holy Alliance, continued to take a strong interest in German affairs throughout the nineteenth century, and was known to wield a particularly strong influence in Berlin. A study of how the
actions of both these countries impacted on the fortunes of German liberalism in the nineteenth century would, therefore, prove illuminating.

In this study, however, I have chosen England to test this notion regarding the extent to which foreign powers affected Germany’s political development in the nineteenth century. Numerous reasons justify this choice. Firstly, England’s world preeminence was at its zenith in the mid-nineteenth century; its maritime and commercial supremacy was as yet unchallenged and its diplomatic prestige was still indispensable in preserving European stability. When combined these factors translated into the kind of genuine influence and power necessary to facilitate the active role which England took in protecting what it perceived to be its national interests abroad. And although England was not in such close proximity to Germany as France and Russia, circumstances in the mid-nineteenth century were such that the island state was in a better position than most European countries to exercise a certain degree of influence over Germany, and Prussia in particular.

For example, England was viewed more or less favourably by most sectors of German society during this period, although the reasons for this varied tremendously. The German landowning classes recognized England not only as the principal market for their corn, but also as a traditional ally against France, a symbol of social stability, and home to the "proudest aristocracy of the world". For German industrialists and free-traders, both the theory and the practice of England’s
economic system were regarded with great admiration. And for the "progressive" political forces in Germany, England represented the "fount of constitutional liberty" (although the socialists, along with peasants and handicraftsmen, disliked the implications of British industrial capitalism).\(^2\) The German liberal movement in particular was strongly influenced by the British constitutional parliamentary model, as the various liberal groupings throughout Germany selectively interpreted British constitutional history according to their own position on the spectrum of German liberalism.\(^2\)

When combined with the perception that England was generally sympathetic to the cause of German national unity, these factors served to heighten German expectations of support from England, a sentiment which was further augmented by the important dynastic ties existing between Germany and England. Gladstone's claim that such ties provided "openings, in delicate cases, for saying more, and saying it at once more gently and more efficaciously, than could be ventured in the more formal correspondence, and ruder contacts, of Governments," is amply demonstrated by the epistolary and matchmaking activities of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, both of whom sought tirelessly to insure that German perceptions of England remain favourable, and that British influence there not be diminished.\(^30\)

Together, therefore, these circumstances would appear to justify focusing on England as a test of the extent to which external forces affected Germany's political development in the period leading up to unification. It should, however, be noted
that while the decline of liberalism is one of the dominant themes in Germany's political history in the mid-nineteenth century, most of the factors cited above suggest that circumstances during this period were propitious for an attempt by the British to strengthen the German liberal movement, an action which would have been consistent with recent Palmerstonian diplomacy elsewhere in Europe. It is this latter point which may well have helped to dissuade scholars from looking to England in their search for the sources of German liberalism's decline; at the very least it has dulled the receptiveness of those British scholars who have studied Anglo-German relations during this period to the possibility that British policy was not guided by ideological considerations.

But what about the British perception of Germany? Was it felt that there was any need for England to exercise its influence over this fractious European entity? Certainly there existed in mid-century England a fairly widespread affinity for Germany and this was reinforced by several factors. One of these, as has been mentioned, was dynastic. Others included a strong British admiration for German culture - a culture which the British regarded as satisfying most of the criteria by which all progressive nations should be judged: "refined scholarship, scientific endeavours, world leaders in so many academic subjects, fine artistic and musical traditions, an unequalled educational system, [and] commercial and technological advances." During this period there was also growing emphasis
placed on the common Teutonic origins of England and Germany, as well as their religious commonality.

On the subject of German politics, however, British opinion was divided; to suggest, as Sontag does, that everyone in England regarded Germany as a region where "conservatives were black reactionaries, liberals were red republicans, and everyone was more anxious to seize the territory of other countries than to strengthen his own country by constitutional reform," is to grossly oversimplify British views during this period. It is certainly true that, aside from "ideological germanophiles" like Carlyle who believed that Germany represented "a more refined, organic, idealised society, in which 'good government' was properly given preference over 'representative government'," the general feeling in England was that Germany's political development lagged behind that of "Liberal" England. Beyond this, however, there existed a broad range of opinions on German politics, many of which were tempered by the kinds of dynastic, cultural, racial and religious influences cited above.

Moreover, British views of Prussia, which are of particular interest to us here, were equally divided. Again, it is an oversimplification to suggest, as Kennedy does, that most British liberals made a clear and simple distinction between "cultured" Germany and "reactionary" Prussia (although it is true that many looked with displeasure upon the preponderance of Junker influence in Prussian politics). The fond memory of Prussia's participation in the defeat of Napoleon, and the growing belief that Prussia alone possessed the means of uniting
Germany so as to create that much desired impregnable central European bulwark against France and Russia went a long way towards moderating British views of the Hohenzollern state. Just exactly how far will be examined in much greater detail below. At this point it suffices to note that the British were not indifferent to Prussian and German affairs - a fact which, when combined with England's above cited potential for exerting a degree of influence in Germany, further justifies the need for a reexamination, within the context of Germany's political development prior to unification, of British policy and opinion regarding Prussia.
CHAPTER 2

British Foreign Policy, Prussia, and the German Question, 1848-1871
One of the most noteworthy features of the historiography on Anglo-German relations during the period 1848-1871 is its recurrent references to the role of liberal idealism in the formulation of British foreign policy. Such idealism, which implies an "inability or disinclination to test the value of ideas [as distinct from facts] by a careful comparison with real and material conditions," is generally cited in this scholarship as a shortcoming because it trusted too much in the inevitable, or at least the eventual, triumph of liberal ideas in Germany.¹ Much of this criticism was written after 1914 by Anglo-American scholars whose intention it was to pillory British policy-makers for their failure to recognize, even prior to Germany's unification, that conflict between an authoritarian and expansionist Germany and England's liberal interests was inevitable in the long run. This question of whether or not British policies regarding Prussia during the period 1848-1871 were affected by such idealism, and what effect, if any, British policy had on the political circumstances existing in Prussia at that time will be the subjects of the present chapter.

As with so much of British foreign policy, England's largely non-interventionist approach to the German question during the third quarter of the nineteenth century has been subject to numerous different interpretations. Most prevalent, however, is the type of interpretation alluded to above; i.e. one which maintains that an idealised view of Germany was widespread in England, particularly among policy-makers who shaped their German policy accordingly. In her study of mid-nineteenth
century Anglo-German and Anglo-French relations, written in 1925, A.A.W. Ramsay was the first to expound this idea. Ramsay claimed that the eighteenth century pragmatists in the Foreign Office had given way in the nineteenth to men who allowed moral and political ideals to govern their actions, men who were "guided by abstract ideas of the Right and the Best." Claiming that a "united Germany in which Prussia was merged, a Liberal constitutional state governed by the voice of the people acting through representative institutions, was one to attract all the hopes of the Victorian idealist," Ramsay accused mid-nineteenth century British statesmen of being "absorbed, and misled, partly by the romantic idea of Germany, partly by liberal tendencies, and partly also by fear of France." Disappointed by the passivity of British policy during this period, Ramsey was scarcely able to conceal her contempt for such dangerous idealism:

There is something pathetic in that conviction of the most high-minded men in the British political world - men like Morier and Clarendon - that complete success could never attend anything so immoral as the policy of Bismarck: that right must triumph in the end, and that 'blood and iron' having ruled a while must pass away before the stronger forces of justice, liberty, and peace."

Raymond Sontag's study of Anglo-German relations during the last half of the nineteenth century, written in 1938, also proceeded on the assumption that the creed of mid-century British liberalism, as practised by such men as Palmerston and Gladstone, was one of inexorable and irresistible "Progress towards individualism and cosmopolitanism, progress towards freedom, with England leading and the Continent following." In
the years following 1848, however, German liberalism gradually "sloughed off the last remnants of individualism and cosmopolitanism," embracing instead the ideal of the national state. Watching from across the Channel, British statesmen "knew that if the rest of Europe accepted the state ideal dominant in Germany, liberalism was doomed." Their response, therefore, was to rush to the defence of their ideals; "English liberals refused to believe that Bismarck could win; when he did win unity, they refused to believe that the state he had created could endure; when it did endure, they insisted Germans were slaves."

The most persuasive statement of the case that England's mid-nineteenth century German policy was shaped largely by liberal idealism can be found in W.E. Mosse's important study of the European powers and the German question, written in 1958. In seeking to explain why it was that Prussia was able to "achieve her triumphs without provoking a coalition of the type which had all but destroyed her in the days of Frederick the Great," Mosse argued that "British policy was influenced to no small extent by ideological promptings":

It was German constitutionalism as much as national consolidation which had found favour in England. The Court and sections of public opinion thought of the German problem in terms which were almost exclusively ideological. What they saw was a struggle between ordered freedom and despotism, the British and Russian 'ways of life'....A constitutional reorganization of Germany would strengthen the European centre. A liberal Germany was expected to adopt a liberal commercial policy. Idealism and self-interest...happily coincided."

Although events between 1848 and 1871 gave rise to serious doubts in England about the possibility of a united Germany
becoming an English-style liberal constitutional state, British statesmen refused to consider alternative solutions since, as Mosse claims, such alternatives would inevitably "fall short of British ideals."

Although several alternative interpretations of Anglo-German relations in the mid-nineteenth century will be discussed below, the question to be asked at this point is are these scholars, whose works are central to the scholarship in this area, justified in having placed so much emphasis on the role which liberal idealism played in the decision-making process in England? Do the words, and/or the actions of those in power in England during this period suggest that British policy regarding Germany was shaped by liberal ideals and a romantic view of Germany? As will be shown, it is possible to answer "yes" to the latter of these two questions, owing to the language frequently used by British statesmen in their public statements regarding Germany. The answer to the former, however, is not so obvious and depends in part upon how one chooses to interpret the available evidence. What would appear to be certain is that Ramsay, Sontag and Mosse, with the benefit of hindsight, took British statesmen's utterances on the German question at face value, and that they then interpreted British policy on the basis of this, mistakenly believing that liberal idealism was the principal determinant of Britain's mid-nineteenth century German policy.

There is little question, as we shall see, that most British policy-makers during this period maintained in public
the appearance of strong support for a liberal solution to the
German question, which included promoting liberal development in
Prussia in particular. Moreover, both the crown and the various
British governments continually declared it their intention to
ensure that England’s foreign policy be guided strictly by the
tenets of liberal ideology, which entailed finding that delicate
balance between adherence to non-intervention on the one hand,
and what Granville described as the cultivation of specially
intimate relations “with countries which have adopted
institutions similar in liberality to our own,” on the other.”

But this was only half the story. The other half involved
ensuring that British interests, which were inextricably
interconnected with continental affairs, not be disrupted by
Germany’s growing pains. Despite the fact both the Foreign
Office and the diplomatic corps remained almost exclusively in
the hands of Whig aristocrats—men who agreed in principle to
the spread of liberal institutions on the continent, and to the
idea of self-determination (except in Ireland, of course), but
who abhorred the idea of going to war in the defense of such
principles—England’s foreign policy tended in fact to be based
on pragmatic, rather than idealistic considerations. Nonetheless, the "rhetoric of a liberal external policy was
never abandoned," thus investing England’s actions during this
period with a dualism that has led scholars like Ramsay, Sontag
and Mosse to conclude that liberal idealism was the most
important principle underlying British policy, while more
cynical historians such as Kenneth Bourne have argued that
British statesmen simply "made idealism a cloak for timidity and inaction." ¹¹

A reexamination of the British government's policies with regard to Prussia at certain key points during the period 1848-1871 reveals that, in all likelihood, neither liberal idealism nor "timidity" fundamentally altered the actual goals of Britain's German policy. These goals were to ensure that Prussian strength and stability, so vital to Germany's unification and hence to the peace of central Europe, not be diminished; any effect which England's pursuit of these goals had on the German liberal movement was largely ignored. Moreover, that ominous element of democratic extremism often associated with continental liberalism convinced some British statesmen (as well as the purportedly liberal Prince Albert) that policies actually inimical to Prussian liberalism sometimes had to be pursued. The events of 1871 therefore represented for British statesmen the successful consummation of British policy; the fact that the Prussian liberal movement's prospects for success had been diminished during the course of events, although lamented by some, went largely unnoticed by many others who were confident that the disposal of the national question cleared the way for Germany's liberal evolution, and would lead to the realization of a liberal constitutional German state. Possible sources for such a complacent attitude will be discussed later. Here it suffices to note that liberal idealism was not the only factor in the considerations of British policy-makers. ¹²
British policy regarding Prussia can be roughly divided into four periods: the first, running from 1848-1851, was one in which the nationalist fervour of German liberals was perceived by British statesmen to be the principal threat to Prussia's stability; the second covers the period of the Crimean conflict, 1854-1856, and was characterized by England's attempts to secure Prussia's support in the war against Russia; the third period, 1856-1862, was a relatively calm interval in Anglo-Prussian relations; and the fourth period, which extends from Bismarck's appointment as Prussian minister-president in 1862 to Germany's unification in 1871, was one in which British policy-makers consistently sought to remove potential external threats to Prussia which arose out of Bismarck's ambitious foreign policy. It is to an examination of these four periods that our discussion will now turn.

Fearful of the revolutionary forces unleashed by the February revolution in France in 1848, King Frederick William IV of Prussia appealed to Queen Victoria to join with him in employing the power of "united speech", so as to "Let France feel by sea and by land, as in the years '13, '14, and '15, what our union may mean." This dubious request was unlikely to gain much support in Britain, particularly since both the crown and the cabinet had already urged Frederick William IV to consider political reform within his own kingdom as a means of averting a potentially disastrous revolution. Actually, the Foreign Secretary, Palmerston, was pleased with the fall of Louis Philippe, and hence, employing the "rhetoric of high-flown
liberalism," suggested to Frederick William IV that he take heed of the example of his ill-fated neighbour; aside from admonishing the Prussian king for his attempt to get England to join in a conservative alliance directed against France, Palmerston lectured Frederick William IV on the use of reformist constitutional concessions as a way to avoid revolution, and strengthen the Prussian state.  Like Prince Albert, Palmerston was concerned that Frederick William IV's sentimental attachment to the political traditions of the Holy Alliance threatened Prussian stability.

The fact that these fears were justified became obvious within days, as the revolutionary fervour that was growing throughout Germany swept into Berlin, compelling the king to make constitutional concessions to the revolutionaries, as well as forcing the king's brother William, the future emperor, to flee to England. It would seem that the mood of the British government regarding the direction taken by events during these first days of the revolution was not a hopeful one, inducing Baron Bunsen, the Prussian ambassador to London, to comment: "No one in England any longer believes in our future."  However, Bunsen's pessimism regarding the British government's attitude to these events in Prussia was not necessarily justified, at least not at this point. Although Palmerston expressed concerns that the growing political instability in central Europe might encourage Russian ambitions, and perhaps lead to a general war, he also responded more or less positively to Frederick William IV's concessions of 18
March, and he issued the following instructions for the British representative in Frankfurt: "[W]e wish you to support as far as you properly can without any direct or unfitting interference any plan which has for its object to consolidate Germany and give it more unity and political vigour." Prince Albert too took heart from the Prussian king's attempts to conciliate the revolutionaries, which he interpreted as an attempt to prevent things in Prussia from getting any more out of hand:

He [Frederick William IV] has done everything that was left to him to do, and has thereby done an immense service to Germany. She will and must be constituted anew, and if some important Prince fails to undertake the task, it will fall into the hands of clubs, societies, professors, theorists and humbugs; and if the work is not begun soon, the masses will seize control of it."

Here too then it would appear that, insofar as Prussian affairs were concerned, both the British foreign secretary and the Prince Consort were preoccupied with the question of German strength and stability; at this particular juncture they were still convinced that liberal reform remained as a viable means of securing this end.

British concerns for Prussian stability were, however, linked to the desire for a peaceful consolidation of Germany, and hence England reacted unfavourably to the more extravagant expansionist designs of the German liberals. Thus, while the new German national assembly in Frankfurt soon came to occupy the centre stage in the German révolutions, British attentions were drawn to the growing problem in the Elbe duchies, which had brought Denmark and Prussia into conflict. Responding to requests from both the Federal Diet and the Frankfurt
Parliament, Frederick William IV had ordered Prussian troops to invade South Jutland in support of the revolutionary German government that had been established at Kiel. This action, which met with a stormy reception in the British press, also prompted Disraeli to thunder in the House of Commons against Prussia's boldness. Citing not only the lack of justification for such an attack ("[T]he only means by which a vindication has been sought to be established has been in a weak adaptation of some of the dreamy effusions of German professors"), and the ominous implications of German nationalism ("If wheresoever the German language is spoken, the German flag should wave, why do not the Prussians invade Alsace?")--Disraeli called upon the British government to intervene in the dispute:

It is for the interest of England, and not of England alone, but all of Europe, that peace be maintained. And peace cannot, I think, be maintained if the policy of Prussia be permitted to pass unnoticed and uncensured....[M]ay the peace of Europe be maintained by the justice and the power of England!

Palmerston, however, was much more concerned with the strategic and political implications of Prussia's actions, which, by serving the expansionist desires of the German liberals, threatened to undermine Prussian/German stability. Nor were his concerns regarding Prussia restricted solely to the Schleswig-Holstein problem. The new liberal Prussian Foreign Minister, Heinrich von Arnim-Suckow, had launched an ambitious foreign policy which involved promoting the restoration of des 'Alten Polen', not only so that the revived Polish state might act as a bulwark against Russia, but also as a means of both appeasing the French, and distracting them from Prussia's
aggressions in the duchies. Conscious of the fact that the Zollverein represented a serious challenge to the economic interests of England, Arnim was working towards establishing a Franco-Prussian alliance which he hoped would facilitate his attempts to place Prussia at the head of united Germany. Hence Prussia’s foreign policy presented Palmerston with several problems; aside from the obvious threat to British commercial interests which Prussia’s possession of the Elbe duchies would represent, there was also the less-than-reassuring prospect of a revolutionary Franco-Prussian alliance, which could only incite Russia, perhaps leading to general war.

Palmerston therefore attempted to follow a middle path, adopting a neutral attitude regarding Schleswig-Holstein, and urging Arnim not to undertake any action which might provoke Russia. Meanwhile, in response to Frederick William IV’s claims that he was a prisoner of his popular Foreign Minister’s Polish policy, Palmerston, through Stratford Canning, advised the Prussian king to "rally the conservative county districts, inveterately hostile to the Poles, against the Berlin mob and the ministerial demagogues." Prompted by Arnim’s evasiveness, and growing public support in England for the Danes, Palmerston finally abandoned neutrality and joined with Russia in urging Prussia to withdraw from the Duchies, a policy shift which was rendered less dangerous by the resignation of Arnim in June, 1848. It is clear therefore that British interests favoured peace and stability in central Europe (best secured through Germany’s consolidation), and not the kind of idealistic
reunification of all Germans— to be accomplished at the expense of Germany's neighbours— advocated by German liberal-nationalists.

The remainder of the crisis was anti-climactic. Bowing to diplomatic pressure, and hoping to alleviate the effects of the Danish naval blockade, Frederick William IV agreed to the terms of the fateful Malmö armistice. Although war broke out again a year later, pressure from Czar Nicholas induced Frederick William IV to conclude yet another armistice, which was followed by negotiations leading to the 1852 London Treaty. Not surprisingly, the British government's pragmatism during this dispute was not appreciated by those Prussians who assumed that British liberal policies would automatically be compatible with German-Prussian nationalist goals; hence England was blamed for the devastating effect which these proceedings had on the German liberal-national movement, prompting Prince Albert's mentor, Baron Stockmar, to claim: "Our only natural friend has acted as an enemy bent on our destruction." Bunsen, who refused to affix his signature to the London Protocol in 1850, was equally critical of British policy. Although he felt that the Berlin leaders had been insufficiently liberal to secure England's crucial support for the revolution, he nonetheless complained to Palmerston that, as a result of England's failure to support Prussia: "[Y]ou drive us to throw ourselves into the arms of Austria, and therefore into those of Russia." But how justified were these complaints? Palmerston himself admitted that the British cabinet had "purposely abstained from
departing, with respect to these [German] affairs, from the position of anxious observers of what was passing.\textsuperscript{26} But this abstention applied primarily to questions of German unity as deliberated upon by the Frankfurt Parliament, which had, as a result of its intransigence over Schleswig-Holstein, long since lost what little support it had from the British government. Prussia, however, remained central to Palmerston's desire to see the revolutionary fervour of the continent dampened so that some kind of a balance might be restored among the powers of Europe. Hence Whitehall's praise for the appointment in November 1848 of Count Friedrich von Brandenburg as Prussian minister-president, even though he was a conservative landowner whose illiberality should have been abhorrent to "any good Whig at Westminster."\textsuperscript{27}

The government's desire to distance itself from the disruptive tendencies of the Frankfurt liberals was reiterated in parliament by Lord Brougham, who believed that the conduct of Frederick William IV during the dispute over Schleswig-Holstein had been "dictated more by the Frankfort Assembly than by his own wishes." Brougham was confident that in the future the Prussian king would be "governed by his own sound judgement."\textsuperscript{28}

Clearly it was the destabilizing radicalism of both Arnim and the Frankfurt Parliament that had alarmed British policy-makers, and further evidence of this is the subsequent support which the British crown and cabinet afforded to the Erfurt proposal for German unification, advanced by Joseph Maria von Radowitz, the new conservative Prussian Foreign Minister. Although Palmerston questioned Prussia's ability to implement
Radovitz’s plan, which called for the creation of a Prussian-led federal German state excluding Austria, he nonetheless gave the plan his blessing, as he believed it would "no doubt be advantageous to the German people, with reference to both their internal interests, and to their foreign relations, and it would consequently be advantageous to Europe at large." Even more supportive was Prince Albert, who was emphatic about the need for Prussia to act: "It is high time that a definite settlement was made of the German constitutional question, and a strong homogenous central authority set up, capable of defending law and order. This can and will be found only in Prussia." In a letter to Prince William in May, 1850, Albert not only expressed his satisfaction that the Erfurt Parliament had "proven as Conservative as it is patriotic," but he also declared that the "urgent necessity of this [Erfurt] settlement is clearly shown." What it was that Albert feared from delay is clear: three months later, when the Erfurt Union was on the verge of collapse, he lamented, "If only Austria and the Princes would realize that the Revolution of 1848 is by no means finished!"

