

remained closeted with the Baroness for several hours. She abjured him to repent his sins and to prove himself worthy of his mission. They prayed in ecstasy together and he wept.

On his arrival in the French capital the Tsar installed himself in the palace of the Elysée. Baroness von Krüdener and her attendants occupied the Hotel Monchenu next door. A hole was knocked in the wall separating the two gardens and night after night the Tsar would attend prayer meetings in the Baroness's house. By the beginning of September, ten weeks after Waterloo, the Russian armies reached French territory. On September 10, 1815, the Emperor staged a tremendous review upon the plain of Verjus to which he invited the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia and all the allied generals. Eight altars had been erected upon the plateau with the whole Russian army dispersed around them. Baroness von Krüdener, arrayed quite simply in a blue serge dress and a straw hat, acted as high priestess on this occasion. 'It was', writes Sainte Beuve, 'as the Ambassador of Heaven that he received her and conducted her into the presence of his armies.' Waving her arms in wide gestures of prophecy and dedication the Baroness passed from altar to altar accompanied by her acolytes and her Emperor. The foreign monarchs and generals watched this spectacle with disquiet. 'This day', wrote the Tsar to the prophetess on his return, 'has been the most beautiful in my life. My heart was filled with love for my enemies.'

## (3)

The ceremony upon the plateau of Verjus marked the climax of Baroness von Krüdener's ascendancy. It may be that she over-played her part; it may be that Alexander became bored by her ecstatic vocabulary as by her constant prophecies that Napoleon, this time, was on the verge of escaping from St. Helena. It may be that he was annoyed by her demands for money. He fled from the Elysée as soon as he was able and took refuge in Brussels. 'Here I am,' he wrote to his sister on October 1, 'away from that accursed

Paris.' In vain did the Baroness seek to renew their spiritual relationship; the Tsar had come to regard her exhortations with distaste not unmingled with alarm; he refused her permission to come to St. Petersburg; and after a few more years of penurious wandering she returned to Latvia where she died.

Baroness von Krüdener always claimed, and Gentz believed, that she was the authoress of the Holy Alliance. It may well be that she invented the title even as she stimulated the mood in which it was conceived. It may well be that her surprising, but carefully planned, irruption into the Tsar's tavern at Heilbronn on the night of June 4 confirmed him in the idea that, having ceased to be the military or political arbiter of Europe, he could become the moral leader of evangelical opinion. The fact remains that the general conception of the Holy Alliance had for long been germinating in the Tsar's mind. As early as 1804 he had suggested to Pitt some pact under which all States should renounce war as an instrument of policy. As late as 1812 he had confided to Countess von Tisenhaus at Vilna his idea of a spiritual compact under which the sovereigns of Europe would agree 'to live like brothers, aiding each other in their need, and comforting each other in their adversity'. He had recently been reading a book by François Baader which advocated that the only cure for the evils of the French Revolution was a close identity between politics and religion; and he had been much impressed by Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*. Some such League, some such affirmation of Christian principles, had moreover been already suggested in other quarters. There had been the Abbé de St. Pierre's *Projet de Paix perpétuelle*; there had been the pamphlet published by Augustin Thierry in 1814; even Napoleon assured Las Cases at St. Helena that he had himself conceived of some such universal compact. It had been contemplated also that a declaration of Christian principle should figure in the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna and Castlereagh himself had tried his hand at drafting some preparatory clauses before

the escape of Napoleon had diverted his attention to more mundane affairs. The particular shape which was eventually given to these current theories was, however, due entirely to the Tsar's own mood at the time. To him must be attributed the tone of mystic pietism in which the document was drafted; to him above all must be attributed the fatal error of concluding the Holy Alliance in the name of the Sovereigns personally, and not in the name of their governments or peoples.

The document that Alexander drafted, and which caused such havoc to the Quadruple Alliance and the whole Conference system, does not strike us today as either more or less meaningless than the Kellogg Pact of 1928. It established that henceforward the relations between Sovereigns should be based 'upon the sublime truths which the Holy Religion of Our Saviour teaches'. It affirmed that 'the precepts of justice, Christian Charity and Peace . . . must have an immediate influence on the Councils of Princes and guide all their steps'. It announced that the three monarchs would remain united 'by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity' and would regard themselves 'as fathers of families towards their subjects and armies'. Governments and peoples must from now on behave as 'members of one and the same Christian nation'. All those Powers who should 'choose solemnly to avow the sacred principles which have dictated this Act' were invited to join the Holy Alliance. Most of them did so. The Pope and the Sultan felt unable, none the less, to accede to a pact subscribed to by so many sectarians and infidels. The Prince Regent refused to sign on the ground that under the British Constitution any signature of his would be invalid unless accompanied by that of a responsible Minister. He none the less addressed a letter to the Tsar assuring him of his 'entire concurrence with the principles laid down by the august sovereigns', and promising that it would always be his endeavour to conform his policy 'to their sacred maxims'.

The Holy Alliance was not at first taken very seriously by

any of those who adhered to it, nor did the Ministers concerned seem to have foreseen at the time the influence which it would exercise either upon policy or upon public opinion. Castlereagh deemed it 'a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense'. He confessed that when the Tsar first produced the draft to the Duke of Wellington and himself 'it was not without difficulty that we went through the interview with becoming gravity'. If he was worried at all, he was worried by the constitutional problem which the adhesion of the Prince Regent to a monarchical trades union was bound to raise. 'This', he wrote, 'is what might be called a scrape.' Even Metternich appears at first not to have realised how valuable an instrument the Holy Alliance would prove for the purposes of his own policies. He called it a 'loud sounding nothing'.

Progressive opinion throughout Europe was from the outset alive to the potential dangers of the Holy Alliance. The fact that it had been concluded between Russia, Austria and Prussia, and only adhered to by the other Powers, suggested that in some manner it represented an attempt on the part of the Three to dominate the Continent. The fact, above all, that it had been concluded as a personal pact between the sovereigns and princes created extreme prejudice and alarm. For against what or whom could these potentates be allying themselves unless it were against the liberal movement and the spirit of the age? It may well be true that Alexander did not at first intend that his Alliance should become a formula of repression; it only became so when Metternich, playing adroitly upon the Tsar's increasing repudiation of his former liberal sentiments, used it as an organ of reaction. And as such it rapidly cast a blight upon the Quadruple Alliance and brought the whole Conference system on which Castlereagh had staked so much, into universal suspicion and disrepute.

It is interesting to note how quickly the Holy Alliance led to a divergence of theory between Russia and Great Britain. In April 1816 the Tsar was already writing to Prin-

cess Lieven to defend his Alliance against the imputations cast upon it by liberal opinion or as he phrased it, 'by the genius of evil'. It signified no more, he explained, than an attempt to 'confirm the contracting Sovereigns in the principles of political and social conservation'. Not even the Whigs could have given it a more damning definition.

## (4)

In spite of these misfortunes and disillusiones Castlereagh maintained his conviction that at any cost the unity between Russia, Austria and Great Britain must be preserved. Metternich sought, by exploiting the distrust of Russia which was now affecting official and even popular feeling in England, to revert to his old idea of an anti-Russian front between Austria, Great Britain and France. Talleyrand himself had been alarmed by Russian ambitions. 'When,' he wrote to Jaucourt, 'unfortunately for Europe, Russia meddles in this way in every concern and takes a tone of authority and seems inclined to dictate to everyone else, it is deplorable and scandalous that no single Power except France should dare to object, not even England who contents herself with vague grumbles.' This disquiet increased as the years went by. The day was to come when even Creevey, who had once shared the confidence of his Whig friends in the Tsar's progressiveness and magnanimity, could write: 'We long-sighted old politicians see a fixed intention on the part of Russia to make Constantinople the seat of her power and to re-establish the Greek church upon the ruins of Mohametanism. A new crusade, in short, by a new and enormous Power, and brought into the field by our own selves, and one that may put our existence at stake to drive out again.'