Both Palmerston and Albert, although for different reasons, had come to look askance at Prussian and German liberalism of the 1848 variety, shifting their support to the more conservative forces in Prussia which were resurgent by the end of 1849. For Albert it was the fear of "Red revolution" which dictated this shift, while Palmerston, anxious to prevent both radical realignments of the European powers, and the abrogation of international agreements, was suspicious of the "kinetic"
character of Prussian liberalism: "As a practical English statesmen, he could not do other than oppose a liberal Prussia, however badly such a line accorded with his actions elsewhere."^{35}

These same considerations shaped British reactions to the Hessian crisis of 1850, which destroyed the Erfurt Union and ended in Prussia's humiliation at Olmütz. Frederick William's attempt to secure an Anglo-Prussian alliance in the face of the impending danger of a conflict with Austria elicited a striking variety of views. On the one hand, Queen Victoria impulsively demanded that England throw its weight "into the scale of Constitutional Prussia and Germany."^{34} Prince Albert, on the other hand, refused to answer Frederick William IV's request one way or another ("An Anglo-Prussian alliance is a matter of such immense import that none but the responsible constitutional advisors of the two Crowns can properly handle it"), while warning Prince William that the "last vestiges of Conservatism may be shattered by disturbances such as are going on in Hesse...and poisoned by the germ of a fresh Revolution."^{35} Finally, there was Foreign Secretary Palmerston, who, while idealistically claiming that he refused to believe "it possible in the present day to re-establish despotic government in a nation so enlightened, and so attached to free institutions" as Prussia, was entirely realistic when evaluating the European-wide implications of the crisis: "Russia on one side and France on the other...must be inwardly chuckling at seeing
Germany came down in so short a time from Einheit to intense exasperation and to the brink of civil war. Although Palmerston harboured no illusions about Prussia's responsibility for bringing about such a lamentable situation, or about the necessity of British neutrality in any ensuing conflict (particularly since such a conflict might also involve France and Russia), he was clearly attracted by the potential benefits of a Prussian victory:

The likelihood is that if such a war should break out the sympathies of this nation would be in favour of Prussia, Protestant and liberal; but there is a wide distance between sympathy and active assistance. The interest of England and I should say of Europe generally would be that out of such a war Prussia should come unscathed and if possible enlarged and strengthened. [Emphasis mine]

Such an outcome, however, was not to be. Although relatively unscathed, Prussia emerged from Olmütz under the tutelage of the reactionary Manteuffel ministry. Hence Mosse concludes that the 1851 restoration settlement represented "a major British defeat," not the least galling of which was "the failure of the German liberal movement." The above account of the British government's attitude towards Prussia during the period 1848-1851, however, suggests that the British government never actively prosecuted any German policy other than one which sought to ensure central European stability; if the exigences of this policy demanded that England abstain from supporting expansionist Prussian and German liberalism, so be it. It would seem, therefore, that pragmatism rather than "ideological promptings" was the principal determinant of British policy during this tumultuous period.
The second period opens early in 1854 with the growing antagonism between Britain, France and Russia in the Crimea. During this period, however, it was Britain who was looking to Prussia for support, rather than the reverse, and thus Anglo-Prussian relations once again became an issue of some importance. As explained by Prince Albert, the strategic importance of Prussia and Austria in a war against Russia was enormous:

The worst of the war is that we cannot bring it to an effective conclusion. Russia is a great and clumsy mass and the blows we can strike her in the few places which we can reach, will not make a great impression on her. If Austria and Prussia go with us, matters are different and war becomes impossible for Russia.39

Frederick William IV, however, having spurned Czar Nicholas’ earnest attempts to win the support of Prussia, also resisted the western powers’ advances. Manteuffel declared that he did not want to embroil Prussia in a conflict which “does not affect the interests of our fatherland.”40 Not even Queen Victoria’s impassioned plea that the Prussian king not abdicate Prussia’s position as “one of the Great Powers, which, since 1815, have been guarantors of treaties, guardians of civilisation, defenders of the right, and real arbiters of the Nations,” was sufficient to deflect Frederick William IV from his “flagitious policy” of neutrality.41

Within weeks of the British and French declarations of war against Russia, Prussia’s neutrality became the subject of scrutiny in the British parliament. Reacting to rumours that Prussia had broken completely with the western powers and joined Russia, the government was asked if either the hostile tone of
the debates in the Prussian Chambers, or the recall of Baron Bunsen from his post in London had any "political meaning with regard to the relations between Prussia and this country?" Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary in Aberdeen's government, dismissed the rumours as being unfounded, and declared that it was "quite impossible" that Prussia would pass over to Russia. But while it was true that there was little danger of Prussia joining forces with Russia, especially given Frederick William IV's justifiable fear of a French attack on the Rhine, what Clarendon did not apprehend was that the Prussian king was affecting a distinct, although largely symbolic change of policy with regards to Prussia's relations with England, and that Bunsen's recall was indeed a part of this. Moreover, it was Prussian liberalism which suffered as a result of this policy shift.

In opposition to Manteuffel and the reactionary Camarilla which surrounded the king, there had recently appeared in Prussia a "kind of German Whig party" called the Wochenblattpartei. This group was led by Bunsen, supported by Prince William, and comprised of pro-western liberals. Following the conclusion of an Austro-Prussian treaty of alliance in April in which the German powers reasserted their independence from St. Petersburg, Frederick William IV moved against the Wochenblattpartei, thus making equally clear his intention to remain outside any concert of Europe directed against Russia. Thus Bunsen's recall from London was a part of the Prussian king's plan to steer his country down a middle
path, despite the British government's anxious attempts to
deflect Frederick William from his policy of neutrality, which
was deemed injurious to England's interests. The fact that the
significance of these events was lost on British statesmen, as
is suggested by Clarendon's response in Parliament, is confirmed
by the Prince Consort's uncharacteristic reaction to the news
about Bunsen. Although he had come to Bunsen's defense four
years earlier when it was rumoured then that the liberal-minded
Prussian ambassador would be recalled, Albert now concluded that
"Bunsen's fall...is best for all parties." It was not long,
however, before the political contours of Prussia's neutrality,
and the significance of the Wochenblattpartei's suppression
became apparent in England, taxing the patience of British
policy-makers to the fullest.

When the terms of the Austro-Prussian treaty finally came
to light in May 1854, there was some debate over whether or not
this treaty, under any conditions, pledged either party to
effective cooperation with France and England in the war. In the
House of Lords the Marquess of Clanricarde concluded that those
clauses which set out the circumstances under which the German
powers would join with the west were "absurd" and wholly
unrealistic (a statement the full irony of which would only
become apparent twelve years later when the Earl of Derby
offered his interpretation of England's commitments under the
1867 collective guarantee of Luxembourg). Within two months of
this Prince Albert could be heard to comment: "Prussia's conduct
is truly revolting, and the King is looked upon by all political
men here with profound contempt. Nor was this situation about to improve. There exists, however, no evidence to suggest that Britain made any attempt to encourage the liberal pro-Western forces in Prussia to rebel against the "revolting" conduct of their monarch.

By the time Palmerston was called upon to form a new government in February 1855, the issue of Prussia's neutrality had become much more contentious, owing largely to reports that Prussia was providing Russia with arms and supplies. In parliament the Russophobic Lord Lyndhurst launched a scathing attack on Prussia's role in the Crimean war to date - a role which he felt was "derogatory to her character, destructive to her influence, and reducing her, in fact, for a time, to the state of a second-rate Power." Lyndhurst, who attributed Prussia's treacherous and possibly suicidal actions to the influence which St. Petersburg exerted over the Prussian king, closed his tirade with a summary of the essential character of Prussian foreign policy:

It is a singular circumstance in the history of nations... that their diplomatic character and their foreign policy have frequently a permanent form, surviving successive monarchs and successive administrations....In tracing the foreign policy of Prussia from the reign of [Frederick II] down to the present time, it will be found ever to exhibit the same features of unblushing fraud and unscrupulous selfishness....I have no faith in the Prussian Government, and if my noble Friend [Clarendon] should be tempted to enter into any engagement with that Power, I should be disposed to address him with words of caution, 'Hunc tu, Romane, caveto'.

Clarendon's response to these inflammatory remarks reveals the dilemma in which the government found itself as a result of Prussia's neutrality. Frustrated by Prussia's inaction, but
unwilling to widen the breach that was forming between Berlin and London, Clarendon chose to empathize with the Prussians’ desire for peace, while lamenting the consequences for Prussia, and for England, of Frederick William IV’s policies:

We can have no object or interest but to be on terms of friendly relation with Prussia....For nearly a century she has taken part in all the great questions of Europe; she has aided in maintaining the equilibrium of power in Europe; and it has been a melancholy spectacle to see Prussia abdicating the high position she has hitherto held....The general result of Prussian policy has, I fear, been to frustrate the union [of Germany], and to prevent the vigorous tone and the uniform language on the part of Germany, which would have gone so far to secure for us that peace we are so anxious to obtain....[I]t must be keenly felt by the enlightened, the brave, and the patriotic people of Prussia.

Employing the rhetoric of a liberal idealist which held that the "enlightened" Prussian people were more or less innocent victims of the policies of their rulers, Clarendon thus reiterated the idea that Prussian strength, whether it be in the hands of liberals or conservatives, was a matter of great interest to England. Clarendon’s suggestion that strong language might have had a positive influence on the course of events is also noteworthy since it anticipated the complaints later directed at England itself after the outbreak of both the Austro-Prussian and the Franco-Prussian wars.

But because Prussia was the only major European power that had refrained from adopting a hostile attitude towards Russia during the Crimean conflict, Palmerston’s government contemplated excluding Prussia from the peace conference which opened in the spring of 1856. In the House of Commons the government was forced to defend this policy against arguments
which were the very opposite of those advanced by Lyndhurst a year earlier. Benjamin Disraeli's comments on this question are of particular interest as they demonstrate the future Prime Minister's appreciation for the pragmatic considerations influencing British policy with regard to Prussia. He too, however, utilized ideologically-weighted language to emphasize the importance of good Anglo-Prussian relations:

[I]f it be of European interest that Prussia should be present at the Conferences...it is, I say, equally desirable, in my opinion, for English interests....From the time when Prussia entered into the highest class of sovereignty, with one brief exception, when she acted notoriously under compulsion, she has been our ally; and from historical associations, from her geographical position, from the nature of her produce, from the character of her inhabitants, and, I may say, of her religion, Prussia is a power which will always be regarded with great sympathy by the people of England, and with profound interest by the statesmen of England.535

In his response, Palmerston made no quarrel with Disraeli's sentiments regarding Prussia: "Prussia is undoubtedly a Power with whom it must always be the interest of this country to maintain the most intimate relations of friendship." As for the question of Prussia's exclusion from the peace conference, here too the Prime Minister tempered his answer, remarking that England was "not entitled to criticise" Prussia's reasons for remaining neutral in the conflict; having attempted "perfect neutrality", however, Prussia could "play no part in the Conference."54 In the end Prussia was admitted to the Congress of Paris, but played only a minor role in the negotiations. Within the context of Anglo-Prussian relations during this period, the significance of the Crimean conflict is that it represented the only time when British interests turned so
decisively on Prussia’s response to a British initiative. At every other important juncture between 1848 and 1871, the leitmotif was England’s response to a Prussian initiative, whether it involved conflict in Schleswig-Holstein, Hesse-Kassel, Austria, Luxembourg or France. Given this reversal of roles, one might expect the British government to have acted in greater earnest, and indeed, such was the case, particularly during the opening months of the war. But once Prussia’s response was established (in this case through its declaration of neutrality), British statesmen resigned themselves to this response, and engaged henceforth in damage-control operations, which involved reasserting the notion that Prussia was England’s "natural ally", and that no purpose would be served by "pouring obloquy" on the enlightened Prussian nation. Here too then it would seem that pragmatic considerations guided the British government’s policy regarding Prussia, while ideological posturing dominated the discourse.

The period between the end of the Crimean war and Bismarck's appointment as Prussian minister-president in 1862 was one of relative quiescence for Anglo-Prussian relations, punctuated only occasionally by disruptive events. Indeed, in the years immediately following the Congress of Paris, circumstances appeared extremely propitious for effecting in Prussia the kinds of liberal constitutional changes which British idealists believed were inevitable. The marriage of Queen Victoria’s eldest daughter to the Prince of Prussia’s son in 1858 (both of whom were thought to hold liberal views), and
The appointment that same year of Prince William as regent for his mentally incompetent brother both seemed to signal a change in direction for Prussia. Manteuffel's replacement by the "New Era" ministry of Prince Karl Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen confirmed this liberalizing trend. While the British press remained wary of these changes, the British government responded positively, presumably because reform was being effected in a peaceful manner.\textsuperscript{56}

The outbreak of the Italian war in 1859 had little bearing on Anglo-Prussian relations. The principal concern of Palmerston's government was to ensure that the war not spread, unduly encouraging either Russia or France. It was from this that sprang Foreign Secretary Russell's belief that "Upon the temperate and enlightened conduct of Prussia depends... whether the present war shall be confined within the limits of Italy, or whether it shall be extended to the whole of Germany, and perhaps to other parts of Europe."\textsuperscript{57} But the unfortunate consequence of the Peace of Villafranca was that, having been sidestepped by Austria and France, the "New Era" ministry had alienated itself from Prince William by preaching neutrality. Hence the embittered Prince William (who was also disturbed by revelations of the British crown's inside knowledge of Prussian affairs) derived little consolation from Queen Victoria's assurances that Prussia's restraint had proven that there was "fundamentally no reason why our policies should not march hand in hand."\textsuperscript{59}
It is interesting to note that the one occasion upon which the British government chose to publicly censure the Prussian government for their conduct was one in which no clear British interests were threatened, and there existed no danger that this censure would in any way impair the Prussian government’s position at home or in Europe. The so-called MacDonald affair, which in 1860 arose out of the arrest and imprisonment in Prussia of a British army captain because of a quarrel on a train, prompted the press and the governments in both England and Prussia to hurl a flurry of insults at one another. Incensed by the Prussian prosecutor's claim that "The English residing and travelling abroad are notorious for the rudeness, impudence, and boorish arrogance of their behaviour," the Times launched a series of vicious attacks against Prussia, which Palmerston followed up with these threatening, but harmless remarks:

It is impossible to cast your eye over the face of Europe and to note the relations of the different Powers to each other without seeing that it is to the interest of Prussia to cultivate, not the friendship of the English Government only, but the good opinion and the goodwill of the English nation; and, therefore, I should say that their conduct in this affair has been...a blunder as well as a crime. 59

As the Prussian liberal leader George von Vinke was quick to point out, "the alliance with Prussia is likewise a necessity for England, on account of the positions taken up by the other Great Powers." This in turn prompted Prince Albert to respond in a manner that betrayed not only his idealistic view of Anglo-Prussian relations and his growing estrangement from his German roots, but also his insights into the workings of the British political mind:
The idea that the British Government could sacrifice an individual citizen who is supposed to have been injured and ill-treated, in order that it might continue on a more convenient, friendly footing with another Government, which might some day be of use to England in time of need, would be regarded here as treason and contemptible cowardice... Prussia has always been talking of being the only natural and real ally of England....I repeat, however, that a large, liberal, generous policy is the preliminary condition for an alliance with England.\(^0\)

But despite all of the rhetoric, the MacDonald affair never amounted to anything more than just words, although it is not impossible that this unpleasant incident helped to prepare Palmerston for what was to be his last encounter with Prussia when the Schleswig-Holstein problem reared its ugly head once again in 1863.\(^1\)

The fourth and final period to be examined, although certainly the most eventful, was also one of the most consistent in terms of British policy regarding Prussia. British policy-makers between 1863 and 1871 steadfastly adhered to a course which helped to safeguard Prussia's position in central Europe amidst all of the momentous changes wrought by Bismarck and the Prussian army in the years leading up to unification. British statesmen, with some notable exceptions, followed such a course because they believed British interests would best be served through the preservation of Prussian stability and the consolidation of Germany. Although Prussia's aggrandizement and the subordination of the Prussian liberal movement were unintended consequences of the fulfillment of these goals, British policy contributed to their fulfillment nonetheless. Possible reasons why this latter development in particular
received so little consideration from British policy-makers will be discussed in the following chapter.

The period opens with the revival in the 1860's of that perennial European issue, the Schleswig-Holstein problem. The most controversial aspect of British foreign policy during the dispute over Schleswig-Holstein in 1863-1864 is its apparent duality - strong support for the Danes on the one hand, and a refusal to undertake any action whatsoever to demonstrate that support on the other. But while this has led to the accusation that British policy was conducted "with an incredible lack of skill and consistency" during the Danish war, British policy-makers were not entirely responsible for this characterization of their actions as "meddle and muddle". Palmerston's government, for example, can only be partially blamed for the perception that England was pro-Danish in this dispute. Only once did Palmerston publicly suggest that England would come to the support of Denmark, while far more frequently did he and Russell declare England's impartiality in response to opposition demands that England act in Denmark's defense. The press, on the other hand, mercilessly attacked the policies of the German powers, Prussia in particular, and when Gladstone added his voice to this through an anonymous article in the *Quarterly Review*, it was not surprising that "official" British policy was thought to favour actively opposing the German powers. The fact that Palmerston's government never undertook such active opposition prompted criticisms of the government's passivity - charges which took on much greater weight when it
was later suggested, somewhat wishfully, that the Danish war had been the best, and perhaps the last opportunity to frustrate Bismarck's plans.

It is no doubt true that the British government was incensed at having to take action in a dispute which was thought to have been settled in 1852. It is also certain that Queen Victoria played an important role in moderating the British government's response to the Danish war, which was blamed largely on the actions of the German powers. But it is equally certain that, as Palmerston himself claimed, "there was no question whatever of England going to war." The same motives that had impelled Palmerston to blunt Russell's ideological indignation over the Alvensleben convention in 1863 (by which Prussia had pledged its support to Russia in suppressing the Poles) also helped to guide the British government's actions during the long and complicated Schleswig-Holstein dispute.

These motives - the desire to preserve Prussian and German strength by not providing France with an excuse to seek aggrandizement on the Rhine - were, of course, accompanied by many other important objectives, not the least of which was the preservation of the Danish monarchy. But as Russell himself noted just a week before hostilities began, "by encouraging Denmark and Germany by turns," Napoleon III sought throughout the conflict "to bring on a war by which France may profit." Thus, only by consistently pursuing a policy aimed at the preservation, and later the restoration of peace could the British government hope to frustrate the French emperor, and
avert a conflagration the consequences of which would be much more serious than the loss of the Elbe duchies by Denmark.

As early as 1861 British concerns were voiced regarding the reaction of France to Prussian interference in Schleswig-Holstein. The Earl of Ellenborough (who, ironically, was to become one of the most vociferous defenders of Denmark) commented in the House of Lords that the German Confederation's demands in the duchies raised the possibility of a French attack on Prussia. His prophetic advice was, "let [Prussia] not provoke hostilities, let her wait till she is attacked, and then let her rally around her the whole of Germany in defense of right." Were Prussia to attack Denmark first, she might well have been "perilling her own existence."

Amidst both the Danish monarchy's attempts gradually to separate Schleswig from Holstein (a violation of the 1852 agreement), and repeated threats of federal execution, the British government proposed several different solutions to the problem in the duchies in the hopes of preventing just such a situation from occurring. Such proposals were rejected by both the German Diet and the Danes, the latter of whom exacerbated the situation with the Patent of 30 March 1863 calling for the incorporation of Schleswig into the Danish state. Meanwhile, in response to opposition claims that all difficulties would "vanish" if the British government, in conjunction with France, let it be distinctly understood that they would not permit a German invasion of Denmark, Russell argued: "I am sure that the best position for the English Government to hold is to maintain
and adhere to treaties that have been made, and not to advance on this dangerous and questionable path of denying to Germany those rights which fairly belong to her." Hence the government's aim, which was to preserve peace and stability in central Europe, appeared to be threatened on all sides—by the obstinacy of the Danes, by the growing nationalist fervour in Germany, and by Napoleon III's desire for aggrandizement on the Rhine.

Palmerston's unfortunate Commons speech of 23 July 1863, in which he declared that anyone attempting a violent overthrow of Danish rights and independence would find that "it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend," can perhaps be better understood in light of correspondence received and dispatched by the Foreign Office around the same time. On 19 July the Swedish Foreign Minister had informed London that his government would feel impelled to provide Denmark with assistance in the face of federal execution, and he urged the same course of action on England and France. Moreover, Russell wrote to his ambassador in Vienna on the 29th and told him to inform the Austrian Foreign Minister not only of Sweden's apparent willingness to actively support Denmark, but more importantly, that federal execution might well induce France to intervene: "Such a pretension might be as dangerous to the independence and integrity of Germany as the invasion of Schleswig might be to the independence and integrity of Denmark." [Emphasis mine] Hence it is possible that Palmerston's words, rather than threatening British intervention
In the dispute, were instead meant to warn the German powers of the growing possibility of intervention from some other quarter.

In the time between Palmerston's speech and the Prussian and Austrian invasion of the duchies on 24 January 1864, the British government worked consistently to avert the outbreak of hostilities, both by urging the Danish king to abrogate the constitution which so offended German nationalists, and by trying to convince the Federal Diet to stop its sabre-rattling. Palmerston remained convinced that the problem was "capable of amicable adjustment," but he was caught between the pro-German sentiments of the Queen, and British public opinion, which was strongly pro-Danish. Russell, on the other hand, was not quite so pragmatic; alarmed by the sentiments being expressed throughout the country, he thought it best to remind the Queen that any surrender of Denmark's integrity would be highly unpopular, and that it would be impossible for her government to "consent to a German occupation of Schleswig." There was, however, a big difference between withholding "consent" for such an invasion, and actually taking action to reverse it. Moreover, both the government and the crown were in agreement that a real danger existed of Napoleon III using the dispute over the duchies as a means of aggrandizing France, and thus the government's official position was that they had no immediate interest in the Schleswig-Holstein dispute, and that their interest was "bound up with the general interest of Europe," as indeed it was.
The German invasion of the duchies, which Prussia justified by pointing to the constitution of 18 November as Denmark's "formal and final violation" of the 1852 London Treaty, did not seriously alter the British government's position, as it was felt that both sides would now be prepared to negotiate. Russell, who believed that a slight push might be necessary to initiate such negotiations, suggested a joint Anglo-French offer of mediation which, if refused, would be followed by the dispatch of a British squadron to Copenhagen, and a French army contingent to the Rhenish border. Palmerston's response to this suggestion is characteristic of his attitude throughout the dispute, and it demonstrates how, unlike his more enthusiastic Foreign Secretary, he refused to let principles override his concern for the stabilizing position which Prussia held in Europe:

I share fully your indignation. The conduct of Austria and Prussia is discreditably bad, and one or both of them will suffer for it before these matters are settled. I rather doubt, however, the expediency of taking at the present moment the steps proposed....[I]t might not be advisable nor for our own interest to suggest to France an attack upon the Prussian Rhenish territory. It would serve Prussia right if such an attack were made; and if Prussia remains in the wrong we could not take part with her against France. But the conquest of that territory by France would be an evil for us, and would seriously affect the position of Holland and Belgium. [Emphasis mine]

With the crossing of a Prussian detachment into Jutland, and rumours that an Austrian fleet on its way to Copenhagen would sail past the shores of Great Britain, tensions in England rose considerably. Once again the Queen urged moderation, Russell urged Anglo-French mediation, while Palmerston doubted that Austria and Prussia actually intended to attack Copenhagen.
He was instead concerned with the attitude of the French emperor who he believed was keeping himself free from engagements "to be enabled either to seize the Rhenish provinces of Prussia, or to occupy the Palatinate of Bavaria, or to put himself at the head of a Confederacy of the Rhine," all of these schemes and others needing only the right circumstances to be implemented."

In the face of England, France and Russia's inability to agree on any other common course of action, a peace conference was called for 25 April. In parliament it was argued that the government should take steps, such as dispatching a British fleet to the Baltic, to reduce the possibility of this conference being unsuccessful, which could only "menace the general tranquillity of Europe" (a sentiment which anticipated Disraeli's censure three months later of the government's policy). The government responded that such an action would run contrary to their intention of entering the conference "not as partisans of one side or the other, but impartially." Above all the government wished "the balance of power in Europe to be maintained, and the rights of all the parties preserved." Hostilities were temporarily suspended, and on 20 April the conference officially opened in London.

It was quickly agreed that the 1852 settlement had to be abandoned as a basis for discussions at the conference, and the British cabinet therefore began to entertain proposals for the partition of the duchies. But Bismarck's duplicity, as well as his opposition to the British government's proposals prevented any progress from being made, which prompted Russell to agree to
the Queen's suggestion that she write to King William and encourage him to moderate his demands. This proved ineffective, however, and it soon appeared possible that the conference would indeed break up and hostilities be resumed. This in turn induced Russell to renew once again his demands that the cabinet offer England's assistance to Denmark, with or without the cooperation of the French.

But in the days leading up the 24 June cabinet meeting in which England's future policy was to be determined, Napoleon III suddenly appeared overanxious for an Anglo-French understanding, which heightened British suspicions. After meeting with the French foreign minister, Cowley reported: "The upshot is that his Majesty wishes to turn present circumstances to account 1) to turn the Austrians out of Venetia 2) to get a bit of the Rhine." He then wrote to Clarendon: "It is clear, I think, that the French alliance is to be bought, but the price will be perhaps more than it is worth." For Palmerston this was simply a confirmation of fears he had entertained throughout the dispute, and he told a delighted Queen Victoria as much: "The greatest danger he [Palmerston] saw from France joining us was dragging us into a war, in which she would claim the Rhine, and possibly revolutionize the whole of Italy." But even more significant was the effect which France's volte-face had on Russell, who had previously been convinced that France's participation was crucial to any attempt to come to the aid of Denmark: "But then comes the question, what will France require as the price of her alliance with England in checking the
ambition of Germany, and is it the interest of England to pay that price?' Clearly the cabinet felt that it was not, and on 24 June it was decided that England would remain aloof from the hostilities which were resumed almost immediately. Within a month the Danes had surrendered, and by the Treaty of Vienna, signed in October 1864, they left the duchies for Prussia and Austria to fight over.

Obviously the above is only a small crosssection of British policy during the complicated Schleswig-Holstein dispute. However it shows that British policy may not have been so irresolute as is commonly believed, and that pragmatic concerns about the European balance, of which Prussia was an integral part, consistently took precedence over all else. Numerous other important issues, such as the position of Russia in the dispute, the integrity and independence of the Danish monarchy, and control over the entrance to the Baltic, all had their place in the formulation of British policy; but it was the possible consequences of a French attack on Prussia which proved decisive when it came to deciding whether or not England would oppose Prussia and Austria's actions in the duchies.

Accusations that Palmerston's government had "lowered the just influence" of England in the councils of Europe, thereby diminishing the "securities for peace," and that vice and crime seemed now to "stalk unchallenged from one end of Europe to another," were a predictable expression satisfying the anger of some groups in British public opinion, and were in fact to be repeated again and again by later historians. Nor was
Palmerston oblivious to the state of British opinion regarding Prussia in the wake of the war: "[I]f our good friend and neighbour at Paris were to take it into his head to deprive Prussia of her Rhenish provinces, not a finger in England would be stirred, nor a voice raised, nor a man nor a shilling voted to resist such retribution upon the Prussian monarch." But it was just such an attack which Palmerston had sought to avert, as the highly dangerous consequences of French aggression against Prussia were more relevant for England than Prussia's actions in Denmark. The illiberal ministry in Berlin had inadvertently been strengthened by having successfully prosecuted the Danish war (which later encouraged Bismarck to challenge his liberal opposition over the matter of army reform); Palmerston, however, was prepared to accept this outcome for the sake of a wider European peace. Hence it is not surprising to find that in his last letter on foreign affairs, after the duchies had been disposed of at Gastein, Palmerston wrote the following:

It was dishonest and unjust to deprive Denmark of Sleswig and Holstein. It is another question how those two Duchies, when separated from Denmark, can be disposed of for the best interests of Europe. I should say that, with that view, it is better that they should go to increase the power of Prussia than they should form another little state to be added to the cluster of small bodies politic which encumber Germany, and render it of less force than it ought to be in the general balance of power in the world. Prussia is too weak as she now is ever to be honest and independent in her action; and with a view to the future, it is desirable that Germany in the aggregate, should be strong, in order to control those two ambitious and aggressive powers, France and Russia....[A] strong Prussia is essential to German strength.

If British statesmen had learned anything from the Danish war it was that, in the hands of Bismarck, Prussian diplomacy
had taken on a whole new character, a fact which was driven home by the way he subsequently used the duchies as a means of provoking Austria in the tug of war that ensued after the signing of the Treaty of Vienna. However, Palmerston's complacency regarding Bismarck's conduct in the duchies after the Danish war was not shared by all. As it slowly became clear during 1865 that Bismarck intended to annex the duchies, irrespective of the popularity of Austria's plan to install Duke Frederick of Augustenberg as their ruler, objections were raised in the House of Commons that the "ambitious aggressions of Prussia" threaten the "tranquillity of Europe." More specifically, it was felt that Bismarck's aim was to "add the Duchies to the Kingdom [of Prussia] as a means of gaining popularity for himself, reconciling the Prussians to his rule, and diverting their attention from home politics and constitutional privileges." Only Bismarck himself could have stated this more clearly. It soon became evident, however, that, despite such protestations in parliament, few British statesmen were prepared to place the needs of the Prussian constitutional movement ahead of those of European stability.

The Gastein convention, which appeared to have averted war by awarding Holstein to Austria and Schleswig to Prussia, appeared to be a step in the direction of such stability, but was nonetheless interpreted in different ways in England. As we have seen, Palmerston thought that both of the duchies should have gone to Prussia. Queen Victoria, on the other hand, felt that world opinion demanded that England let the German powers,
and Prussia in particular, know how they felt about this "iniquity". The Queen no doubt feared the challenge which Gasteln represented to the principle of legitimacy. But the government's only response was to be one of quiet, tactful disapproval. Having informed England's diplomatic representatives abroad that the government considered the Gasteln convention to be inappropriate, the following delicately-phrased circular memo was dispatched:

This instruction does not authorize you to address observations on this subject to the Court to which you are accredited, but is intended only to point out, when the opportunity shall present itself, what is the language you are expected to hold.

With the Gasteln convention a fait accompli, and war apparently averted, little practical good would have been served by British remonstrances against this display of power-politics. But the "tranquillity" which Gasteln had afforded Europe proved to be short-lived, and by the spring of 1865 Russell's new government, in which Clarendon was Foreign Secretary, once again faced the prospect of a German civil war disrupting the peace of Europe. But while the aim of British policy remained the same — that of preserving peace — the emphasis which Palmerston had formerly placed on the security of Prussia was dramatically reduced as a result of Clarendon's presence in the Foreign Office in the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities in June.

The new Foreign Secretary had little sympathy for Prussia in the wake of the Danish war, privately stating that "if she [Austria] could give the Prussians a licking, I am sure that
Europe would be glad." Nonetheless, Clarendon tried to nip the growing German problem in the bud by unofficially conveying to Bismarck his concerns about Prussia’s confrontational policy in the duchies. Fearful that a German war would disrupt the "present equilibrium of power," Clarendon wrote:

Setting aside family ties, Prussia is the great Protestant Power of Europe, with which we naturally have kindred feelings, and it would be with deep regret that we should see her regarded as a common enemy, because a wilful disturber of the peace of Europe; and still more if, in the course of events, we found ourselves compelled to take any part against her....It would reflect great credit upon Prussia if before she went out in this duel with Austria she volunteered to place herself in the hands of seconds upon whose impartiality she could rely."

Russell too saw the preservation of peace as England’s principal concern in the dispute, and that British policy was not "either to put Prussia in possession of territories in the North of Germany not now belonging to her, or to look with favour upon her humiliation." But while he hoped to avoid both of these two evils by proposing that the two duchies go to the Grand-Duke of Oldenburg, his proposal unfortunately ignored the claims of Duke Frederick of Augustenberg, which, according to Queen Victoria, were the "only claims which accord with the wishes of the People of the Duchies." It would appear that in this particular instance Victoria’s idealism overruled the Prime Minister’s pragmatism.

Nonetheless, Queen Victoria was anxious to offer British mediation in the dispute. But as she made clear in her correspondence with the Crown Prince of Prussia, the course pursued by Bismarck made it extremely difficult for the British government to offer such mediation: "I must say, as much as I
should lament war between Prussia and Austria, I should grieve still more if my government made themselves parties...to so gross a violation of all the principles on which we pride ourselves in England, as the violent annexation of the duchies to Prussia. 

Upon being informed by the Prime Minister that the government would not "give any advice, or interfere with Prussia in any way" while Bismarck was the Minister of the King, Victoria decided to make one last effort, writing directly to the Prussian king, and advising him that, indeed, he was being deceived and dishonoured by the recklessness of "one man" whose actions threatened to plunge Germany into a fratricidal war.

But now it was Victoria's turn to be rebuffed, as the cabinet, concerned about the consequences of a Prussian refusal of England's offer of mediation, declared the German quarrel to be one in which "neither English honour nor English interests are concerned." This, of course, was not entirely true, for the cabinet recognized that a German war could well result in a relative increase in the strength of France, thereupon encouraging Napoleon III to reap some advantage. But unlike his predecessor, Clarendon does not appear to have been concerned about French designs on Prussia. In convincing the cabinet of the need for England to remain aloof from the German quarrel, the Foreign Secretary argued that the "military and pecuniary resources of England" had to be carefully managed. Not only was this necessary because of the state of Ireland, but also, as he informed Cowley: "Our great care must be for Belgium and our resources of all kinds must be husbanded for fulfilling our
Treaty engagements respecting that Country. To further this end, Clarendon even lent his support to French negotiations with Austria and Italy, which were aimed at the isolation of Prussia, hoping perhaps thereby to contribute to a Prussian "licking".

Clearly, Clarendon had his own ideas about Prussia's place in the European balance, and they were distinctly different from those of Palmerston. Clarendon had resigned himself to the fact of a German war being fought over the spoils of 1864, hoping only that it be confined to Germany. However, when questioned in parliament about British offers of mediation, the Foreign Secretary promptly assumed a proper liberal attitude and responded thus:

[W]e have stood alone, and alone we could do nothing against the determination that war was...the most effective means of giving effect to an ambitious policy....More than a million men are now armed and prepared for conflict. And I must say that it is a melancholy sight in this enlightened age, and the present state of civilisation and progress, that Europe should even be menaced with a war for which no casus belli can be said to exist.100

As would be the case four years later following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, some people argued in 1866 that "a little energetic language from London" would have prevented the war between Prussia and Austria.101 In the mind of the Prussian Crown Princess there was no doubt that a "liberal, German-feeling, reasonable Prussian government would have prevented it all!"; although no such government was to be found in office in Berlin prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the circumstances immediately preceding the war did appear propitious for Bismarck's removal.102 British diplomatic sources in Germany had informed Clarendon during the spring of 1866 that
the question of war with Austria was decisive for Bismarck's future. And more encouraging still was the warm reception King William afforded to both the British ambassador's and Queen Victoria's recommendations for peace, prompting the Crown Princess to write: "You again, dearest Mama, may be the means of averting a European conflagration."\textsuperscript{103} Indeed, there was even a last minute effort made by the Queen's brother-in-law, the Duke of Coburg, to drive a wedge between King William and Bismarck. However this attempted intervention on the part of the British royal family was rendered ineffective by Clarendon, who was resentful of such "royal diplomacy," and who therefore discouraged the Queen's participation.

The point here is not to show that England could have brought about Bismarck's dismissal and thereby averted the Austro-Prussian war; this kind of wishful thinking tells us nothing about the events which actually transpired. What is evident here, however, is that the course pursued by Clarendon produced results which were consistent with previous British policy regarding Prussia. The fact that Clarendon harboured a strong dislike for Prussia, and that personal feelings had induced him to restrain the Queen is irrelevant (although not a little ironic). What is important is that Clarendon's actions, like Palmerston's during the Danish war, helped to remove potential obstacles from Bismarck's path, and thereby contributed to the favourable international situation existing at the time when hostilities between Prussia and Austria commenced.
Soon after the outbreak of war in June 1866 there took place in England not only a change of government, but also a shift in focus with regards to German affairs, as anger at Bismarck's iniquities gave way to concerns about the future of Germany itself. By the time the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Stanley, made his first policy statement on the conflict, stating that he intended to maintain "a strict and impartial neutrality between all the contending parties," the war was already decided, the most crucial battle having been fought at Königgrätz a week earlier. But as the magnitude of Prussia's victory became apparent, there took place a remarkable transformation amongst British policy-makers, who now saw that Prussia was in a position to reorganize Germany. As Stanley succinctly stated: "We must make up our minds to consider Prussia as a leading - perhaps as the leading - military power of Europe." The implications of this were not lost on either the British government, or the British crown.

In parliament both the opposition and the government quickly adjusted to the possibility of there coming into existence a united Germany from which Austria would be excluded. Noteworthy is the idealistic tone which was adopted to express these sentiments. No longer bent plunging Europe into war, the Germans were described by one liberal M.P. as "like ourselves a sober and peace-loving people, and, however warlike on a great occasion, more likely to prosecute the pursuit of peaceful industry than of grasping ambition." Conjuring up visions of Prussia at the head of a united Germany, William Horsman spoke
of an "intellectual and aspiring nation, awaking from a long lethargy, and working out its political freedom with new national life, a great new power in Europe, and a guarantee for the peace of Europe. This is the consummation to be desired by the English ministry." Even Gladstone, despite his deep-seated suspicion of Bismarck, endorsed the idea of a Prussian-led unification of Germany:

Germany contains the most numerous race in Europe; one of the most intelligent, and perhaps the most intellectual—a race united by its juxtaposition, famous in history, having traditions inferior to those of no other people....It may be possible when the rivalry in Germany is at an end there may be established between Prussia...and the Minor states such relations as will do justice to these States, and give Germany her proper position in Europe. That, I think, is the problem to be settled in Germany; and we should not by act, or even by word, offer any obstacle to the solution of that problem.¹⁰⁵

Nor was it the government's intention to oppose such a solution. Stanley's position on the new situation was clear, and was consistent with British policy in the past: "What harm could a united Germany do us?" he asked.¹⁰⁷ And this, of course, accorded fully with the views of the Queen, who asked only that the government not "appear utterly indifferent to what passes in Germany," the effect of such indifference perhaps being "injurious to the position and influence of England." True to the memory of the Prince Consort, Victoria declared that, "A strong, united, liberal Germany would be a most useful ally to England."¹⁰⁸

All of this, of course, ignored the fact that Prussia's victory over Austria, the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation, and the establishment of the North German
Confederation had only strengthened Bismarck's position in Prussia, with no corresponding advance being made towards liberal constitutional government in that country. The verdict of the Battle of Königgrätz, therefore, appears to have had the same effect on the British as it did on the National Liberals in Prussia - that of reconciling them to a Bismarckian solution to the German problem.

Derby's government continued to demonstrate a Palmerstonian-like concern for Prussia during their handling of the Luxembourg crisis in 1867 (which nearly resulted in a Franco-Prussian war as a result of Napoleon III's attempts to acquire this duchy). Strenuously urging moderation on Bismarck and the Prussian king, and eventually agreeing to a solution of the problem which allowed Prussia to withdraw with honour and Belgium to escape unscathed, British policy throughout the dispute once again sought to preserve peace and stability in central Europe as Germany continued to move in the direction of unification. Although "rigidly impartial neutrality" was to be the policy pursued if war were to break out, the British government assiduously worked to prevent such an occurrence since it was thought that war could only damage the prospects for Germany's consolidation, thereby also damaging what were perceived to be British interests on the continent.

Early in the crisis, following Prussia's hostile reaction to France's offer to purchase Luxembourg from the King of Holland, Stanley claimed not to understand why England should act to prevent France from acquiring the duchy when the
government and the people of England had already acquiesced to, and even applauded Prussia's own aggrandizement the previous year. However, as the danger of war became more apparent, both the crown and the government took a more active part in attempting to restrain Prussia. Queen Victoria, in a letter to King William urging him to agree to withdraw the Prussian garrison at Luxembourg in exchange for the French withdrawal of their offer of purchase, claimed that the world would accuse Prussia of desiring war if the French request was denied. Stanley offered the same advice to Bismarck, claiming that, "Her Majesty's Government would see with deep regret the breaking out of a war, for an object apparently so trifling, which could not but retard the consolidation of Germany." Hence while the British government clearly anticipated and welcomed the impending unification of Germany, they sought through their policies to hinder, if possible, any rash explosive Prussian policies potentially deleterious to this goal.

Thus, in the hopes of averting war, a conference was called in London in June, whereupon it was proposed that Luxembourg's independence be preserved by means of a collective guarantee. But since such a guarantee would contravene the government's declared policy of non-intervention, the idea met with strong opposition, Stanley himself having doubts about the wisdom of such a commitment. However, bowing to pressure from the Prime Minister and the Queen, Stanley agreed to the proposed guarantee. Though he was aware that the agreement in question
was flawed and that Luxembourg's independence was not any more secure as a result, Stanley agreed to the collective guarantee nonetheless since it helped to defuse the situation, and permitted Prussia to withdraw without backing down. Satisfied with this result, Stanley wrote in his journal: "We have averted war here for the moment - for the year I think certainly." And in the House of Commons he sought to provide assurances that war was even more unlikely now, and that Prussia herself was the best guarantee of this:

What Prussia really wants is time and repose to secure her acquisitions, to consolidate the territory she has obtained, to assimilate the laws and institutions of her newly-gained provinces, and to fuse the whole of that newly-acquired country into one homogenous whole. All that war could do for Prussia would be to give an opportunity for plots and conspiracies of a reactionary nature...for attempts to undo what has been done.