Rumours of Russian intrigues and intentions poured into the Foreign Office from every quarter. The Tsar's agents at Naples were, it appeared, encouraging the Carbonari to look for Russian support. Through his family connections with Würtemberg and Baden Alexander was seeking to oust both

Austrian and Prussian influence from the Germanic confederation. The Russian Ambassador in Turkey issued a sort of Monroe doctrine on his own, intimating that Russia would not permit the interference of other Powers in her relations with the Porte. Even more disquieting news was received from Spain. A marriage contract was, it appeared, being negotiated between the Spanish and Russian Courts. Russia, in return for the cession of Minorca, had agreed to deliver some of her fleet to the King of Spain and to assist him in suppressing the revolt of the Spanish colonies in South America. Rumours reached England of a projected Russian landing at Buenos Aires. And in fact a few old and most unseaworthy vessels were actually transferred from the Russian to the Spanish flag.

The Duke of Wellington was not unduly disturbed by such rumours. 'What the Russians are looking to everywhere,' he wrote to Sir Henry Wellesley in March 1815, 'is general power and influence. But as they have neither wealth nor commerce, not anything that is desirable to anybody except 400,000 men (about which they make more noise than they deserve) they can acquire these objects in a distant Court like Spain only by bustle and intrigue.'

Castlereagh himself was more than imperturbable; he sought to allay the perturbation of others. 'The true interests of Russia,' he wrote to our Ambassador in Vienna, 'dictate a pacific policy.' He described the anti-Russian agitation, which he admitted 'must exist in all Governments against a State as powerful as Russia has latterly become', as a mere '*cri de bureau*' or as we might say a Foreign Office ramp. This attitude of distrust on the part of the professionals might, unless sternly suppressed by Ministers, create the very dangers which all wished to avoid. He urged our agents in foreign countries to avoid suspicion and not to credit rumours. 'It will be the province of Ministers abroad,' he wrote to our representative in Madrid, 'to inculcate in all quarters the importance of union, to (*vis*) the preservation of peace for which the Powers have for so long and so glor-

iously contended, and to keep down as far as possible the spirit of local intrigue which has proved no less fatal to the repose of States than the personal ambitions of their Sovereigns.' 'My wish', he wrote on January 1, 1816, to our Minister in Naples, 'is that while you watch with all due attention whatever the Russian agents be about, that you do not suffer yourself to be drawn, either by the Court of Naples or yet by the Court of Vienna into a premature attitude of suspicion, much less of hostility, of the Russian agents in Italy. It is of the utmost importance to keep down, as far and as long as possible, these local cabals which may shake the main Alliance—still indispensable to the safety of Europe. . . . We cannot be too susceptible in our minor relations to the hazards of the great machine of European safety.' In a circular addressed to all missions abroad he again warned British diplomatists 'to discourage that spirit of petty intrigue and perpetual propagation of alarm, upon slight evidence and ancient jealousies, which too frequently disgrace the diplomatic profession, and often render the residence of foreign Ministers the means of disturbing, rather than preserving, harmony between their respective Sovereigns.'

Castlereagh preserved this attitude with admirable consistency during the years that remained to him. When in March 1817 Metternich through Esterhazy renewed his suggestion that Great Britain should collaborate with Austria in curtailing Russia's ambitions in Spain and the Near East, Castlereagh returned a definite refusal. He informed Esterhazy that he disliked 'measures of precautionary policy upon speculative grounds'. He did not consider that Metternich's insinuations regarding Russian policy were justified 'either in degree or in proximity'. If trouble came, then they must induce France and Prussia to join them in opposing a common barrier against further Russian encroachments. But he would only agree to such a policy in face of 'a real and obvious danger'. Such a danger did not, in his opinion, then exist.

It is evident that during this period Castlereagh was in agreement with Wellington in thinking that the Russian menace was partly an invention of Metternich's, partly a bogey raised by the professional diplomatist, and partly a gigantic bluff on the part of Russia herself. He was wisely convinced that if only Great Britain could avoid a head-on collision with Russia during the coming few years, Russia would herself be obliged from motives of internal economy eventually to curtail her excited ambitions and reduce her vast military establishments. He had been obliged to defend the Holy Alliance in the House of Commons and he did so in such sympathetic language that the Tsar was touched. In a further impulse of conciliation Alexander thereupon suggested to Castlereagh 'a simultaneous reduction of armaments of all kinds'. Metternich, as was to be expected, described this suggestion as a further proof of the Tsar's duplicity. And Alexander himself admitted to Lord Cathcart that he would in practice only consider reducing the armaments of Russia provided that Austria and Prussia first restricted their own military establishments. Nor was the proposal taken seriously by any of the other European chancelleries, since the Tsar continued on all occasions to boast that he could place a million men in the field, and since his new and reactionary Minister, Araksheiev, was at that moment organising with unexampled brutality the system of military colonies in West Russia. Yet Castlereagh, while he rejected the proposal, had at least the courtesy to send a considered reply. 'It is impossible', he wrote on May 28, 1816, 'not to perceive that the settlement of a scale of force for so many Powers,—under such different circumstances as to their relative means, frontiers, positions and faculties for re-arming,—presents a very complicated question for negotiation: that the means of preserving a system if once created are not without their difficulties, liable as States are to partial necessities for an increase of force: and it is further to be considered that on this, as on many subjects of a jealous character, in attempting to do much, difficulties are

rather brought into view than made to disappear.' His suggestion was, therefore, that each State should reduce its own armaments to the minimum which each might consider necessary; and that each State should then 'explain to Allied and neighbouring States the extent and nature of its arrangements as a means of dispelling alarm and of rendering moderate establishments mutually convenient.'

Already, during the months which intervened between Waterloo and the Second Peace of Paris, the diplomatic kaleidoscope had shifted once again and disclosed a new pattern of combination. 'The relations between the Powers,' wrote Gentz on September 4, 1815, 'have changed since Vienna. The friendship between Russia and Prussia has chilled considerably; Prussia today stands much closer to us and England becomes more and more estranged from each of us. Conversely, Russia, France and England stand for the moment upon the same side. It is in this manner that the foolish minds of men veer now to one side now to another, upon the shifting sands of modern politics how difficult it is to build on solid foundations!'

The Quadruple Alliance which Castlereagh had created at Chaumont, preserved during the Vienna Congress and reconstructed in Paris, thus seemed already in danger of disintegration. His just equilibrium was already threatened by the shifting of great weights. The Holy Alliance had exposed his whole system to ridicule, which was rapidly merging into apprehension and dislike. Distrust of Russia's overt and covert ambitions was creating an ever-widening breach between East and West. The Conference system remained for him the only hope of maintaining the Concert of Europe. He sought to preserve that system with all the great energies of his heart and soul and mind.

He did not succeed.

## XVI

## THE FAILURE OF THE CONFERENCE SYSTEM

[1818-1822]

Castlereagh's conception of the Concert of Europe as 'the great machine of European safety'—The fallacies of this conception—He underrated the inevitability of change even as he underestimated the force and nature of British public opinion—The original purpose of the Coalition having disappeared the four Powers began to interpret the Quadruple Alliance in different ways—A gap widened therefore between Great Britain and the Eastern Powers—Castlereagh persisted in believing that the gap could be narrowed by repeated personal conferences—The Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle—The Tsar's suggestion of an 'Alliance Solidaire' obliges Castlereagh to define the extent to which Great Britain considers herself bound by existing treaties—This definition makes it clear that our future collaboration with the Alliance will be conditioned and limited—The spread of unrest—The assassination of Kotzebue—The Carlsbad decrees—The position of the British Government weakened by the controversy regarding Queen Caroline—Revolutions in Spain, Portugal, Piedmont and Naples—The 'Troppau Conference'—Great Britain publicly refuses the Russian claim to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries—The Greek revolt introduces the Eastern Question—The Death of Castlereagh—The advent of Canning—The disruption of the Holy Alliance—The end of the Quadruple Alliance—The calm sunset of Metternich.