Stanley's words seemed to be borne out by the period of relative calm in Anglo-Prussian relations that followed the Luxembourg crisis. Although Queen Victoria was fearful that the appointment of Clarendon as Foreign Secretary in Gladstone's new ministry "would have a bad effect at Berlin, where his opinions are well known as hostile to Germany," Clarendon allayed the Queen's fears by meeting with the King and Queen of Prussia, whereupon he received assurances that Prussia would be "careful not to give offence and very slow to take it." The prospects of war appeared to be diminished even further by Napoleon III's suggestions that a European peace conference be held, and by growing talk of European disarmament. It was into this peaceful atmosphere that the news of the Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish throne fell like a bomb.
In examining British policy and the Franco-Prussian war, one of the principal questions raised is: could England have prevented the outbreak of hostilities? Although Mosse has argued that "no action psychologically or constitutionally open to British ministers" could have averted this war between France and Prussia, many people at the time believed otherwise. Historically, however, it is pointless to ask whether or not England could have prevented the war; the fact of the matter is the war was not prevented. What should instead be examined is the British government's actual response to the threat of war, which can then be compared with alternative courses of action. The point here is not to argue that England should have pursued a different course than it did, or that war would have been averted had England done so. But by evaluating England's actions in light of the alternative courses of actions available to policy-makers at the time, certain important questions are raised regarding those policies that were actually implemented - policies which, at first glance, appear to be inconsistent with those previously pursued by British statesmen.

The British government first learned of the Hohenzollern candidature in March 1870 when the Crown Princess of Prussia, at the request of King William, wrote to her mother for advice on the subject. Although Clarendon ventured the opinion that "the proposed arrangement would produce an unfavourable impression in France," his advice to the Queen was that "it would not be expedient for Your Majesty to give any advice upon a matter in which no British interest is concerned." Four
months passed, however, before news of the candidature broke in Paris, producing a violent reaction in the French chamber, and inducing Granville, who had succeeded Clarendon upon the latter's death, to urge that the "French government avoid acting with precipitation." Granville also advised the application of "friendly pressure, without any appearance of dictation, on the Governments of Prussia and Spain, to induce them seriously to consider the question at issue in all its important bearings." 

Events began to move quickly after this, as the Prussian withdrawal of the candidature and the Prussian king's encounter with the French Ambassador at Ems led to the publication of the famous Ems telegram on 13 July. By now the British government realised that little could be done to restrain the two belligerents, and it began to look instead to the consequences of the impending war. Gladstone was afraid that preserving British neutrality in such a war would be "a most arduous task", given the vulnerability of Belgium, and thus he began to inquire as to England's ability to transport troops to Antwerp on very short notice. In the parliament, however, both Gladstone and Granville refrained from commenting, while from the opposition bench Disraeli condemned the actions of the French government, and claimed, somewhat dubiously, that "neither France nor Prussia has a moral right to enter into any war without fully and really consulting Great Britain." On 18 July Granville made one last effort to offer Prussia the services of British mediation, but they were refused on the grounds that any
negotiations at this point would be "misunderstood by the national feelings of Germany, excited as they have been by the menaces of France." France declared war on Prussia the next day.

It is possible to identify two occasions upon which the British government chose a policy of inaction rather than pursuing more active policies aimed at the preservation of peace. The first of these was in March when the government first learned of the Hohenzollern candidature, and Foreign Secretary Clarendon asked the Queen to refrain from offering the Prussian king any advice on the subject, despite William's request for such advice. We can only surmise that Clarendon either did not comprehend the implications of the Hohenzollern candidature (which is unlikely), or that his dislike for "royal diplomacy" induced him to immediately discontinue the Queen’s intervention in this important matter.

The second occasion arose following Prussia's withdrawal of the candidature, at which point the British government offered to mediate in the dispute, but refrained from more strenuously urging the French government to accept the withdrawal. There are numerous possible explanations for the British government’s reluctance to apply greater pressure to France in this second instance, the most obvious of these being the desire to remain impartial, the speed with which events unfolded, and/or fear of provoking Napoleon III, perhaps at the expense of Belgium. But if we recall that British policy-makers had endeavoured since 1848 to deter Prussia from war, and since 1863 in
particular to prevent a French attack on Prussia, this apparent resignation to the fact of a Franco-Prussian war in July 1870 becomes somewhat more puzzling. The composition of the cabinet may have been a factor. The sympathies of the new Foreign Secretary lay with France (although he was less hostile to Prussia than Clarendon), while Gladstone was more of an idealist than were his predecessors, as would soon become evident in his reaction to Prussia's intention to annex Alsace-Lorraine.

Another explanation, however, is that confidence both in Prussia's ability to withstand a French attack, and in the likelihood of German unity being advanced in the process, enabled British policy-makers to accept with greater complacency a Franco-Prussian conflict, long thought to be inevitable. Although many Tories and veterans of the Crimean conflict were confident of a French victory, the memory of Prussia's impressive performance against Austria four years earlier was still strong, thanks in part to the efforts of writers like Edward Dicey who had reported glowingly of Prussia's victory at the time. Moreover, when Bismarck had announced the existence of Prussia's defensive alliances with the south German states in 1867, the government had responded positively, claiming that it was "glad in the interest of European peace to hear of the union of Germany for defensive purposes being effected." This is not to suggest that the British government looked forward to a Franco-Prussian war, for obviously this was not the case. But given the interest which British policy-makers had hitherto taken in the question of German unity, the present government's
willingness to avert a conflict by interposing itself between the two belligerents was probably dulled by the knowledge that such a war might help to facilitate a resolution to the German question, much like the one envisioned by Lyndhurst almost a decade earlier.\textsuperscript{130}

Having refrained from actively attempting to prevent the war, the British government was certainly not about to take sides once hostilities began, and thus British neutrality was declared almost immediately.\textsuperscript{131} Upon learning of Benedetti’s infamous draft treaty, which the French ambassador had imprudently left in the hands of Bismarck, the British government moved quickly to protect Belgium, and treaties guaranteeing Belgian neutrality were concluded with both France and Prussia in August 1870. In an effort to further minimize the war’s impact, the British government encouraged the formation of a League of Neutrals, which also included Italy and Austria. Prussia’s non-committal response to England’s neutrality soon turned sour, however, amidst reports that the British were helping to supply the French army. This development prompted the following comment from Sir Robert Morier, a British diplomat with an “unrivalled intimacy with German politics”: “The copper capsule of a \textit{chassepot} cartridge engraved with the trademark of a Birmingham firm - should such, God forbid, chance to be extracted in a German hospital - might, in the present temper of men’s minds, raise a storm of national vindictiveness in the German people which it may take generations to allay.”\textsuperscript{132} Nor did the government deny the accusation that England’s actions
were a form of retaliation for Prussia's conduct in the Crimean war; Granville simply replied that, unlike Prussia's exportation of arms 15 years earlier, England's was at least "open and undisguised."

France's crushing defeat at Sedan on 2 September was immediately followed by the capture of Napoleon III and the collapse of the Second Empire, which led the British government to believe that the war could now be ended more easily. These hopes soon evaporated, however, when Bismarck announced on 27 September that the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine was a necessity for Prussia, which in turn prompted the French Provisional Government to carry on the war in the hopes of moderating Prussia's demands. The British government's response to these demands - its last major policy decision respecting Prussia prior to the creation of the German Empire - would seem to confirm that it was indeed pragmatism rather than liberal idealism which governed British policy during this period, although the presence of Gladstone now threatened to change all of this.

Because the German press had been campaigning for the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine since the beginning of the war, Bismarck's announcement did not catch the British government entirely by surprise. Perhaps hoping to soften up the government in anticipation of Prussia's demands, Queen Victoria informed Gladstone on 9 September:

The great danger for us in interfering is to have the appearance of wishing to prevent Germany from making a lasting peace, and from obtaining such securities from her [France] as may really prevent the recurrence of a similar
Much to the Queen's delight, this was the very policy which the government intended to follow upon learning of Bismarck's demands.

The Prime Minister, however, disagreed with such a course of action: "It seems to me that Count Bismarck's paper raises questions of public right, in which all Europe has a common interest, and it would be impossible for us to receive in silence matters relating to such questions." Gladstone's moral indignation could only be satisfied by a British remonstrance, in conjunction with Russia if necessary, and he once again resorted to writing an anonymous article in the Edinburgh Review to help support this position. In the cabinet Gladstone's proposal was endorsed by George Goschen, who argued that British opposition to Prussia's demands would possess three advantages: "(1) being right and just in itself; (2) opening a moral campaign in Europe against Bismarckism, militarism, and retrograde political morality; (3) giving lead to opinion in this country at a moment when everybody is at sea, and grounding our action and our sympathies not on preference for one of the combatants, but on political truth."

Granville, however, succeeded in convincing the cabinet that it would be impossible to do what Gladstone proposed "without being considered to throw our weight into the French scale against Germany." Above all, Granville was afraid of "wasting that which we at present derive from moral causes, by
laying down general principles when nobody will attend them, and
when in all probability they will be disregarded." Hence
Gladstone was prevented from acting upon his liberal
convictions, despite the fact that it was only moral pressure
via diplomatic channels that he had suggested be applied. Once
again, therefore, a British policy of inaction, born out of
political expediency, helped to facilitate Bismarck's plans.
Clearly, the concerns expressed here by one lonely idealist in
the British parliament had little place in the formulation of
British policy:

Whatever I feel about the German Government, I have too
great a respect and too great an esteem for the great mass
of the German people not to wish to see them saved from the
great injury which annexation would inflict upon
themselves....The annexation of the provinces no man can
doubt will prevent constitutional development in
Germany.157

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Not surprisingly, the unification of Germany in January
1871 brought forth a wide variety of responses in England,
ranging from Carlyle's effusive accolades to the ominous
rumblings of Disraeli.140 But the following comments from John
Corrance in the House of Commons are particularly instructive
with respect to perceptions of Prussia in England, and how the
history of Anglo-Prussian relations since 1848 had affected
these perceptions:

I know that the great German people are both intellectual
and peaceable; but I believe the very contrary to be true
of the Prussians...Was [Prussia] not a partner in the
partition of Poland? Was she not a partner in the
conspiracy against Schleswig-Holstein? And is she not at
the present moment a determined candidate for the
possession of Alsace and Lorraine?...Added to that, when we
find that she set herself up as a great military dynasty—
is not that a policy in utter opposition to the principles of the Liberal party of this country? What has been the career of Prussia since 1848? It has been one in direct antagonism to the constitutionalism of Europe and immediately to the constitution of Frankfort....Count Bismarck has suppressed a portion of Denmark because he found it too Liberal in its principles. He has also suppressed the Diet of Frankfort because it was too Liberal. Is it likely that he will continue to tolerate Switzerland and Holland?\(^1\)

As evidence of the growing realization that perhaps a Germany unified at the behest of Prussia would turn out to be an aggressive expansionist European power - a development which was certainly not in the best interests of England - these comments reveal the confusion that was created by the duality of British policies regarding Prussia. Ostensibly, good relations were sought with Prussia because, among other things, the purported political enlightenment of the Prussian people made Prussia a "natural ally" of England. However the various British governments' actual relations with Prussia did little or nothing to strengthen the spokesmen for this supposedly politically enlightened segment of Prussian society; i.e. the Prussian liberals. On the contrary, it was the existing authorities in Prussia - the state and the monarchy - which appeared to have benefited most from the consequences of British policy since 1848. Couched in the language of liberal idealism, but shaped almost exclusively by Tory realism, it is little wonder then that such policies were criticized for their inconsistency.

But what then were the actual goals of British policy with regard to Prussia? As we have seen, Prussia's position in central Europe was of preeminent concern to most British policy-makers during this period, particularly as the German
question loomed in importance after 1848. Although British statesmen were predisposed, largely by strategic considerations, to favour the idea of German unification, idealistic ideas of seeing Prussia transformed into a liberal constitutional state which would then take the lead in unifying Germany invoked memories of the destabilizing nationalism and democratic extremism associated with 1848-49. British statesmen thus concluded that the preservation of political stability in Prussia - a goal best achieved after 1862 through adherence to non-intervention - was the safest means of facilitating German unification. Avoiding disruptions of the status quo in Prussia therefore lay at the heart of British policy during this period.

The difficulty involved in determining the extent to which British policy during this period affected Prussia's liberal development stems from the inseparability of two strands in nineteenth century Prussian and German history; i.e. the growing success, particularly after 1862, of a state-centered, authoritarian, paternalistic political ideal, and the decline and eventual eclipse of the liberal one. Although no clear and simple causal relationship exists between these two processes, the breakaway of the National Liberals in 1867 is clear evidence that the declining fortunes of the latter cannot be understood without reference to the victory of what might loosely be termed "Bismarckism." Hence it is not sufficient to simply argue that British policy was inconsequential because England failed to more actively promote Prussia's liberal development, in contrast to their support of such goals in Greece and Italy. British
policy-makers' role in sheltering Prussia from possible sources of instability—be they internal, as was perceived from 1848 to 1851, or external, as during the period following 1862—must also be taken into consideration since it undoubtedly helped either to moderate, or avoid altogether the possible consequences of a serious challenge to the authority of the state and the monarchy in Prussia.

In the former of these two periods this attempt to restore or preserve stability in Prussia was accomplished both through British opposition to the destabilizing policies of Arnim, and through support for the resurgence of conservatism under Brandenburg and Radowitz (although this support fell short of a British military commitment to Prussia during the Hessian crisis). It was as a consequence of Bismarck's active foreign policy that the principal threats to Prussian stability after 1862 were external; regardless, however, of the underlying cause of these threats, British policy-makers persistently sought to remove them. There is little doubt that such efforts met with success during both the Danish war and the Luxembourg crisis. And it can certainly be argued that in their anticipation of Germany's unification, British policy-makers further strengthened Bismarck's hand by acquiescing to the Alvensleben Convention, the Gastein Convention, and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. Clearly, the liberal movement in Prussia stood to gain little from British policy during this period.

One incident in particular illustrates how averse British statesmen were to the idea of pursuing potentially disruptive
policies in Prussia. In 1867 the post of British ambassador to Berlin became vacant, the second such vacancy in two years.¹² The task of filling this particular post was complicated by the presence in Berlin of Princess Victoria, who took an active interest in these appointments, and who attempted to influence them through her correspondence with her mother, Queen Victoria. As something of a liberal idealist, the Prussian Crown Princess was critical of previous appointments to this post. Having objected to Sir Andrew Buchanan because he was a high Tory who "dislikes everything liberal", and who "has a secret liking for Bismarck," Princess Victoria also accused Buchanan’s successor, Lord Loftus, of being a "very great admirer of Bismarck" with whom he was on friendly footing.¹³ Thus when the post became available in 1867, she immediately sought to ensure the appointment of someone who would be sympathetic to the liberal movement, and who would aid her and her husband in their attempts to undermine Bismarck’s position with the king; her choice was Sir Robert Morier, whose views on Germany, as we shall see later, were extremely idealistic.

The Queen supported Princess Victoria’s endorsement of "good excellent Morier", but this choice was rejected by Lord Stanley, who did not like the idea of appointing someone who was so clearly opposed to the Prussian Premier. Despite pressure from the Queen, Stanley held his ground, claiming that England had nothing whatever to do with the internal politics of Prussia, and that by "meddling in these, we only destroy our proper and legitimate influence in matters affecting Europe."¹⁴
Although Stanley thought highly of Morier, once describing him as "very-clever, very hard-working; something of a dreamer, full of German ideas", his reasons for rejecting him for this important post were clear: Morier was "too much in earnest, and earnest men with ideas and great abilities are sometimes unsafe men." Any clearer rejection of liberal idealism - as manifest in the person of Morier - in favour of Tory pragmatism aimed at preserving stability in Prussia is difficult to imagine.
CHAPTER 3

Prussia Idealised:
British Liberal Commentary
The fact that several prominent British historians of Anglo-German relations came to regard liberal idealism as one of the principal determinants of England's mid-nineteenth century German policy may well account for such scholars' failure to consider more carefully the question raised at the beginning of this paper; i.e., the extent to which British policy affected the declining fortunes of German liberalism in the period leading up to unification. However the above account of Anglo-Prussian relations during this period suggests that the influence of such liberal idealism was negligible. Moreover, it demonstrates that British statesmen, by pursuing a German policy thought to be in the best interests of England, helped to facilitate the creation of that authoritarian German Empire which English-speaking historians writing since World War I have so lamented. This therefore raises the question: why did historians like Ramsay, Sontag and Mosse come to such a conclusion about the basic principles underlying British policy in the first place? Certainly, England's reputation as the world's oldest and most stable constitutional parliamentary state was a factor in this, as was England's support for liberal-national movements elsewhere in Europe during the nineteenth century. There did exist, however, more concrete evidence than this to help convince these scholars that liberal idealism was an important principle guiding British statesmen in their relations with Germany (and subsequently, that German liberalism stood only to profit from such relations).
Such evidence is to be found in the statements regarding Germany made during this period by British policy-makers themselves. Aside from the Prince Consort’s and Queen Victoria’s professed dreams of seeing Germany transformed - via Prussia - into a liberal, constitutional, parliamentary state (and the stories of the so-called "Coburg Plan" which resulted from the royal couple’s attempts to realize this dream), British statesmen were prolific when it came to making idealistic statements about the "enlightened, the brave, and the patriotic people of Prussia," their unshakable "attachment to free institutions," their position as the "great Protestant Power of Europe," their possession of "traditions inferior to those of no other people," and, above all, their role as England's "natural ally." Such statements as these undoubtedly helped to convince the British elite at the time and historians since that a generally positive and optimistic view of the future prospects for a united Germany lay at the root of British policy during this period.

But where did this style of discourse regarding Prussia and Germany originate? Was it simply a convenient means for avoiding potential criticisms of the Foreign Office’s accommodating attitude towards an increasingly authoritarian and militaristic Prussia? Or does its use by British statesmen tell us something about the existing tone of British commentary on Prussia during this period, to which British policy-makers had to respond? If so, what were the contours of this commentary, who were its contributors, and what effect did it have on the formulation of
British policy regarding Prussia, aside from that of providing a rhetorical style well-suited to the needs of British politics? It is to these questions that we must now turn our attentions in order to round out this picture of England's relations with Prussia during the period 1848-1871.

While many European liberals in the mid-nineteenth century regarded England as the touchstone of constitutional and parliamentary government, none did so with more conviction than the British themselves.² British faith in the superiority of England's system of government was an expression of "complete certainty that wherever liberty and representative government were to be found, they must be guaranteed by institutions modelled on these evolved by the mother of Parliaments."³ Moreover, British liberals also used the British model of political development as the standard by which the soundness of foreign political institutions was measured. The British constitutional system of government had been "selected by Providence as the model of free and orderly government to mankind," claimed the Edinburgh Review. Furthermore, it was seen to possess an expansiveness which ensured its continued existence, despite the persistence of revolutionary waves which continued to engulf established governments throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴

British liberals were not alone in this respect. German liberals in particular were drawn to the example of Britain, and although their interpretations of British constitutional history reflected the more conservative complexion of German political
culture, they fully appreciated those features of the British constitution which attracted them. As Alexander Meyer wrote in the *Preussische Jahrbücher* in 1864:

If the liberal party of the continent wishes to summarize in one slogan the various demands it makes in all areas of political life - for ministerial responsibility, parliamentary control of the budget, firm regulation of the administration, and securing of fundamental rights - there is hardly any other one than the cry heard so often and so justifiably: give us an English constitution!

Nevertheless, the conviction expressed here by Prince Albert that England was "the sole representative of Liberal and constitutional institutions in Europe" was far and away strongest in England itself. Moreover, there is little question that many people in mid-Victorian England fell victim to the "illusion" (mistakenly attributed to Palmerston) that British institutions were "a panacea for all the political evils in the world." But less well-understood is how such notions affected British attempts to interpret foreign liberal movements. More specifically, how did this mid-Victorian Whig perspective, with its "Protestant, empirical, progressive, bourgeois, and democratic biases," affect British views on the political future of Prussia during the period 1848-1871, a time which was clearly a watershed in the constitutional and parliamentary history of Germany? Moreover, what was the reaction of British liberals when events during this period "failed" to develop in the manner expected? The answers to such questions not only help to explain the origins of the style of political discourse regarding Prussia used at the time, but they also shed valuable light on the historical tradition out of which sprang the modern
Sonderweg thesis, which seeks to explain German uniqueness from the perspective of Western "normalcy."

A survey of British liberals' views on Prussian politics from the period just prior to the 1848 revolutions up to Germany's unification in 1871 reveals that there existed a small, yet active group of the educated liberal elite - men who stood, for the most part, outside the corridors of power - who were most concerned with developments in Germany. In their correspondence, and in articles written for such Liberal journals as the Edinburgh Review, the Westminster Review, MacMillan's Magazine, the North British Review, Fraser's Magazine and St. Paul's, these British liberals set forth what was a remarkably consistent interpretation of Prussian and German affairs. Some of the most prominent figures in this group were R.M. Milnes and Sir Austen Layard, both of whom were Liberal M.P.'s; Sir Robert Morier and Lord Augustus Loftus, who served as British diplomats in Germany; and journalists such as Edward Dicey and David Masson. Prince Albert, although clearly exceptional because of both his official position and his German background, also shared many of the views held by this vocal group of British liberals.

This group's assessments of Prussian affairs went well beyond simply determining Prussia's approximate position on the British scale of progressive liberal development, and exhorting leaders in Prussia to support, rather than impede, the "advancing" liberal tide. They also contained the following features: assessments of Prussia's preparedness both for
"genuine" constitutionalism and parliamentarism, and for the leadership role which Prussia was expected to take in the unification of Germany under liberal auspices; reappraisals of the Prussian monarchy and how Prussian attachments to monarchism affected attempts to liberalize the Prussian political system; comparative examinations of British and Prussian history with a view to confirming that a pattern of liberal development existed; and finally, critical discussions regarding how constitutionalism and parliamentarism were actually being employed in Prussia, and how much or how little these processes deviated from the "healthy" example of Britain. In assessing Prussian politics on the basis of these themes, this active group of British liberal observers put forth views which, aside from their consistency, succeeded in dominating the scholarly commentary on German affairs during this period.

Upon closer examination, however, the views of this group demonstrate more than simply the intellectual insularity of England. These assessments of Prussian and German politics reveal how most British liberal commentators maintained the illusion that English-style liberal institutions would eventually emerge in Prussia, despite growing evidence to the contrary. The fact that such institutions failed to materialize during and after the 1848 revolts was rationalized away by means of various analytical devices which held out the possibility that liberal reform of the British stamp was just around the corner. Moreover, the inability of these British observers to rise above their own institutionally-inculcated ideas of what
constituted "normal" constitutional and parliamentary practices resulted in one-sided analyses of Prussia's political development. While acknowledging the circumstantial differences that divided Prussian and British political history, these British liberals generally regarded as aberrant those features of Prussian liberalism which did not fit the British mould. The attitude of condescension which accompanied such analyses was matched by a typical liberal confidence in the inevitability of progress towards English-style liberalism. Seldom were any attempts made to recognize what Geoff Eley has described as the "necessary diversity in liberal movements' national conditions of existence" (despite the efforts of some Germans who sought to make British liberals aware that such diversity indeed existed).

Hence it was an unshakable idealism that characterized this group's views of Prussian politics. As we have seen, such idealism seldom prevailed over Tory realism in the actual formulation of British foreign policy. However, the extremely positive, almost deterministic tone of this liberal commentary on Prussia helped to foster a complacent attitude in England regarding the future of Prussia. In the longer term, such idealism established a way of looking at German affairs which even today persists among Anglo-American scholars of German history.

It should be noted that there existed a vast difference between the kinds of issues commented on by this group of British liberal idealists, and those which occupied the
attentions of British policy-makers. The liberal idealists described below restricted themselves largely to domestic issues in their commentary on the liberal development of Prussia and Germany, although foreign affairs often provided the occasion for this commentary. British policy-makers, on the other hand, limited their official pronouncements only to those issues connected with Prussia's foreign affairs; on the subject of the internal affairs of Prussia - although frequently addressed in the brisk correspondence carried on between the British and Prussian royal families, and perhaps the subject of an occasional tactful comment from the British ambassador to Berlin - British policy-makers had to be more circumspect. As will be shown, important differences of opinion concerning the significance of Prussia's political development, and England's role in attempting to influence this development resulted from the difference between these two perspectives.

Sympathy for Prussian liberalism and expectations of its eventual triumph are what characterized the views of this group of British liberals who concerned themselves with Prussian affairs; British popular opinion regarding Prussia, on the other hand, was much less consistent, and was itself often characterized by strong feelings of antipathy towards the state of Prussia and its people. In seeking to explain why British public opinion favoured Austria during the Austro-Prussian war, Edward Dicey concluded somewhat grievously that, aside from the fact of Prussia's aggressions in the highly unpopular Danish war, it was simply because the British public "did not like the
Prussians personally." It is certainly true that what had once been a generally positive perception of Prussia in England began to sour in the 1860s, slowly at first, as a result of such unpleasant incidents as the MacDonald affair and the new Prussian king's claim to hold his throne by divine-right, and later more quickly, following the appearance of Bismarck at the helm of the Prussian ship of state. Even Queen Victoria, who only a year earlier had been accused of pro-Prussian sympathies, exclaimed in 1865 upon learning of the Gastein convention: "Odious people the Prussians are, that I must say!"

But while much of the British public after 1862 regarded Bismarck's internal and external policies with a growing sense of unease, throughout most of the third quarter of the nineteenth century British liberal idealists consistently held the German people, and the Prussians in particular, in very high regard. Indeed, it was this same confidence in the enlightened character of the Prussian people which instilled into these observers the belief that Prussia would soon abandon absolutism, and embrace "civilized politics" by entering into what John Morley described in the *Fortnightly Review* as "the normal path of progressive internal development."

Such wishful thinking on the part of British idealists was in evidence even before the liberal outburst of 1848-49. Already in 1845 the *Foreign Quarterly Review* could claim: "We think the Germans are a people by their whole temper and habit of mind peculiarly calculated for the exercise of political rights and the enjoyment of public liberty....The cool, sober, systematic
German is, of all the species of genus Homo, the best calculated to deliberate wisely on public affairs, and to achieve successfully the problem of self-government." Thus, these British liberals found it reprehensible and "not a little incomprehensible" that the Prussian monarchy went to such great lengths to stifle public opinion and limit self-government in a country so well-suited for constitutionalism on the British model. But whatever were the Prussian government's motives for resisting liberal reform, it was clear to R.M. Milnes even before the outburst of 1848 what the consequences of continuing this "obstructionism" would be:

Free to think, ready to feel, able to fight,—what can be wanting to the healthy social state of this great people? ...What is still the unsatisfied desire that rankles at the heart of the nation—turning its kindliest feelings into gall, and blunting the edge of patriotism; changing the poet into the satirist, and the philosopher into the pamphleteer; making wise men foolish, and wicked men mad; distorting graces into bribes and kind words into falsehoods? What is the object of hopes so long delayed, of prayers so long neglected, now fast accumulating for the evil day of vengeance and despair? We answer, and they answer—political development under liberal institutions.¹⁶

Nor was this certainty that success would ultimately "attend the cause of constitutional liberty in North Germany," seriously diminished by the setbacks suffered in Berlin and Frankfurt in 1848-49.¹⁶ Indeed for some in England, like Prince Albert, the events of 1848 were a confirmation that the Prussians were sensible to where their future lay, and that the actions of Frederick William IV had prevented the revolution from falling into the hands of radicals. Nor was this confidence shaken by the fear that despotism was about to be "reimposed by
Austrian arms upon Germany" in 1850. We have seen how Palmerston used this same idealistic rhetoric when he dismissed out of hand Queen Victoria's fears that "rational and sound Constitutional government" in Germany was threatened, particularly since Prussia was "so enlightened, and so attached to free institutions." Prince Albert echoed these same sentiments, claiming that, if Frederick William IV openly declared Prussia's role in the Hesse-Kassel crisis to be "a matter of maintaining the constitutional principle," then he would "not be anxious about its success."

This assumption that Prussia would continue to move towards English-style constitutionalism even managed to survive the dark period of the Manteuffel-Westfalen ministry, thanks primarily to the belief, expressed here by Sir Robert Morier, that the Prussians were "a people far too healthy at the core to be permanently affected by...so short-lived a departure from the principles" which the British liberal-mind held so dear.

Although the great hopes that were pinned on the "New Era" Hohenzollern-Auerswald ministry, formed in 1858, soon vanished in the face of Bismarck's appointment as minister-president in 1862, British idealism stood fast.

In fact, the alarming character of Bismarck's policies both at home and abroad during the 1860s, rather than inducing these British liberals to abandon the cause of liberalism in Prussia, had the opposite effect: it reaffirmed their conviction that it was the Prussian people, as opposed to the king and his government, who were the solemn repository of the Prussian
liberal spirit. In urging closer ties between Britain and Prussia, the British ambassador to Berlin, Lord Loftus, declared: "She [Prussia] represented the intelligence, the progress and wealth of Germany....She will gradually advance in a constitutional system of government, and she will play the part of a moderator in Europe." In response to British fears of Prussia raised by her defeat of Austria in 1866, Sir Austin Layard responded: "We cannot believe that the German race, so enlightened and so progressive, would renounce their liberties even to accomplish their national unity." Nor did the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war lessen that optimism which was inspired in these British liberals by the knowledge that "Neither the King nor Count Bismarck can live forever"; Morley maintained that it was "impossible to believe that the tenacity, vigour, eagerness, which have made Germany a nation, will not in their due season and course take liberal form." Obviously not everyone who watched German affairs unfold during this period was as confident as this regarding the imminent victory of liberal institutions there. Journalist Edward Dicey, a staunch advocate of an Anglo-Prussian alliance and a keen observer of German politics, raised doubts about the hopes which liberals both in England and Prussia were placing upon the fact of William I's advanced age, and the Crown Prince's apparently liberal turn of mind:

I can recollect exactly the same hope being placed on the supposed liberalism of the present King, when he was heir presumptive to the throne. Personally, I attach very little confidence to the parliamentary proclivities of Prussian princes....I doubt whether the cause of parliamentary government, in the way which we understand the word, will
Others too expressed their concerns regarding the supposedly "progressive" nature of Prussian and German politics, especially in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war.\(^\text{26}\)

But Dicey's scepticism regarding the direction and distance which Prussia had travelled down the path leading to English-style constitutionalism was clearly exceptional, and was not at all in keeping with the generally positive tone of British liberal commentary on Prussian politics during this period. Although discouraged by both Frederick William IV and William I's "unnatural interpretations" of the constitution of 1850 (a document which was seen as "a fair embodiment of even the more advanced positions of the Liberal Party"), and by the "capitulation" of the National Liberals to Bismarck after 1867, this idealistic group of British liberals clung to the notion that their German brethren would eventually succeed in their struggle with the dark forces of despotism; it was after all, claimed Morley, inevitable that "the same splendid activity which has made her foremost in literary and scientific achievement will also, when other conditions are ready, identify her with a rational philosophy," like that of England.\(^\text{27}\)

Such views were in fact reinforced by the writings of prominent German liberals, whose work was often published in journals like the *Home and Foreign Review* and the *Fortnightly Review*. Heinrich von Sybel, for example, asserted in 1871: "[T]hey cannot seriously believe, that a State, whose military power rests chiefly on an intellectual basis, on the personal
services of all the educated inhabitants—a State which possesses a grand literature, a free press, and two debating parliaments, could really, in the long run, maintain a political system which was repudiated by a vast majority of its population."²⁸ Such statements were eagerly interpreted in England as proof that Prussia, despite the unpleasant Bismarckian interlude, was poised to embrace a constitutional parliamentary system of government.

This British interest in the progress of liberal institutions in Prussia, while in part brought about by liberal millenarianism, was also inspired by the realization that German unification would most likely be accomplished under Prussian auspices. Already prejudiced in favour of a united German state by their "enthusiasm" for Greek and Italian unification, British idealists hoped that a liberal constitutional Prussian state could bring about German unification in a way which would facilitate the spread of liberal institutions throughout Germany. The alternative to unification brought about by means of "progressive, justifiable pressure from below," was its imposition from above, which, according to Paul Kennedy, left many in Britain asking: "What blows might be dealt to Liberal ideals, to superior Liberal methods of forestalling unrest and conflict, to the economic prosperity of the age, by violent and irresponsible deeds?"²⁹ In 1866 Morier was among those who expressed the conviction that the Bismarckian method of unification from above was entirely unnecessary, especially given the mature state of Prussia's liberal development:
[I]f Bismarck succeeds the world will clap its hands and say that he was the only man who knew how to bring about what the world, which worships success, will say was a consummation it always desired. Whereas what is really proved is that Prussia was...really the heart and lungs of Germany, [and] that she could, by her mere natural development with, instead of against, the liberal and national forces of Germany, have effected what required to be done by peaceful means and without bloodshed.30

Hence, on the subject of a Prussian-led unification of Germany, the hopes of British idealists appeared to coincide with the goals of British policy-makers; if the former were convinced that Prussia, and thus Germany, was destined for English-style liberalism, the latter was reassured that British interests, rather than being threatened, would actually be safeguarded by the creation of a Prussian-led German national state.31

Given the expressed desire of all British governments during this period to see peace prevail in Europe, it is not surprising that many of these British idealists maintained that the promotion of constitutionalism and parliamentarism in Prussia was itself the surest method of insuring such peace. As reaction began to descend on Europe in 1849, Milnes, who was sympathetic to the cause of continental liberalism, stood fast by his belief that the "solid establishment of a German Empire on a constitutional and representative basis would soon make European despotism impossible and Europe really secure."32 With Prussia's humiliation at Olmütz close at hand at the end of 1850, Frederick William IV appealed to England for support, only to receive the following advice from Prince Albert:

[A] Prussia prepared to come forward as a genuine pattern of constitutional monarchy on the continent and with
unself-seeking patriotism to protect the constitutional [Erfurt] union and foster the development of the States of Germany, will possesses a moral force sufficient by itself to repel any attack - a force which will meet with England's sympathy and support....It will be the surest guarantee to Europe of universal peace.

When William I succeeded his brother in 1861, Albert reiterated this policy, believing that confidence in the king, achieved by an honest interpretation of the constitution, was the "political summum bonum of humanity," and "the core and kernel of European safety." Albert's daughter Victoria, the Crown Princess of Prussia, on the other hand, took a more narrow view of the problem, lamenting the possible consequences of her father-in-law's failure to embrace the principles of constitutionalism, which she believed "alone can be the saving - not only of Prussia's position in Europe and in Germany - but of the Prussian monarchy." Clearly, her concern here lay not with European peace, but with the fate of the throne, which she expected her husband to possess one day soon. Unlike the Crown Princess, however, Lord Loftus took a continent-wide view of this question; he was confident that a constitutional Prussia would become "a Power of great importance in maintaining the peace of Central Europe." And back in England, anyone who feared the appearance of this Prussian-led German state in central Europe was reassured by Layard that such a state, destined as it was to develop liberal institutions, "should be a source of satisfaction" to the British, "affording additional security for the maintenance of peace." Sentiments such as these regarding both the inevitability of a liberal victory in Prussia, and the positive impact which this was sure to have on
European stability undoubtedly helped to allay British concerns about the character of Prussia's political development, while quelling opposition to the accommodating attitude towards Prussia adopted by most British statesmen during this period.

There also existed, however, a growing concern that the British were neglecting Prussian affairs, largely because it was felt they did not understand them. The lack of success in seeing their goals realised in Prussia led some of the more vociferous British liberal spokesmen to believe that the fault lay not so much in Prussia, as in the lack of sufficient support from within England itself. Milnes, in particular, was incensed by the passivity and indifference of England to the constitutional struggles going on in Germany in 1848-1849. He argued that, "If we had the trust in our national institutions we so glibly express...and if we comprehended them aright, we should see that...it is the unyielding systematic nature of continental governments which proved their ruin." Unfortunately, argued Milnes, the British seemed blind to the duty they had to support constitutional movements on the continent, and in Prussia in particular. Morier was another who repeatedly upbraided the British public and the British press for failing to remember that the privilege of talking freely about the political problems of other countries involved the "corresponding duty of understanding, or at least trying to understand, the subjects we discuss." It was to this shortcoming that Morier attributed the fact that "the process towards the development of free institutions in Prussia has been watched with less interest and
sympathy in England than have been accorded to similar phenomena exhibited on the far less congenial soil occupied by the Latin races of Southern Europe." Morier's insights into the foibles of the British public are even more evident in this somewhat longer passage, in which he seeks to explain Britain's aloofness from Prussian politics:

To the Englishman, in the happy enjoyment of the privileges secured to him by his insular position, the study of foreign politics has always been...more or less of a dilettante kind. It is as a recreation rather than as an earnest part of a day's work that he turns to the columns of the newspaper recording the 'foreign intelligence.' From his point of view the proclamation, for instance, by a Spanish Junta of the Rights of Man has more of picturesque circumstance connected with it than can ever enliven a debate respecting the right of an individual Israelite to sit at quarter sessions in the province of Brandenburg, or a discussion of the title by which an individual clergymen in Back Pomerania refuses to marry parties legally divorced by the civil tribunal. And yet it is from materials like these, rather than from such as the former, that the Constitutional metal which passes current in England has been wrought."

The fact that it was the British public and the British press, as opposed to British governments, which bore the brunt of these criticisms suggests that the underlying goal of British policy during this period - the preservation of stability in Prussia - met with the tacit approval of these British liberal idealists, whose confidence in the future of a liberal Germany was unshakable. Certainly some, like Morier, were troubled by the apparent capriciousness of British policy during the Danish war, and by the ambiguous character of British non-intervention after 1864. But even here it was to the apathy and ignorance of the British public that such policies were attributed. In writing to Lady Salisbury in 1864, Morier exclaimed: "You can
form no conception of the intricacy of the political gymnastics which an English diplomatist has to go through in his attempt to vindicate the wisdom and consistency of the foreign policy of his country, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, of the public opinion of which that policy is but an echo."

Nonetheless there persisted among these British observers of Germany the belief that Prussian constitutional development had "strong claims" on the interest of England, as the interests of the two nations were considered to be intimately bound up with one another. As early as 1832 Palmerston had declared that the independence of constitutional states in Germany could "never be a matter of indifference to the British Parliament," and that he considered such constitutional states to be the "natural allies" of England."

Queen Victoria's daughter in Berlin echoed these same sentiments thirty years later during the Prussian constitutional conflict, as she indicated that the "safety and peace of Germany and England depend on England and Prussia going cordially together, advocating the same principles - constitutional liberty and protestantism." It was from this, the belief that the political interests of Prussia and England "should be identical," that arose the conviction among such British liberals as David Masson that nothing "ought to hinder Prussian Liberalism from having full sympathy from Britain.""

It should be noted this "sympathy" for Prussian liberalism was often tainted by expressions of superiority which frequently accompanied British interpretations of foreign countries' political practices. Thus, while the Prussians were regarded by
the Westminster Review to "deserve well of the world" for the constitutional advances they had made, the Prussians were nonetheless thought to lack the "keen sagacity and bold initiative of their brother Teutons." Hence it could not be said of them, "as of their brethren across the sea," either that "their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world," or that they had "invented the form of political government, to which...all modern nations must conform or die." What can be seen emerging here is a growing inconsistency between, on the one hand, the idealism of British liberals who embraced the inevitability of Prussian liberal development, and the kind of ethnocentric hauteur which permeated British political culture on the other. For more conservative commentators like the historian Archibald Alison, the tensions arising from this inconsistency were easily dissolved into the mists of time:

When England became a man, she put away childish things. France, by the spoliations and destruction of the first Revolution, has lost the elements of freedom. But Germany yet possesses them; and if she does not abuse her advantages, in two hundred years she may possess the mingled freedom and stability which now constitute at once the glory and happiness of England."

Not all British observers of German affairs, however, were so easily able to resolve these tensions, particularly when it came to the question of how much or how little Prussian liberals should imitate the British model. Nor, as will be shown, was this the only such contradiction inherent in British liberals' assessments of Prussian liberalism during this period.
Let us turn now to examine in greater detail this group's evaluations of Prussian politics and society. Having established that the Prussian people were eminently well-suited for liberal forms of government, and that, out of considerations for European security, Prussia was deserving of England's attention (even if she did not always get such attention), it remained to be determined whether circumstances in Prussia were actually propitious for the immediate "growth" of healthy liberal institutions.* Morier, ever optimistic of the future prospects of German liberalism, felt that, by virtue of Prussia's "enormous superiority in every political element," she was fully prepared for the kinds of reforms Prussian liberals were seeking. As proof of this, he recalled the fundamental principles at stake in the constitutional conflict of the 1860's, principles which were "asserted and defended with an ability, a determination, and a perseverance plainly denoting how the Liberal party in Prussia had ripened in Parliamentary training, and how sound it was in constitutional doctrine." Prince Albert was also convinced of Prussia's readiness for constitutional parliamentary government. Rebuking Prince William in 1853 for doubting "whether conditions in Prussia are sufficiently matured for representative institutions to be possible," he declared that Prussia was "ripe for nothing else" than a "representative Constitution with responsible Ministers and unfettered expression of public opinion." Disappointed by the outcome of 1848-1849, yet firm in their conviction that Prussia would eventually embrace English-style
political institutions, some British idealists, however, concluded that the hour of Prussian liberalism had been postponed, the time not yet being ripe for Prussia to embrace constitutional self-government. A glance at Prussia's political history revealed that the necessary preparations for the exercise of responsible representative government had not yet been made, with certain aspects of Prussia's past actually working at cross purposes to such liberal development. Prussian history was synonymous with the rise of the Hohenzollern family, and above all with the mystique surrounding the achievements of Frederick II. According to the British Quarterly Review, Prussia was a state in which everything institutional had been "constructed and worked so as to exhaust public spirit, and place the men and the means of all families at the disposal of one family." Having created "the most perfect despotism," Frederick II was seen to have "destroyed all those institutions and authorities conservative of freedom, on which a parliamentary constitution could have arisen." John O'Hagan, an Irish judge and a liberal journalist, therefore concluded that in the face of a crisis Prussia would lack experienced statesmen "equal to the task of converting the popular desire for peace and for a strengthened authority into a means of securing liberty on the ancient foundations of self-government." Even Morier was forced to conclude that Prussia after 1848 was in a state which was "one inseparable from all Parliamentary systems recently introduced, and where sufficient time has not elapsed to reconcile and harmonize the
old absolutist traditions with the new popular franchises."

Hence Prussia had "neither time nor opportunity to form a school of parliamentary statesmen."

Perhaps more serious than such political inexperience was the fact that "the popular habits of thought outside Parliament" had yet to undergo important modifications in Prussia. In order for parliamentary institutions to function properly as organs of national expression, it was first necessary, according to the Westminster Review, that the "individuals composing the nation...crystallize themselves by the force of some political dogma, strong enough to constitute an article of faith." But in Prussia the process of identifying such a "political dogma" was complicated by the pervasiveness of the "old absolutist traditions" referred to above, traditions which were central to Prussia's national identity. Since British constitutional history demonstrated (at least to the satisfaction of the British) that such absolutist traditions were irreconcilable with healthy parliamentary government, British idealists concluded that the retardation of liberal reform in Prussia was, in part at least, the result of the Prussian people's strong attachment to the original source of Prussian absolutism - the Hohenzollern monarchy. This British concern over the possibility of supplanting Prussian monarchism with a new "political dogma" embracing the principles of constitutionalism and parliamentarism required, therefore, a careful assessment of the Hohenzollerns' place in Prussia's political culture.
Although it was not until the outbreak of the constitutional conflict in the early 1860's that it became clear just exactly how difficult it would be to reconcile Prussian monarchism with constitutional parliamentary government, some British liberals recognized prior to this that a clash between these principles was imminent. Carefully preserved by those clauses of the Vienna settlement which had established the German Confederation, dynasticism remained as a powerful force to be reckoned with by both nationalists and liberals throughout Germany, prompting Baron Stockmar, Prince Albert's mentor, to describe "dynastic sentiments" as the "special and chief impediment to a genuine and necessary development of German national life." In Prussia this attachment to dynastic traditions was especially strong because of the intimate relationship which was seen to exist between the history of the Prussian state and the exploits of the Hohenzollerns. The tendency among Prussians to regard the state as virtually commensurate with the Hohenzollern family even led the British Quarterly Review to conclude that the Prussian state was "altogether a product of family ambition," and that it existed "purely for the sake of its princes." The problem, therefore, was to determine how, specifically, Prussia's strong monarchical traditions had affected that country's preparedness for political reform. How did the Prussian people conceive of the monarch's role in the governing of Prussia? And what about the monarchy itself; had it hitherto promoted or hindered the development of liberal institutions in Prussia, and how likely was it that the monarchy would adapt
Itself to such institutions once they were established? Not surprisingly, the answers which British liberals formulated for each of these questions were a reflection of England's own experiences with constitutional monarchy.