## (1)

IN gazing back across the gulf of time we are able to form a juster estimate of the merits and defects of Castlereagh's policy than was ever vouchsafed to his contemporaries. On the one hand we possess, as they did not, documentary evidence to prove his constancy of aim and purity of character. On the other hand we know which of the many tendencies of his age became the dominant tendencies; and we conclude, too readily perhaps, that he was obtuse in regarding the spread of liberalism and the rise of nationalities as distressing but momentary symptoms of the reflux of the revolutionary epoch; and in not recognising in them the twin streams of a mighty tide which was to flow for more than a hundred years.

To him the unity of the Three Great Allies was something

several committees into a single document of one hundred and twenty-one articles. The physical labour of making the number of copies required proved exacting; it was calculated that it took the time of twenty-six secretaries to make a single copy even if they worked all day. By the beginning of June, however, copies of the treaty had been prepared for signature by the plenipotentiaries of the Eight Great Powers. Don Pedro Labrador, who remained true to form throughout the Congress, refused to sign the treaty unless he were allowed to attach to it reservations regarding the rights of the Spanish Bourbons to the several Italian principalities. It was wisely decided that the treaty could not carry any reservations and that if Spain objected, then Spain must be left out. The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna was therefore signed on June 9, 1815, by the representatives of the Seven Powers alone. The smaller Powers were invited to adhere separately; and eventually they all did so, with the exception of Turkey and the Holy See.

The conclusion of this tremendous treaty attracted but slight attention. Castlereagh himself predicted that it would maintain the peace of Europe for at least seven years. As a matter of fact all the main provisions of the Vienna Final Act remained unaltered for a space of forty years; and the settlement arrived at preserved Europe from any general conflagration for all but a century.

Castlereagh had always retained at the back of his mind the recommendation which Pitt had made in 1804 that the new European order should be stabilised and perpetuated by some general Treaty of Guarantee. Pitt's idea had been that the rights and possessions acquired by the several Powers should be 'fixed and recognised' and that the signatories to the guarantee treaty should 'bind themselves mutually to protect and support each other against any attempt to infringe these rights and possessions'. Metternich, who was becoming increasingly alarmed by the intrusion of Russia into Europe, sought with Talleyrand's assistance to persuade Castlereagh that it would be prefer-

## XV

## THE HOLY ALLIANCE

[September 26, 1815]

The Drafting of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna—Its signature on June 9, 1815—Castlereagh raises the question of a Treaty of Guarantee—His motives in so doing—He attempts to induce Russia to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire—This endeavour fails owing to Russian designs against Turkey—The Nesselrode memorandum—Opposition in London to any Treaty of Guarantee—Castlereagh drops the idea and falls back upon the Quadruple Alliance—The effectiveness and acceptability of this diminished by Alexander's conception of the Holy Alliance—Origin of the Tsar's conception—Baroness von Krüdener—The Heilbronn interview—The review upon the plateau of Verus—The Tsar's draft of the Holy Alliance—Its reception by Castlereagh and Metternich—Immediate reaction against it of progressive opinion in Europe—Its conclusion marks the beginning of a rift between Great Britain and Russia—Metternich seeks to create suspicion between Castlereagh and Alexander—Castlereagh's general attitude towards the Russian menace—The suggestion of a disarmament treaty—Its failure—Castlereagh sees in the Conference system the only hope of maintaining the Concert of Europe.

## (1)

The escape of Napoleon from Elba, the drama of the hundred days, the battles in Brabant, and the concentration of diplomatic activity upon the negotiation of the Second Peace of Paris and the Quadruple Alliance of November 20, 1815, all combined to divert attention from the Congress of Vienna. Yet the Congress had continued. The two Emperors, King Frederick William III, Metternich and Talleyrand, remained on after Wellington's departure until the end of May. It had been Alexander's wish that no general treaty should be concluded but that the several Powers should make separate treaties as between themselves embodying the regional settlements which had been arrived at. Lord Clancarty, under instructions from the British Government, insisted however that the results of the Congress should be embodied in some comprehensive form. He was supported by Metternich and the Tsar gave way. The task of drafting the main treaty was entrusted to Gentz who was able to incorporate the conclusions reached by the

able to renew the secret treaty of January 3, 1815, under which France, Great Britain and Austria had pledged themselves to resist Russian expansion. Castlereagh was opposed to this suggestion, fearing that it would divide Europe into two potentially hostile camps. He suggested to the Emperor Alexander that the seven Powers who had signed the Final Act should declare their determination to uphold the general settlement arrived at by the Congress and should publicly announce 'their determination to unite their influence, and if necessary their arms, against the Power that should attempt to disturb it'. A draft treaty to this effect was prepared by Gentz. Castlereagh remained for some time under the impression that this draft had been accepted by Alexander and the Ministers of the other Powers. This expectation was optimistic. For it was at this stage that a fissure appeared in the fabric of the United Nations which as the months passed widened rapidly into a gulf.

Castlereagh's undeviating objective was the preservation of Peace. He conceived the maintenance of peace in terms of European stability and he interpreted that stability as a system under which each of the Five Great Powers, having obtained from the war all reasonable satisfactions and rewards, being almost exactly balanced against each other in military strength, should form a Security Council to safeguard the stability which had been so painfully achieved. The balance of power was thus only one element in his theory; treaties such as those of Chaumont, the Quadruple Alliance of November 20, 1815, and even the Vienna Final Act, were valuable expedients devised to deal with a temporary situation; what he really desired was to create some permanent institutional device which would enable the United Nations to co-operate indefinitely in preventing the threat of war wherever it might arise.

He was unable to realise this far-seeing project owing to three main factors of which at the time he was strangely unaware. He failed to foresee that the Russian tide, having been stemmed in one area of the Continent, might seek for

outlets in other directions. He failed to foresee that his Security Council would deteriorate into a Pact of Sovereigns intent, not so much upon the prevention of war, as upon the repression of all democratic and nationalist movements. And he failed to foresee that the British people, who only become conscious of foreign policy when in imminent danger from external aggression, would relapse into a mood of isolationism hostile to any foreign or long-term commitments.

He was aware of course that if his Treaty of Guarantee were to apply solely to the general settlement embodied in the Final Act of the Vienna Congress it would not cover the Near East. He was aware that Russia, now that she was the dominant military Power in Europe, would wish to modify to her own advantage the Treaty of Bucharest (1) which, with British assistance, she had hurriedly concluded with Turkey, under the threat of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. What he did not foresee was the extent to which Russia, having been balked in Poland, would desire compensations and rewards in the Near and Middle East. It was with some naiveté therefore that he suggested to the Tsar that a clause should be inserted in the Treaty of Guarantee including the Ottoman dominions within its scope. Alexander replied that the difficulties between Russia and Turkey, which had been left unsettled by the hasty Treaty of Bucharest, must first be re-examined; he indicated that he would be willing to accept the good offices of Great Britain, Austria and France in reaching an accommodation with the Turkish Government. The three Ambassadors at Constantinople were instructed accordingly and an hour before he departed from Vienna Castlereagh had a conversation with Mavrojani, the Sultan's representative, in which he urged him to persuade his master to accept such mediation.