It was immediately obvious to all that the Prussian people held their monarch in higher regard than did the British, who had long since grown accustomed to the fact that the rights of the British crown had "lain practically in abeyance" for at least a century and half. Stockmar's claim that the Prussian middle-classes were "anti-dynastic" was clearly an exaggeration of the social discontent which preceded the outburst of 1848, and was hardly in keeping with the deep loyalty which most Prussians felt for the crown. Most British liberals were extremely suspicious of these sentiments, as they considered them obstacles to the development of popular respect for such fundamental liberal principles as constitutional restrictions on royal prerogatives, ministerial responsibility, and parliamentary supremacy, all of which flew in the face of Prussian ideas of monarchism. Indeed, it was pointedly argued by O'Hagan that in the period after 1850 Prussia might have "obtained a sound constitutional system" were it not for the Prussian people's attachment to the monarchy. The events of 1848-49, and blows sustained by the crown during this period had shocked the sensibilities of Prussians, who reacted to this by rejecting the liberals' interpretations of the new constitution in favour of the reactionary interpretations of Manteuffel. Of this unfortunate development, O'Hagan wrote: "[I]t is not easy
for a minister to foster freedom when the people are eager to strengthen the sovereign power." Here we have an excellent example of the wishful thinking of British idealists; the Prussian liberals' inability to capitalize on the disruptions of 1848-49, and their acquiescence in the face of the Manteuffel ministry could be explained only by attributing such developments to an overexaggerated attachment to the monarchy.

Nor was this inordinate attachment to the monarchy simply a temporary reaction to the disturbing disruptions of the social order which attended the 1848 revolution in Prussia. Morier's examination of the Prussian parliament in 1859 revealed that the Mathias faction - one of the two parties composing the "ministerial majority" - based its popular support on an advocacy of political principles which were co-extensive with traditional Prussian notions of monarchism: "Going back to the old days of Prussian history, and to the Prussia of Frederick the Great, a strong self-trusting policy on the part of the Crown, not based on the Divine Right principle, but on the historical relation of the Hohenzollern Dynasty to the nation, is more than any other the goal aimed at in their programme." [Emphasis mine] Although we are not told to what extent the sentiments expressed in Mathias' programme were those of the Prussian population in general, it was clear that Morier regarded them as archaic, primarily because the policies of this faction were hostile to the "logical consequences" of the constitutional and parliamentary programme advocated by the Prussian Alt Liberalen.
It was, of course, during the constitutional conflict that the Prussian people were finally forced to confront their anachronistic attachments to the Prussian monarchy. It was hoped by British liberals that from this experience the Prussian people would learn to distinguish between what Morier described as their "general duty of loyalty" and their "special duty as citizens," a distinction long since understood in England. Unfortunately, in Prussia there was a "far greater danger than elsewhere of a false personal sentiment influencing political actions," and it was precisely this kind of problem which convinced some British liberals that Prussia was not yet ready for the exercise of responsible self-government. When the conflict reached crisis proportions in 1863, the pervasiveness of the crown's influence remained in evidence, prompting Morier to exclaim, "It is incredible how deep-seated is still the feeling of loyalty to the Crown, and how intense is the actual feeling of pain caused even to men of very advanced opinions by having been branded by the king's own lips as *illoyal subjects.*"

British idealists regarded such loyalty as one of the principal causes of Prussia's, and later Germany's, deviations from the British example of constitutional government. As Dicey explained it, the British constitution functioned on the "unexpressed understanding that...if it came to a contest, the nation would support the Parliament in preference to either Peers or Sovereign." But in Prussia the crown argued that it possessed the deciding vote when it came to an irreconcilable
issue, a theory based upon the conviction that "the nation would in the end support the Crown rather than the Parliament"; unfortunately, the Constitutional party always shrank from disproving this theory by the "test of experience." This reluctance to force the issue because of the prestige of the Prussian crown served well the purposes of the defacto wielder of its power, Bismarck, who was easily able to manipulate a Chamber which felt itself "impotent" in the face of the monarchy's opposition. Demonstrations of this impotency, however, were in evidence at least a decade before Bismarck's appointment as Minister-President, providing what the British Quarterly Review described as "an instructive illustration of the constitutionalism of men who feel at every step that to quarrel with the dynastic organization of the body politic, is, in effect, to quarrel with the means of their very own privileged existence." Hence many of these British liberals concluded that liberal reform in Prussia, while inevitable in the long run, would remain stunted until such time as the Prussian people showed themselves willing to challenge their own sentimental (and material) attachments to the monarchy. But what about the Prussian monarchy itself? Did British idealists think it possible that a Hohenzollern king would submit his authority to either constitutional restrictions, or the scrutiny of a parliamentary majority, as was the case in England? In general, it would seem that Dicey's scepticism regarding the "parliamentary proclivities of Prussian princes" was shared by most British observers of Prussia. Although, as
Dicey noted, some people looked with favour upon William I when he was still the Prince of Prussia, and later his son Frederick when he became the Crown Prince, most agreed with Fraser's Magazine that constitutional principles were not "the most congenial to a scion of Hohenzollern." It was felt, for example, that the "failure" of constitutionalism in Prussia in 1848 and in subsequent years was caused not by any shortcomings on the part of its advocates, but was instead the result of constitutionalism's incompatibility with the "inherent maxims of such a monarchy as obtained in Prussia," founded as it was the absolutist and militaristic traditions of Frederick II. Neither Frederick William IV nor William I ever proved themselves able to break free of these maxims, eliciting from the Westminster Review the following comment in 1871 about the latter of these "warlike Hohenzollerns": "The present King is chiefly remarkable for the drill sergeant view he takes of politics, and save revising the Prussian army system, he has done nothing to entitle him to the gratitude of an enlightened people."

It was, therefore, the character of the Prussian monarchy itself, and not just the people's attachment to it, which was seen to be hindering liberal development in Prussia. Nor was any kind of significant change expected in this situation, at least until there appeared some evidence, according to Morier, that the "stereotype absolutist military notions of the Hohenzollern school" had been abandoned. Since there appeared to be little chance of this happening, some in England concluded that it did not matter who occupied the throne of Prussia; there was no hope
for liberty in Europe as long the Prussian (and Austrian) monarchies were allowed to exist. Although this particular view was an extreme one, it too expressed the general feeling of pessimism which pervaded these discussions of the Prussian monarchy's role in the evolution of liberal institutions in Prussia. All of this contributed to the British idealist's belief that Prussia was not yet fully prepared for the consequences of adopting such institutions. Such a view obviously contrasted sharply with kind of optimism described above regarding the inevitable progress of Prussia in a liberal direction owing to "enlightened" character of the Prussian people. Having established that it would only be a matter of time until Prussian liberals achieved their goals (as such "goals" were perceived in England), the British cautiously avoided predicting exactly when this would transpire in Prussia; instead they hedged their bets by drawing attention to the kinds of "deviations" described above. And in order to confirm that such "deviations" were indeed detrimental to the cause of constitutionalism and parliamentarism in Prussia one had only to find analogous events in the political histories of Prussia and England. It was thought that through such comparisons both the correctness of the English model, and the harm caused by departures from it could be irrefutably demonstrated.

Perhaps the best evidence of the degree to which the British embraced the belief that England was indeed the "mother of Parliaments," and that the historical evolution of British liberal institutions was somehow paradigmatic is the way in
which developments in Prussia were set alongside the historical British "model", and judgements made on the basis of Prussia's conformity to this model. Few commentators on Prussian politics were so naive as to demand that the Prussians slavishly attempt to replay British constitutional history, irrespective of circumstantial differences. Indeed, some were quite prepared to recognize, and make provisions for the unique conditions under which Prussian liberalism labored (although the granting of such magnanimity became grudging after the National Liberals broke with the Progressives in 1867). But the constitutional and parliamentary "goals" for which Prussian liberals were struggling were ultimately those of Victorian England, or so the British believed.

Thus, while the British commentators examined so far appear to have been troubled by those aspects of Prussia's political development which deviated from that of England (e.g., the absence of practical experience amongst Prussian politicians, their dependence on the state for renumeration, and the prevalence of monarchism in Prussia), they were also keen to identify, for the sake of further comparison, parallels between the political history of Prussia and England. The transformation of the dispute over army reform in Prussia into a constitutional conflict in the early 1860s was therefore heartily embraced by contemporary British analysts as the Prussian counterpart to the beginnings of the English revolution of the seventeenth century, an event which well-nigh embodied the British liberals' (and the Sonderweg historians') conception of political progress.75
Hence, how Prussian liberals and the Prussian monarchy conducted themselves in their own constitutional conflict was, for the British, a good measure of Prussia's "progress" towards English-style liberalism.

It is quite certain that similarities were seen to exist between these two struggles: "History is not apt, any more than nature, to repeat itself very exactly. But this Prussian struggle...is marvellously like the beginning of the struggle of our own Charles the First with the English people," declared David Masson. And yet it was more the actions of the Prussian monarchy than those of Prussian liberals which convinced the British that the Prussian constitutional conflict was comparable to that of England. In Prussia, as in England two and a half centuries earlier, a constitutional monarch had committed a breach of the constitution, and remained unrepentent. Characteristically, the British regarded as sacrilege such a challenge to the principle of parliamentary supremacy (despite the fact that in Prussia such a notion, as it was understood in England, scarcely existed in theory, never mind in practice). As Masson stated:

That any king under a Constitution, were he the wisest that lives, should, for the support of an increased army, or any other purpose, insist on having more of his people's money than they through their representatives will vote him, and, when these representatives are firm, should announce his intention of taking the money without their consent 'by means beyond the Constitution' - this is a course of royal conduct antipathy to which, and the conviction that it ought to be opposed and frustrated, may surely be assumed as incorporate with English nerve and blood. The right of the Commons over the national purse is a fundamental principle in our own politics, and we can hardly avoid extending it to Prussia. [Emphasis mine]
Even Lord Salisbury was among those who acknowledged that William I's "pertinacity" had "excited the greatest apprehension in England," where it was felt that if he persisted in "arrogating powers wholly inconsistent with his position," then he could expect nothing else but the "fate of Charles I." Salisbury himself, on the other hand, recognized that William had more respect for the "traditions of Frederick the Great than for those of the British Constitution."7

But while William I was seen to be adhering dangerously to the example set by Charles I of England, and although it did seem that among Prussian liberals there was a healthy sense of those "wrongs of the general kind" being committed by the Prussian crown, most British observers felt that a different outcome than that achieved by England would probably result from Prussia's constitutional conflict.80 Furthermore, it was because of the same kinds of "weaknesses" described above that these British idealists tempered their optimism regarding the possibility of Prussia's liberals securing a parliamentary victory, at least from the present conflict, like that achieved in England two centuries earlier.

It was obvious, for example, as was noted earlier, that Prussia had had "neither time nor opportunity to form a school of parliamentary statesmen"; according to O'Hagan, the actions of the Prussian parliamentarians during the constitutional conflict clearly demonstrated both the "incomplete development of the constitutional system," and the kind of "imperfect maturity of political judgement" which proceeded from this lack
of practical experience.

Similar to this was the political impotency which British liberals felt had resulted from the "privileged existence" of Prussian parliamentarians, a situation which effectively strengthened the hand of the crown in the conflict: "If we remember how hard was the struggle between the Long Parliament and the King...it is evident that the crown must prevail in any similar conflict with the Prussian parliament, which has not the material foundation of independence, and would be disabled by the stopping of the supplies which each member receives from the state." Finally, there were the problems created by the prevalence of monarchism in Prussia. According to Fraser's Magazine, the Prussian people's strong attachments to the Hohenzollern monarchy did not bode well for the future of the Prussian constitutional conflict: "The Prussians of the present day are little like the English of the time of Hampden. Submissive and crestfallen, after their defeat by Frederic William IV and his coadjutors, Manteuffel and Westphalen - no sooner does William I ascend the throne than the strings of popularity rebound and are again in overstrained vigour."

Nor did such criticisms end here. The very nature of Prussia's constitutional conflict was seen to lack the kind of distinction and high-mindedness which singled-out as unique the British struggle against the Stuarts. Absent from the cause of the Prussian liberals was "all that accumulation of noble ingredients" which Masson claimed had once dignified "the English liberalism of Eliot, and Pym, and Hampden." Hence the Prussian conflict was thought to contain more of the mere
"Tonnage and Poundage" question, and less of those other great questions of "intellectual and spiritual liberty with which the Tonnage and Poundage question in England was then inextricably associated." Here once again, therefore, we find evidence of that superior British attitude alluded to above.

These comparisons of the Prussian contest with the English revolution served, therefore, a dual purpose; they reaffirmed for British liberals their belief in the superiority of the British political system, while confirming their suspicions that the "abnormal" development of Prussian liberalism, in evidence since 1848, was simply the result of transitory influences peculiar to Prussia - foremost among these being the Prussian people's marked attachment to the monarchy, and their political inexperience. Hence there arose the question of how closely was Prussia to pattern itself on the model of England, where constitutionalism and parliamentarism were considered fully developed, but where such peculiarities of circumstance did not exist. Clearly, the British believed they had a duty to impart to others the benefits of their own system:

"Can we to men benighted
The true lamp of life deny?"

But while the British model remained foremost in their minds, particularly during their assessments of existing constitutional and parliamentary practices in Prussia, British idealists were chary to suggest the wholesale adoption of British institutions by Prussia. Although unwilling to abandon their belief in the eventual triumph of liberalism in Prussia, British idealists were forced to acknowledge, at least implicitly, the existence
of that chasm which separated the political cultures of England and Prussia.

It is odd that British observers of Germany, having expressed such an interest in the suitability of Prussia for liberal political reform as they conceived it, should then back away from the logical consequence of their arguments, which was that Prussia take to itself English-style liberal institutions. Yet this was exactly what some did, although, ironically, they reserved for themselves the right to criticize, on the basis of their own system of government, any reforms actually undertaken by Prussian politicians. Of this latter tendency, Morier cynically remarked:

"It happens that Prussia, while weaving her Constitutional woof after a pattern of her own, not copied from that of any of our schools of political design, appears to us in so far to be guilty of a political heresy, as being orthodox neither in her dogmas nor in her dissent from those dogmas, - for an Englishman, in politics no less than in religion, likes his very heterodoxy to be orthodox."

But not all British liberals were entirely ignorant of either the unique circumstances in which Prussian liberals found themselves, or the potentially disastrous consequences of attempting to fit Prussia for what Frederick William IV once described as "Ungerman notions" of political reform. When the peculiar formation of the Prussian state was considered, with its "combination of peoples and interests under one national name - its struggling form and strange divisions - and its absence of common historical associations," less idealistic liberals like Milnes came to the conclusion that it was not necessarily to the British polity that "Prussia should look for
Especially instructive appear to be the views expressed in the *British Quarterly Review* by a self-described constitutionalist after the "old English fashion," who stated: "We are far from thinking that anything like a counterpart of the institutions so designated among us, is either desirable or possible in the case of the great majority of people of Europe." Arguing that the Prussians, among others, should be more concerned about the "practicable and reasonable in their own special circumstances" and "less about the historical constitution of the English," he goes on to point out that, while it might be very agreeable to British vanity "to suppose that England is destined to become the normal school in politics for all the world," the British should also remember that the "struggle for constitutional liberty on the continent" could never be the same as it had been in England, owing to the insular position of the latter. This, of course, did not mean that the ultimate success of this struggle, as it was played out in Prussia, was thought to be any less assured, for such was not the case. But what this does show is that some British liberals perceived what most did not; namely, that liberalism in Prussia had a character all its own, and that such a character was not necessarily conformable to English-style institutions.

It is interesting to note that in 1871 certain Prussian liberals also attempted to make this same point, addressing themselves to a British audience in an attempt to secure British support for the new German Empire. Among these was Reinhold
Pauli, who, while lecturing at the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, acknowledged both the importance, and the limitations of England's role as an example for other constitutional states, and Prussia in particular:

Different in its origin from the ancient crown of England, and of a later date, [Prussia] has had to solve different problems too. In their struggles for political liberty the nations of Europe will ever look up to the constitutional principles of your country. But can they be adopted in their full extent as a universal model, as a panacea for every place and every time? Pauli evidently felt that they could not.

Karl Hildebrand was another who saw fit to question the unreflective employment in Prussia of political concepts which were, essentially, "composed of English elements adapted to French forms." What troubled Hildebrand in particular was that nobody ever really questioned whether it was advisable to "apply indiscriminately the same form of government to all nations of the globe, from Englishmen to negroes." Thus, while himself owning to a preference for self-government "when exercised under local and aristocratic influence, as in England," Hildebrand rejected suggestions that the new Germany hastily adopt British political practices:

Would it not be in vain to attempt founding a state artificially upon the English plan, in a country like Germany, politically the result of 1648? Would it be possible, even were it advisable, to obliterate the traces of three centuries of Roman Law and French absolutism from the pages of her history, and link her present political forms to those of Luther's time?...Who can deny that [its bureaucracy] has contributed to the power and greatness of Prussia? And is not the saying, 'Ye shall know the tree by its fruit,' applicable to political institutions?"
result of a difficult problem to which many in England also addressed their concerns. What was really at issue here was the propriety of rigidly applying abstract constitutional and parliamentary doctrines to a country like Prussia, rather than allowing for the "natural" development of these doctrines within the setting in which they were expected to survive and flourish. For Hildebrand this was a question of particular concern, as he saw in it the key to both the past and future development of political institutions in Prussia and Germany. Hildebrand acknowledged that the Prussian constitution of 1850 had been "artificially grafted" upon the body politic of Prussia "in consequence of the riots of 1848 and 1849," and that the parliamentary institutions of northern Germany had been "transplanted de toutes pièces to a soil utterly unprepared for their reception, instead of springing up by natural processes at a season propitious for their growth." But in spite of this, Prussia had preserved intact her original character as a military and bureaucratic state, and had succeeded in fulfilling what Hildebrand regarded as "the fundamental conditions of all modern States," - the maintenance of order, national independence, and individual liberty. Having fulfilled these conditions (although "by different means and under other forms" than those which the British were accustomed to), he asked whether England was justified in "rejecting the benefits conferred." Even more importantly, he noted that the "reign of abstract theory" was seen to be drawing to a close in Prussian politics, which in turn guaranteed the "future development of
German parliamentary institutions." Thus, Hildebrand regarded the constitutional and parliamentary history of Prussia as a curious blend of the theoretical and the practical, with the latter gradually supplanting the former, and ensuring both the fitness and durability of Prussian political institutions.

British idealists, however, tended to see Prussia as embracing either one or the other of these two approaches. Prussophiles like Morler and Dicey were anxious to demonstrate that Prussia's constitutional and parliamentary institutions rested on a strong practical foundation that was well-suited to the country's needs. Only under these circumstances could it be hoped that liberalism would flourish in Prussia, thus earning her the goodwill of England. In the constitutional history of Prussia, therefore, Morler saw evidence of a "living process derived from a posteriori experiences instead of from a priori doctrines." This he considered the only method by which "political fruits of a permanent kind" could be matured in Prussia:

A natural growing upwards of a living organism in obedience to laws written in the history of the past and in the character of the people, instead of an artificial and inorganic mechanism imposed from above, and obeying no impulse but that given to it by the caprices of an individual or the stereotype traditions of a dynastic policy: such is the contrast presented by Prussian institutions as compared with those of the three gigantic neighbours on whose frontiers her own abut.

Similarly, the new German state which Dicey saw being formed after Sadowa - a state which would be "virtually Prussia under new conditions of existence" - was neither Utopian, nor theoretical. It was instead, he argued, "eminently
matter-of-fact, prosaic, and common place," and was thus "well suited to commend itself to the instincts of the German nation." Hence both of these men were optimistic about the future of a Prussian-led German state, given the factual and concrete foundation on which Prussia's political institutions were seen to rest. And indeed, rather than being an expression of disapprobation, Dicey's warning that Prussian parliamentarism might appear unfamiliar to British observers was simply an acknowledgement of the "organic", a posteriori origin of Prussia's parliamentary practices.

Other British observers, on the other hand, feared that Prussian liberals were making the same mistakes which Burke had accused the French of making in 1790 — that of pursuing political reform solely on the basis of abstract schemes which had no basis in experience. And as Milnes had pointed out in 1849, "[T]he whole art and mystery of constitutional government is to teach men to govern themselves, — and this can be learned by experience alone." The fact of the matter was that in "facilitating and perfecting liberal institutions," ratiocination wielded an indirect influence at best. While it was true that the German had a natural penchant for philosophy which in turn predisposed him to imbibe constitutional doctrines, this in no way prepared Prussians for the actual application of such doctrines in the political arena:

Hence in reading the speeches of any constitutional leaders...one is struck with the doctrinaire complacency which comes out in almost every sentence, imparting to all they do in this way the cast of an esoteric science.
Even Morier lamented that the purportedly liberal Hohenzollern-Auerswald ministry, which exercised such influence over William I when he first became Regent in 1858, was composed largely of "doctrinaires rather than men tried in the fire of real party strife." Such men had never really taken part in the parliamentary life of Prussia, and were connected to the Prussian liberal movement solely by the force of "abstract doctrines" and social ties, which perhaps accounted for the ministry's precipitous demise. Moreover, Fraser's Magazine argued that certain features of Prussia's parliamentary protocol, such as the "mischievous habit" of selecting, as presidents of the Chambers, the leaders of prominent parties, demonstrated that Prussian parliamentarians preferred the "theoretically perfect" French pattern of organization to that of the "tried practical rules by which the English houses are guided." Hence the British continued to offer the model of England as an example to be emulated, even while emphasizing that it was necessary for the Prussians to avoid being too doctrinaire in the articulation of their own liberal institutions and practices.

It seems that by attaching such importance to this German penchant for a priori thought, particularly in politics, British idealists were employing yet another strategy designed to account for the disappointing progress of liberalism in Prussia. However, if we look at how closely they actually adhered to their advocacy of indigenous, non-doctrinaire liberal development in Prussia, the transparency of this strategy
immediately becomes obvious. For while the British criticized Prussian liberals for being overly-attached to the political doctrines of other countries, France in particular, they refused to recognize that some of Prussia's deviations from the healthy example of England were the direct result of *a posteriori* experiences derived from the exceptional circumstances in which Prussian liberals found themselves. Foremost among these "deviations" was the existence of unelected ministers and the absence of a law of ministerial responsibility - features of Prussia's polity which were described as being "totally opposed to the most limited application of the principles of popular government." Even those in England, like Albert and Morier, who better understood than most the essential character of Prussia's political culture balked at the suggestion that ministerial responsibility was a concept unsuitable for Prussia. Indeed, Albert was convinced that such a concept, central as it was to the operation of parliamentary government in England, was even more necessary on the Continent, where governments were an "outgrowth of a relation of supremacy and subordination between Sovereign and subject":

[As] the servant, trained in ideas natural to this relation, does not know which to obey - the law or the Sovereign - the existence of such a law [of responsibility] would deprive him of the excuse which, should he offend the law, and so be guilty of a crime, is ready to his hand in the phrase 'The Sovereign ordered it so - I have merely obeyed!'; while it would be protection to the Sovereign that his servants, if guilty of a crime, should not be able to saddle him with the blame of it.

Morier, on the other hand, saw, running throughout the whole constitutional conflict, a thread of unreality since the liberal
majority was not acting with the "Damocles-sword of responsibility" hanging over its head. Like Albert, Morier regarded such a law as the "regulating force of Parliamentary life - the having on the morrow to give practical effect to the vote of yesterday."\(^{106}\)

Here once again the claims of British idealists appear to have been contradictory. For just as it is difficult to reconcile the implied sublimity and matchlessness of Britain's constitutional history with the suggestion that the British experience was also normative, so does it appear inconsistent for British liberals to have criticized Prussian liberals for their unreflective adoption of foreign political doctrines on the one hand, while being equally critical of their failure to affect a law of ministerial responsibility on the other. Since such a law was considered a cornerstone in the British constitutional-parliamentary edifice, it is not surprising that most British liberals were reluctant to see Prussia forego its development, even though such a law was foreign to Prussia. At best Prussia and Germany were considered lucky for not having "contracted the vices which generally result from an absence of responsibility."\(^{107}\) Any suggestion that such a serious compromise of "normal" parliamentary practices was somehow justifiable in Prussia clearly implied a repudiation of England's role as the vanguard of European liberalism - an idea which was totally unacceptable to British idealists.

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Almost without exception, the views described above reflect the degree to which the political consciousness of British liberals was permeated with the belief that England had been "selected by Providence as a model of free and orderly government to mankind." And just as many of the historical interpretations discussed in the opening chapter involved the evaluation of German history with a view to affirming the propriety of the Western liberal tradition, so also, it would seem, did British liberals in the mid-nineteenth century keep one eye firmly affixed on British institutions when assessing the political development of Prussia. But whereas historians writing since World War II have been preoccupied largely with trying to explain why German liberalism failed, British liberals writing about Prussia during the period 1848-1871 contemplated no such failure; on the contrary, they were convinced that the progress of liberal institutions in Prussia was assured.

Unfortunately, events in Prussia following 1848 militated against the Idealists' optimism. But rather than accept this unpleasant reality, British Idealists set about shoring up their illusions concerning Prussia's political future through the employment of those kinds of analytical strategies described above - strategies which derived their explanatory power from the peculiarity of Prussian circumstances, but which, most importantly, permitted British liberals to hold fast to their belief in the eventual triumph of their ideas, even if such a consummation was seen to be coming later rather than sooner. Convinced that Prussia represented the "intelligence, the
progress and the wealth of Germany," and that a liberal transformation of Prussia was therefore inevitable, British idealists eagerly embraced as proof of this such developments as the liberal character of the 1848 revolts; Frederick William IV's apparent defense of constitutionalism in Hesse-Cassel in 1850; the "New Era" ministry and the accession of William I; and the resistance of the Prussian Chamber, with the support of the Crown Prince, during the constitutional conflict. Upon recognizing that such developments, the latter in particular, had not resulted in a liberal "breakthrough" in Prussia's constitutional and parliamentary development, British idealists, rather than retreating, found excuses for the delayed realization of their goals, appealing to the parliamentary inexperience of Prussians, their attachments to the monarchy, and the Prussian penchant for abstract political doctrines.

The fact that each of these strategies called attention to Prussian attitudes and practices which were specifically "un-English" demonstrates that British idealists had adopted what later came to be called a "Whig" perspective in their evaluation of Prussian liberalism. The prevalence of this perspective is confirmed by their willingness to suspend their criticism of Prussians as being too doctrinaire just long enough to demand that they adopt, untried, a law of ministerial responsibility, since such a law was indispensable to British parliamentary government. At best, therefore, the views of these British idealists gave rise to that particular style of discourse which, as we have seen, was frequently adopted by
British statesmen when discussing England's relations with Prussia; at worst, it fostered a complacent attitude in England regarding the development of liberal institutions in Prussia and Germany - a complacency which permitted British policy-makers to set aside any concerns they might have had regarding their pursuit of policies which facilitated Prussia's unification of Germany.

But while it seems fairly clear as to how British idealists maintained their illusions regarding the future of Prussian liberalism, less obvious is why such illusions were maintained. Was it out of an unshakable belief in the inevitability of liberal development on the continent, irrespective of any active support from England? Certainly some British liberals demanded that people in England take a greater interest in Prussian and German affairs which were largely thought to be misunderstood by the British public. However, demands that the British government take a more active role in promoting liberalism on the continent are almost entirely absent from the many views described above, apparently confirming this notion that the idealists regarded the progress of liberal institutions in Prussia to be inexorable. The following passage taken from the Westminster Review in 1851 is clearly an exception to the idealists' general acceptance of British policy regarding Prussia and Germany:

"The continent is not yet ripe for constitutional freedom. Brought up under the tutelage of a police, the bulk of the people do not even wish to be constitutionally governed, and the slightest release from absolutism would plunge them into anarchy. A strong German confederation or union, founded upon popular rights and liberal principles would derange the balance of power; but while Germany is governed upon absolutist principles, there is little fear of even..."
commercial competition, and its state of political darkness will make our Whig twilight look like a noon-day of liberty, and the mouths of radicals will easily be stopped.' Thus runs the reasoning of that short-sighted policy that drags England down from the height of her glorious mission, to assist in developing the liberties of Europe.

There is, however, another related explanation for the Idealists' preoccupation with using what they conceived to be Prussia's "deviations" from the British model as an explanation for the course of Prussia's political development during and after 1848; such an approach released them from the need to question the universality of the British liberal ideal - an ideal which was religiously invoked both as the source of England's prosperity and stability in the mid-nineteenth century, and as justification for everything from the possession of a global empire to demands for free trade with the German Zollverein. Thus, rather than challenge the notion that British liberalism was based on principles of natural law which operated universally, British idealists concluded that Prussia had simply strayed temporarily from the path of normal development.

It is from this unwillingness to question the validity of either the concept of "normal development", or England's own historical journey down such a path that there emerged the foundations for the Sonderweg explanation for Germany's past, which is simply a continuation - albeit under wholly new circumstances - of this same attempt at producing a picture of German history that furnishes the liberal mind with acceptable explanations for the "un-Western" character of German development. Also writing under the influence of a strong
liberal bias (inspired in this case by a revulsion for the consequences of the Third Reich), Sonderweg historians made many of the same assumptions about Germany's historical development as those made by British idealists a century earlier. For this group of British idealists, however, the homeland of Bach and Goethe was as yet unstained by the butchery of two world wars, and was still subject, therefore, to the self-correcting forces thought to be at work in those nations, like Germany, which had already taken the first tentative steps towards the development of liberal institutions. Thus for British idealists of the nineteenth century the peculiarities of Prussian history lacked that ominousness and malignancy which much of the historiography on Germany since 1945 has attributed to these so-called "deviations" from the West.
CHAPTER 4

Conclusions
A.A.W Ramsay's examination of the dilemma confronting the British government on the eve of the Austro-Prussian war in 1866 contains the following speculations on the course which German history would have taken had England acted differently during the Danish war:

Armed intervention in 1864 would inevitably have led to the fall of Bismarck. Had his Danish policy failed, as when sincerely opposed by Great Britain it must have done, his position in Berlin, already dangerous, would have become untenable....The fall of Bismarck would have cleared the way for the Liberal party. The King would have been obliged to surrender to them at last....[A]bsolute government in Prussia would have been at an end, and Germany would have been free to develop along Liberal and constitutional lines....The gospel of 'Blood and Iron' would have met, in its very beginnings, the only reply that might have checked its progress. The inborn tendencies of the national character towards the worship of force and the lust of conquest would have been stamped down just as they were beginning to show themselves afresh. It would have been well for the world had this lesson been learnt in 1864, and not in 1918.\(^1\)

If for a moment we allow ourselves to engage in this same type of speculation, we can conclude that, had Ramsay written this in 1945 instead of 1925, she would have argued that British opposition to Bismarck in 1864 would also have prevented the rise of Nazism and the horrors of the Second World War. Or to put it another way, had Cleopatra's nose been longer, etc.

Ramsay's speculations are not unique. Indeed, it is this same kind of wishful thinking which can be found in much of the historiography on modern Germany, particularly in Sonderweg interpretations of Germany's past. Implicit in the Sonderweg theorists' claim that Germany departed from the "normal" path of Western development is the assumption that, had such a departure never occurred, German, and subsequent world history would have
turned out very differently; Ralf Dahrendorf's query "Why wasn't Germany England?" clearly implies that Germany would have been England (and perhaps still could be) were it not for the aberrant pattern of Germany's development. Unable to reverse the troubled course of German history in the twentieth century, many historians have therefore registered their protests against it by using the more agreeable national histories of England and France as the basis for a "what if" reconstruction of Germany's past. Of this fallacy E.H. Carr once wrote: "The trouble with contemporary history is that people remember the time when all options were still open, and find it difficult to adopt the attitude of the historian for whom they have all been closed by the fait accompli."

It has not been my intention in this paper to use this kind of reductive analysis in an attempt to "demonstrate" that liberalism would ultimately have prevailed in Germany had not British policy-makers, lulled into a state of complacency by men like Morier, Dicey and Milnes, pursued a course which served better the goals of Bismarck than of Prussian liberals. Nor has it been my intention to somehow absolve Germany of responsibility for the Nazi era by pointing to the role which England may or may not have played in the decline of German liberalism in the nineteenth century. It would be absurd to suggest that British policy single-handedly brought about triumph of authoritarianism and militarism over liberalism in the new German Empire; or that it was simply the weakness of the
German liberal tradition which led to National Socialism's victory in Germany.

My intention has been quite simply to broaden the debate regarding Germany's political development, and I have attempted to accomplish this by raising the possibility that international relations also affected the outcome of Germany's political struggles in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. By demonstrating that England's Prussian policy during the period 1848-1871 was shaped primarily by the desire to see Germany unified - a goal inspired by pragmatic concerns regarding the maintenance of peace, as well as England's interests in Europe, and best thought to be served through the preservation of stability in Prussia - I have attempted to call into question certain traditional assumptions regarding the role which liberal idealism played in the formulation of British policy. It is these assumptions (as well as the notion that German liberalism's defeat was preordained by the peculiarity of Germany's historical development) which have hitherto discouraged historians from considering more carefully the extent to which British policy contributed to the untenable situation in which German liberalism found itself during and after 1848.

Furthermore, it is clear from the above analysis of the views of British liberal idealists that the impact of this group has been twofold with regard to this question. Firstly, the idealists' vocal interpretations of Prussian and German affairs contributed an important political dimension to the existing
rhetoric about the shared interests and common links between Germany and Britain. It is the pervasiveness of this rhetoric, and its employment by British policy-makers which has helped to satisfy British historians of Anglo-German relations that British policy was indeed shaped largely by liberal idealism and a romantic view of Germany. And secondly, by permitting their evaluations of German affairs to be heavily colored by distinctly liberal, ethnocentric biases, these same British idealists helped to establish an enduring intellectual perspective on German history which continues to direct Anglo-American scholars' attentions to the internal sources of German illiberalism, and away from the milieu of international relations within which German monarchs and politicians operated.

According to Dahrendorf, questions are like revolutions: "Once one gets started, it is hard to find an end; both seem to breed incessantly."

In attempting to extricate the German question from the kind of tendentious atmosphere within which it has generally been posed by historians writing since World War Two, the present study naturally raises more questions than it answers. Moreover, it only goes halfway towards answering the most important of these questions - to what extent did British policy actually affect Prussia's and Germany's political development during the period 1848-1871. It is clear from the above analysis that there was more to British policy than simply non-intervention, and that Britain's impact on Prussia cannot be viewed exclusively in terms of what Britain did not do during this period. Palmerston, Russell, Granville and Stanley all
pursued active policies aimed at ensuring that Prussia remain a
bulwark against "Red and anarchical government" in Europe, which
was naturally regarded as a potential threat to British
interests; even Clarendon was inclined to favour an
"unprincipled Bismarck" over a "democratic Lasalle" since he
believed that "democracy in Germany means socialism, i.e. the
subversion of all those laws by which Society is held
together." Furthermore, such concerns were matched, and at
times overridden by British fears of a renewal of French
aggression in Europe, or even by the danger of a more powerful
Russia.

In order to determine whether Britain’s actions really
mattered, however, reactions in Prussia to British policy must
also be examined, and their place established within the
shifting sands of Prussian politics during this period. It may
well be that British diplomatic support for the resurgence of
conservatism in Prussia in 1849-1850, and Britain’s attempts to
neutralize potential threats to Prussia arising out of
Bismarck’s military and diplomatic initiatives were of
relatively little consequence to the fate of Prussian
liberalism. But in order to examine properly, from the Prussian
perspective, the extent to which British policy affected
Prussia’s political history, it has first been necessary to
clarify Britain’s role in these events by separating the
rhetoric from the actual practice of British policy. And by
identifying the liberal biases which pervaded the rhetoric of
mid-nineteenth century British idealists, we are better able to
appreciate how and why subsequent scholarship on the German question has so readily embraced the notion that German history is "peculiar". All of this hopefully helps to clear the way for a more balanced approach to the formation of the German Empire within the wider context of nineteenth century European history.
NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER 1

NOTES


7. The most thorough application of this view can be found in Peter Viereck’s Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961). Although Viereck originally published Metapolitics in 1941, it was poorly received at the time, and was re-released more successfully

8. Blackbourn and Eley claim that the scholarship on the Sonderweg question has "moved on to more sociological and structural terrain," having incorporated all of the valuable elements from the arguments in favour of the "German mind." This trend is particularly true among German historians. Yet the idea of the "German mind" continues to exercise an important influence on the historiography on modern Germany. *Peculiarities of German History*, pp. 5-9.


11. Snyder, *German Nationalism*, p. 102; Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, pp. 21-22. Although touted as a study which has avoided falling back on a Sonderweg explanation, Harold James's *A German Identity, 1770-1990* (New York: Routledge, 1989), simply revamps the notion that Germany diverged from the West by focusing on the eclectic character of German nationalism: "There is nothing singularly or peculiarly German about the idea of an invented nationality; but what is unusual about Germany is that a nation-state generated in this 'eastern' way developed into a Great Power on the European and world stage." p. 32.


15. As a good example of this, observe Theodore Hamerow's claim that the penalty for the liberals' failure in 1848 was "paid not in 1849, but in 1918, in 1933 and in 1945." Restoration, Revolution and Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. viii. See also Iggers, The German Conception of History, p. 277; Snyder, German Nationalism, p. 104. More serious, however, than this tendency to see continuity where perhaps none exists are the many fallacies common to the field of Nazi pedigree-hunting, nicely summarized by Klaus Epstein in "Shirer's History of Nazi Germany," Review of Politics, 23 (1961), 230. Although certainly a more balanced appraisal of the "roots" of National Socialism than that of V.iterek and Shirer, Fritz Stern's The Politics of Cultural Despair is not entirely free from such fallacies. See pp. 294-295.


22. For Talcott Parsons the fact that Germany's administrative bureaucracy was not in conflict with liberal-democratic
ideas, and that the paternalistic social welfare system was in a position to help mitigate the consequences of extreme individualistic capitalism suggested that a liberal-democratic solution in Germany was very possible. "Democracy and Social Structure in Pre-Nazi Germany," pp. 115-116. See also Craig, The Germans, p. 32; Krieger, The German Idea of Freedom, pp. 401-402. Kohn argues that in mid-nineteenth Germany, as in the rest of western Europe, "liberalism was in the ascendancy," but that the German liberals "wittingly and willingly" reversed this "prevailing trend" in exchange for national power. The Mind of Germany, pp. 11, 128-19. For Koppel Pinson, on the other hand, it was precisely the apolitical nature of the German "classical humanist tradition" which presaged the defeat of liberalism in Germany. Modern Germany, pp. 12-22.


25. Sheehan, German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century, p. 3.

26. Not surprisingly, German historians have been the largest contributors to this latter question. For an excellent summary of such work, see Mosse, The European Powers and the German Question, Appendix A, pp. 375-381.


30. William E. Gladstone, "Life and Speeches of the Prince Consort," Contemporary Review, 26 (1875), 12. See also Frank Hardie, The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901. (London: Humphrey Milford, 1935). On the existence of the so-called "Coburg plan" in which Albert, Stockmar, King Leopold and others purportedly sought to ensure that Germany be unified under the auspices of a liberal constitutional Prussian state, see L. Farago and A.


CHAPTER 2


12. Palmerston epitomized this Janus-faced approach of British policy-makers to the German question. Having claimed in 1832 that the "independence of constitutional states...can never be a matter of indifference to the British Parliament," Palmerston continues: "[M]y opinion is that as long as our commerce is of importance to us, as long as continental armies are in existence, as long as it is possible that a power in one quarter may become dangerous
to a power in another - so long must England look with interest upon the transactions of the Continent, and so long as it is proper for this country, in the maintenance of its own independence, not to shut its eyes to anything that threatens the independence of Germany." R.W. Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1945), p. 463.


14. In response to Frederick William IV's anti-constitutional stance the previous year, Prince Albert warned the Prussian king: "The only way to deal with this onrush threatening destruction is to bind that part of the people which has the means and the intelligence (i.e. the real people) to the government by trustfully admitting it to participation in the administration of its own life." Frank Eyck, *The Prince Consort: A Political Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 73.


17. Mosse, *The European Powers*, p. 16


20. Mosse, *The European Powers*, p. 13; Weber, "Palmerston and Prussian Liberalism," pp. 129-131. Although Mosse contends that Arnim's plans involved creating a kind of Grand Alliance of Germany, France, Poland and England, which would "in the name of liberty and the happiness of peoples" lead a liberal crusade against "despotic Russia," Weber views Arnim's plans as being much more pragmatic, and as being shaped by his fear that conflict with England was "inevitable". In support of Weber's view is Palmerston's memo to Albert in which he argues that the Zollverein "is intended to cripple the trade and manufactures of England." Hence British policy could only look upon the Zollverein as "a league founded in hostility to England." Theodore Martin, *Life of H.R.H. The Prince Consort* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1880), 1, pp. 447-451.


27. In Berlin Westmoreland echoed this support by resisting democrats' requests that he pressure Frederick William IV to dismiss Brandenburg. Weber, "Palmerston and Prussian Liberalism," p. 135.


37. The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell, 11, p. 35.
39. Ibid., p. 55.
40. QVL, 1st series, p. 21.
41. Ibid., pp. 22-23; Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, 111, p. 14.
42. Hansard (Lords), 3rd series, 132:815-816.
43. Ibid., col. 818.
44. Lothar Gall, Bismarck: The White Revolutionary trans. by J.A. Underwood (London: Unwin and Allen, 1986), 1, p. 120.
46. Letters of the Prince Consort, pp. 165, 213. Albert goes on to remark, "He [Bunsen] knows that he has often done me a lot of harm."
47. Hansard (Lords), 3rd series, 133:976-977.
48. Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, 111, p. 92.
49. Hansard (Lords), 3rd series, 137:858-871.
50. Ibid., cols. 876-878.
51. In writing to her uncle, the King of Belgium, Queen Victoria expressed these same sentiments, maintaining that, "if Prussia and Austria had held strong and decided language to Russia in '53, we should never have had this war!" QVL, 1st series, 111, p. 215.
52. Perhaps preparing the ground for this exclusion, Clarendon proposed a strongly worded draft be sent to Prussia in January 1856, criticizing that country for its ambiguous position in the Crimean conflict. Although no doubt inspired by her pro-German sentiments, Queen Victoria (probably on the advice of Albert) adopted the prudent and pragmatic attitude displayed by Clarendon the previous year, demanding the tone of this draft be softened: "It is quite natural and excusable that our patience should at last be worn out by the miserable policy which Prussia is pursuing, but it can never our interest to openly quarrel with her." Ibid., p. 205.
53. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 141:157-158.
54. Ibid., col. 161.
55. Characteristically, Prince Albert recognized this soon after the war broke out. To Prince William he wrote: "I fear...that passion will lead to injustice, as the attacks of our press on Prussia already show that they provoke the same feelings in Prussia; and, no doubt, before long, nations which have every reason and every interest to maintain the warmest mutual friendship, will be misled into the foolish notion that they should in fact be enemies and hate each other." Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, iii, pp. 137-138.

56. The Times of London, 3 October 1855; QVL, 1st series, iii, p. 187; Eyck, The Prince Consort, p. 243. Granville’s response to the engagement is particularly interesting: "There is no doubt, my Lords, that in free countries, where representative institutions prevail, Royal alliances have not the same effect on the happiness or the prosperity of the people, which they have in countries under more absolute government....In the latter countries it frequently happens that the power of a kingdom is increased or diminished by a Royal alliance, sometimes leading to happiness, sometimes to misery; but on the present occasion there is need to anticipate anything of that kind." Hansard (Lords), 3rd series, 148:753.

57. British Sessional Papers: House of Commons, ed. by E.J. Erikson, 32 (1859):559-60; British and Foreign State Papers, 49 (1860): 1143. Paul Hayes has interpreted the Earl of Malmesbury’s recommendation that the British and Prussian governments seek during the Italian war to "encourage as much as possible the good feeling and amity of all the German powers," as aiming at the creation of an anti-Russian coalition. Modern British Foreign Policy: The Nineteenth Century, 1814-1880 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1975), p. 41. Prince Albert also preached moderation, arguing that it was crucial for Prussia to maintain a "waiting position, if it does not want to expose itself and Europe to great dangers." Eyck, The Prince Consort, p. 244.


60. *British and Foreign State Papers*, 52 (1861), 64; Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, v, pp. 348-350.

61. Princess Victoria complained that the press and the government's attacks upon Prussia further alienated her from the Prussian court, which already viewed her with some suspicion as an *Engländer*. More serious, however, are Sir Robert Morler's claims that the "promiscuous scurrility" of the *Times* attacks had "totally demoralized" Prussian liberals, such that they came to think "all hope of an understanding with England impossible." *Memoirs and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Robert Morier*, ed. by Rosslyn Wemyss (London: Edward Arnold, 1911) 1, p. 247.


64. See chapter 4, note 1.


66. Upon learning of the Alvensleben convention, Russell proposed sending the following dispatch to Prussia: "Her Majesty's Government are forced to arrive at the conclusion that it is an Act of Intervention, which is not justified by necessity...and which may be quoted by other Powers of Europe to justify intervention in favour of the insurgents." However, Palmerston and the Queen prevailed on the Foreign Secretary to concentrate on Russia as the culprit. This prompted King William to thank Victoria for the "conciliatory and friendly conduct of Her Majesty's Government," and for the "moderation with which the French Government under the influence of Her Majesty's Government" had acted. Mosse, *The European Powers*, pp. 112, 116; *QVL*, 2nd series, 1, pp. 66-67. Several months later Palmerston came to the defense of Prussia in the face of accusations that it was violating international law by supplying arms and transport to Russian troops in Poland. *Hansard* (Commons), 3rd series, 170:1955-1956.

67. *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, 11, p. 306. Henry Cowley, the British ambassador to Paris, also believed that Napoleon III's actions were shaped by the "possibility that out of the complications something may turn up advantageous to France." Mosse, *The European Powers*, p. 164. Although early in the dispute the British government probed the French about the possibility of an alliance designed to protect the Danish monarchy from dismemberment, this query followed so closely on the heels of the Polish affair that it stood little chance of success.
68. *Hansard* (Lords), 3rd series, 161:2138-2139.

69. Having already advanced a partition proposal the previous year, only to be rebuffed by Copenhagen, Russell was again urged by the Queen to consider partition as a solution to the "interminable quarrel" between Prussia and Denmark. *QVL*, 2nd series, 1, pp. 23-24. For the text of Russell’s earlier proposals, see *British Sessional Papers* 64 (1861):85-87.


74. *QVL*, 2nd series, 1, pp. 103-104.

75. Palmerston was even forced to defend his Foreign Secretary when he angered the Queen by implying to the Prussian ambassador that England would come to Denmark’s aid in case of a German invasion: "Lord Russell is of course well aware that an actual decision on a matter such as that in question does not rest with any single member of the Government, but with the Cabinet and your Majesty." *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 132, 145.


77. *British Sessional Papers*, 65 (1864):636. Palmerston was confident that the German powers’ assurances that they were only seeking to restore the conditions of the 1852 treaty were genuine. Mosse, *The European Powers*, pp. 174-175.

78. Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston*, 11, pp. 247-248. It is interesting that Palmerston appears to regret the fact that in the event of a Franco-Prussian war England would be unable to participate because of Prussia’s conduct in the duchies.


84. *QVL*, 2nd series, 1, p. 223.
85. Ibid., p. 228.

86. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 176:826, 2084


88. Ibid., pp. 270-271.

89. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 178:926-929. The speaker in this case was Sir Harry Verney, a pro-German M.P. whose comments reveal a curious blend of Palmerstonian realism and the kind of idealism described in chapter 3. He was confident that Bismarck could not permanently alter the Prussians' "true character - that of a mighty conservative Power in the midst of Europe, with populations prosperous, well-governed, and contented, able to curb the ambition of France on the one side, and the aggressions of Russia on the other, and gradually, but surely, advancing in material welfare, and in all that appertains to true freedom and the blessings of constitutional orderly government."

90. QVL, 2nd series, 1, p. 276.

91. Of the Queen's indignation, Palmerston wrote to Russell: "The fact is, as far as the Queen is concerned, that so long as the injustice committed appeared calculated to the benefit of Germany and the Germans it was alright and proper; but now that an example is about to be set of extinguishing petty states like Coburg, her sense of right and wrong has become wonderfully keen." Foundations of British Foreign Policy, ed. by H. Temperley and L.M. Penson (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1966), pp. 279-280.

92. Bourne, Foreign Policy, p. 383.


96. QVL, 2nd series, 1, p. 311.

97. Ibid., p. 317.

98. Ibid., pp. 314-315. In a circular memo of 9 April to British representatives in the various German courts, Clarendon wrote: "[H]owever much this country may regret to see Germany a prey to civil war, yet so long as the war is
confined to Germany there is not a British interest of sufficient magnitude to render imperative the tender of British good offices." Millman, British Foreign Policy, p. 25.

100. Hansard (Lords), 3rd series, 183:573.  
104. Ibid., 184:736-737.  
106. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 184:1223-1225, 1235, 1247-1251.  
108. QVL, 2nd series, 1, p. 364.  
109. Naturally Queen Victoria was most alarmed at the possible consequences for Belgium of a Franco-Prussian war, and demanded that England not stand aloof: "England must show the world that she is not prepared to abdicate her position as a great Power." QVL, 2nd series, 1, p. 419.  
110. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 186:1255.  
111. Further Letters of Queen Victoria, pp. 163-164.  
112. Millman, British Foreign Policy, p. 78.  
113. Stanley was criticised in the House of Commons for having "discounted our future prosperity for the present tranquility of Europe. This is not statesmanship, it is a mere hand-to-mouth policy." Hansard, 3rd series, 187:1911. In his diary Stanley wrote: "It would be repugnant to the principles and feelings of Parliament and the Public to do more, and surely...we cannot be expected to forego all our

114. The Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs assured the inexperienced Stanley that the guarantee "amounted to nothing." Millman, British Foreign Policy, p. 89. In commenting on Derby's "unfortunate" interpretation of the guarantee in the House of Lords, Stanley wrote: "He represented it as nearly worthless, which it is, but a little more ambiguity at this moment would have been prudent." Journals and Memoirs of Lord Stanley, p. 312.

115. Howard, Britain and the Casus Belli, p. 73.

116. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 187:1920. Compare this to Disraeli's sardonic reply to the Prussian ambassador's claim that Prussia desired only to be left in peace: "Yes, certainly...tell Count Bismarck, that we don't wish her [Prussia] to be disturbed in her digestion." Mosse, The European Powers, p. 295.


118. It was through the British government that the French Foreign Minister initiated negotiations on disarmament with Prussia. Clarendon, however, remained sceptical of Prussia's role in such a venture: "His Majesty [King William] does not desire war...but his army is his idol, and he will not listen to any proposal for its reduction." QVL, 2nd series, ii, p. 5.

119. Mosse, The European Powers, p. 388. The Prussian Crown Princess wrote to her mother soon after the war began, claiming: "England could have and should have prevented the war - by a rebuke and a threat to the party who was the aggressor." QVL, 2nd series, ii, pp. 79-80. Morier argued that England should have officially backed Prussia in the war, as Napoleon III would "never face a coalition between England and Germany." Memoirs, ii, p. 154. And in parliament the government was taken to task on several occasions for not speaking out against the war more energetically. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 203:1299; 204:387-388. In his study of British policy, Millman, like Mosse, argues that England could not have prevented the war. British Foreign Policy, p. 198.

120. QVL, 2nd series, ii, p. 10.

121. Ibid.


124. *Hansard* (Commons), 3rd series, 203:343-347. Raymond argues that this must have been an uncomfortable session for Gladstone: "It must have been galling to sit fettered by the chains of office and hear the Disraelian thunder against the French Monarch who so wantonly disturbed the peace of Europe." *British Policy and Opinion*, p. 72.


126. Although Mosse claims that Clarendon's "almost incomprehensible negligence had thus not a little to do with the outbreak of the war," he offers no explanations for the ailing Foreign Secretary's behavior. Mosse, *The European Powers*, p. 303, n. 1.


128. Raymond, *British Policy and Opinion*, p. 107. The idealistic Dicey, of course, attributed Prussia's victory to more than just the needle-gun; he saw Prussia's homogeneity and excellent administration contributing to a genuine sense of national consciousness: "That a nation is always more powerful than an army - this, I think, is the true lesson to be learnt from the war." "The Campaign in Germany," *MacMillan's Magazine* 14 (1866): 386-394.


130. A year earlier Clarendon had also noted that "if France was aggressive, it would do more to cement Germany together than Bismarck could achieve in five years." *QVL*, 2nd series, 1, pp. 624-626.

131. The government's resignation to the fact of this long-expected war is evident in Granville's declaration of British neutrality: "I am convinced that in order to maintain the honor of this country, and in order to be of the greatest use in restoring peace - of such restoration is possible - the best course we can pursue is in words and in attitude to maintain a dignified and calm reserve." *Hansard* (Lords), 3rd series, 203:1056-1057.

132. Morier, *Memoirs*, 11, p. 158. King William complained to Queen Victoria that, "notwithstanding England's declaration of neutrality, horses, coal, and even ammunition in the shape of millions of cartridges are being shipped to France from England....This grieves me deeply." *QVL*, 2nd series, 11, pp. 50-52.

134. The Queen and Mr. Gladstone, ed. by Philip Guedalla (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), p. 277. Queen Victoria did, however, telegraph King William (with Granville's blessing), asking him "as a friend" if he could "so shape his demands so as to enable the French to accept them." QVL, 2nd series, 11, p. 71.


139. Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 204:395.

140. Although the aging "sage of Chelsea" was widely criticized for his extreme views on the consequences of France's defeat (see Raymond, British Policy and Opinion, pp. 251-252), Disraeli's comments were much more balanced: "This war represent the German revolution - a greater political event that the French Revolution of the last century....not a single principle in the management of our foreign affairs, accepted by all statesmen for guidance up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition that has not been swept away....The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers most, and feels the effects of the great change most, is England." Hansard (Commons), 3rd series, 204:70.

141. Ibid., cols. 438-439.

142. When the post was vacant in 1865 and the Foreign Office was looking for a candidate, Punch sardonically remarked, "We have hanged almost everybody fit to be sent there." Hayes, Modern British Foreign Policy, p. 49.


144. QVL, 2nd series, 1, pp. 461-466. In his private journal, Stanley remarked that the Queen's suggestion was "manifestly an intrigue against Bismarck, conducted by the Crown Princess." Journals and Memoirs of Lord Stanley, p. 316.
145. Ibid.; Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 487. Millman has interpreted Stanley's rejection of Morier as proof that Stanley was himself "more German or Prussian than Victoria." *British Foreign Policy*, p. 107.

CHAPTER 3

1. See Chapter 2 above.

2. This belief amongst the British that their political system was incomparable resulted in a "conscious superiority and self-confidence which the foreigner found excessively irritating." A.A.W. Ramsay, *Idealism and Foreign Policy* p. 6.


10. This idea that idealism characterized the British liberals' view of Germany, although first suggested by Ramsay, was later modified by Paul Kennedy, who describes British policy regarding Germany after 1864 as being shaped by conflict between idealists and realists. "Idealists and Realists: British Views of Germany, 1864-1939," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 25 (1975), 137-155.


13. John Morley, "France and Germany," *Fortnightly Review*, 8 (1870), 370. Of this tendency to assume that English-style liberal development was inevitable, Ramsay wrote: "[I]n Britain the ideal form of government was a constitutional
or limited monarchy on the strict English style, and the British habitually assumed that all foreign states with Liberal tendencies were moving in this direction." Idealism and Foreign Policy p. 22.


17. QVL 1st Series, 11, p. 328.

18. Ibid., p. 329.


20. Morier, Memoirs, 1, p. 221.

21. Following the frightening spectacle of Prussian-led armies bombarding Paris in 1871, this distinction began to be modified by many in England, and was now made between Prussia, "which was militaristic, reactionary, and unscrupulous, and Germany, which was liberal, bourgeois and cultured, if only it could rid itself of the poisonous influences of the Hohenzollern Machtstaat." Paul Kennedy, "Idealists and Realists: British Views of Germany, 1864-1939," p. 141.


26. For example A. Eubule-Evans, a liberal divine, also questioned Germany's supposed liberal development. In examining the history of "constitutional Germany" from 1815 to 1871, he concluded that, "however changed may be the present position of Germany viewed in its international relations, no proportionate advance has been made in internal development," especially in matters pertaining to constitutional change. "Constitutional Germany," Contemporary Review, 20 (1871), 839-853.


31. It was this concern with not only the ends but also the means regarding German unification which Queen Victoria was expressing when she informed Frederick William IV that "Much would depend upon the manner which this [new German] Power was represented" among the powers of Europe. *QVL*, 1st Series, II, p. 164.


41. *Ibid*.


44. *Dearest Mama*, pp. 128-129.


48. The use of organic metaphors, so common to British descriptions of their own political system, was carried
over into their treatment of Prussian politics. In discussing this issue of preparedness, British writers were fond of using the image of "soil" into which constitutional/parliamentary "roots" needed to be sunk in order to survive. Morier, whose prose was exceptionally eloquent, furnishes but one example of this, as he described the Provincial Estates of Prussia, introduced by Frederick William III, as "a parasitical plant forced artificially over the naked masonry of the official system, and tended to cluster gracefully about it, but unable to afford it support, or derive nourishment from it....During the twenty-odd years of its existence it never struck root." Memoirs 1, p. 213. See also note 96 below.

49. Morier, Memoirs, 11, 72.


51. Letters of the Prince Consort, pp. 188-189.


55. Morier, "The Reconstruction of Germany," pp. 285-286. Sybel too regarded that the relative youth of parliamentary institutions in Prussia as a handicap, as the brief period during which they had existed was "too short to afford the population of a country a practical training for parliamentary government." Sybel, "The German Empire," p. 13.


57. Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, pp. 452-453.


60. Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, p. 547.


62. Morier, Memoirs, 1, 177.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 312.
65. Ibid., p. 361.
66. Dicey, "The New Germany," p. 487. Dicey also suggests that it was just as well that such a test was never made, for even at the height of the constitutional conflict there was "never the slightest talk of any disruption of the monarchy." Dicey, "The Campaign in Germany," p. 288.
68. Milnes was a curious exception to this, as he saw in the character of the Prussian monarchy much of what the British saw in theirs. Hence he did not consider Prussian monarchism an obstacle to liberal reform in Prussia: "A constitutional King of Prussia has none of that ancestral majesty to abandon, which might have made the rulers of France, or Spain, or Austria cling fast to absolutist traditions. The proud recollections of his forefathers are all personal...and which, under constitutional forms of government, preserve to the Crown a safer and more legitimate authority than could, perhaps, be exercised in countries where the throne has been rather the object of fear than of love, of blind homage than of rational regard." Milnes, "The Political State of Prussia," pp. 231-232.
69. Sybel, distraught by the stalemate which had developed in the constitutional conflict, hoped that "it might be that we should have the good fortune, like that of the English in 1688 in the Prince of Orange, [of] a split in the leading circles themselves; for example, a declaration of the Crown Prince for the constitution." Anderson, The Social and Political Conflict in Prussia, 1858-1864, p. 237.
73. Morier, Memoirs, 1, p. 304.
75. Otto Pflanze describes this transition from an army conflict to a constitutional conflict as taking place in


77. Wrote one observer: "In considering the behavior of the King, one cannot help being struck with the similarity, which may be traced, between James Stuart and Charles, and the late and present Kings of Prussia." [Anonymous], "The Prussia Crisis," p. 416.


80. Masson, "The Prussian Contest," p. 76. Among such "wrongs" was the "systematic and long-continued repressions of many of the various liberties and just desires of an intelligent and well-educated nation."


87. Morier, Memoirs, 1, 181.

88. Ibid., p. 215.

89. Milnes, "The Political State," p. 231. Milnes held that, because of the need to entrust "large and distinct powers" to local interests, the American example might prove most applicable to Prussia.

90. [Anonymous], "Austria and Prussia," pp. 272-274.

91. Morier is certainly the best example of such enlightened observers of Germany. For example, in commenting on the difficulties which the Grand Duke of Baden encountered in expressing himself on political issues, Morier remarked that anyone in Germany who becomes "possessed of liberal ideas" does so by such "perfectly different avenues and such perfectly different trains of thought from those which are used by us, whose lungs have been filled with free air
ever since we could breathe at all, that it is often very
difficult to trace the process by which the common goal has
been attained." Memoirs, 1, p. 243.

92. Reinhold Pauli, "Prussia and Germany," Fraser's Magazine,
83 (1871), 216-217.

93. K. Hildebrand, "Prospects of Liberalism in Germany,"
Fortnightly Review, 10 (1871), 389-390, 398-399.

94. Ibid., pp. 391, 413-418.

95. Hildebrand felt that it was through this development of
indigenous ideas that emerged the constitutional law of the
Western hemisphere's three "most durable" states - Rome,
Venice and England: "Their institutions were not the work
of conscious reflection or of a forcible act of the will;
their origin was natural and their development the result
of the changes which successive events gradually brought
about in facts and interests, rather than in the
realisation of abstract ideas and preconceived theories." 
Ibid., p. 414.

96. Morier, Memoirs, 1, p. 181.


98. See note 25 above.

99. Similar to Burke's objections were those of Onno Klopp, the
Hanoverian conservative who railed against the "vulgar
liberalism" of the Gotha party in Germany: "They look to
England as the model to be imitated; and herein lies the
great political and historical error of the party, which
resembles that of the French liberals in 1790....The Gotha
party imagine that the self-governing bodies can be
replaced by elections according to majorities, or some new
scheme of government unknown to the traditions, and not
founded upon the materials, which the country has

100. Milnes whole analysis of the 1848 revolutions hinged upon
this very issue, which he expounded in the following
manner: "Men have been so accustomed to speaking of nations
being prepared for liberal institutions before they obtain
them, of something which was to be the instruction and the
discipline, of the political catechumen, of some moral and
intellectual foundation to be laid, upon which the
political edifice was to rise in proportionate and orderly
beauty, that it is well that so clear an example has been
exhibited of the competency of any but political culture to
adapt mankind to the duties and capacities of political
life. The old analogy of learning to swim without going
into the water remains accurately correct....Neither man
nor action can be taught self control and the conditions by which the result is obtained are as complicated and as mysterious, in the national, as in the individual mind."  "Reflections on Germany," p. 538.

104. Ibid.
107. [Anonymous], "The Political Reconstruction of Germany," p. 334. Only a few realists, like Lord Salisbury, were prepared to accept that, in Prussia at least, it was most opportune that a minister did "not depend for his official existence upon the nightly caprices of a popular assembly." Cecil, "Political Lessons of the War," pp. 276-277. Conscious of the fact that the British regarded the absence of such a law as a political vice, Prussian liberals justified this situation on the grounds that it had "grown up historically," that it expressed the "actual situation," and that it corresponded "on the whole with public opinion"; in short, that it was based on the post mortem experiences of Prussia herself. Pauli, "Prussia and Germany," p. 217. Sybel justified the absence of parliamentary government in the new German Reich on the following grounds: "Parliamentary government means the government of the majority, for the time being, of the Representatives of the People. It is essential, therefore, to its existence that there should be a homogenous majority in the parliament, and that it should be able to form a ministry from its own members. Now both these requirements have hitherto been wanting in Germany, and I see no prospect, at present, of the want being speedily supplied." "The German Empire," p. 12.


Conclusions

1. Ramsay, Idealism and Foreign Policy, pp. 218-219.
2. Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, p. 15.


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