Alexander, having disappointed the hopes both of his Russian and his Polish subjects, had begun meanwhile to dream of finding in the Balkans and the Levant the rewards which had been denied him in central Europe. It was ob-



served that Capo d'Istria, who looked to the Tsar as the liberator of all orthodox Christians, was becoming increasingly influential and that the counsels of Czartoryski and Stein were on the wane. A memorandum was drafted by the obedient Nesselrode from which it became startlingly clear that what Russia wanted from Turkey was something far more than a rectification of the frontiers established by the Treaty of Bucharest. The territory now demanded would firmly have established Russian strategic dominance over the Black Sea and the Caspian. Even more disturbing was Nesselrode's claim that to Russia should be accorded the right of 'protecting' all the Christian subjects of the Sultan of Turkey. If such claims were admitted, then Russia would not only obtain bases from which to threaten Constantinople and the Straits, but she would acquire on religious, and even racial, grounds, a vast and indefinable zone of influence in the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Levant which would provide her with inexhaustible excuses for future intervention. The Sultan, as was to be expected, refused to accept mediation on such terms. And the idea was therefore abandoned of including the Ottoman Empire within any Treaty which might guarantee the general settlement arrived at in Vienna.

On his return to London Castlereagh found that his colleagues in the Cabinet were by no means enamoured of his suggested guarantee treaty. They pointed out that any such agreement would have the effect of committing Great Britain to go to war in defence of Russia's European acquisitions without in any way curtailing Russia's expansion in the Near and Middle East. The British people, moreover, now that the Napoleonic menace had been removed, were becoming increasingly suspicious of continental entanglements. Thus when the inevitable leakage occurred and Gentz's draft of the Treaty of Guarantee was published in the London newspapers, Castlereagh was obliged to state in the House of Commons that this draft was not to be regarded as an official document.

Having in this way abandoned, and thereafter repudiated, his original conception of a general guarantee, Castlereagh decided that the only way in which the Concert of Europe could be maintained would be to stipulate for periodic conferences between the great Powers. It was with this in mind that he secured the insertion into the Quadruple Alliance of November 20, 1815, of Article VI which provided for regular meetings between the Allies. He believed sincerely that this device would transform the methods of the old diplomacy and create a new and useful system of intercourse between sovereign States. He did not explain to his colleagues in the cabinet the intention underlying this Article; he kept his plan to himself. But whatever prospect (and it was small indeed) that Castlereagh may have had of inducing the British public to accept and thereafter to support the Conference system was prejudiced, and eventually destroyed, by the mood of spiritual exaltation which at this stage took possession of Alexander's mind and produced the Holy Alliance.

## (2)

Barbe Julie von Wietgenhof was born at Riga in the year 1764. While still a girl she married Baron von Krüdener, Russian minister in Venice, Copenhagen and Berlin. Being an assiduous woman she neglected her domestic and diplomatic duties and concentrated upon emulating the example of Madame de Sael. The amatory adventures in which she indulged, whether in her Latvian homeland or in the smaller watering places of the continent, were recorded in her autobiographical novel *Vallée*, which caused a slight and momentary stir. The passage of years, coupled with her failure to establish her reputation as a European woman of letters, induced a mood of repentance; her final conversion was affected when, gazing one morning from the parlour window of her house in Riga, she observed one of her admirers raise his hat to her and thereafter fall dead in the street. Shocked by this episode, she experienced a change of



heart. She embraced the pietist movement with uncritical fervour, she fell under the influence of the impostor Fontaine and his medium Maria Kummrin. She became an Evangelist. 'Everything', she confessed, 'requires a certain amount of charlatanism.'

Her mystic faith in Russia and in the Emperor Alexander was, however, perfectly sincere. For her the Russian people were 'the sacred race'; they were 'dear in the sight of the Almighty'; they were 'a simple folk, who had not drunk the cup of iniquity'. More specifically she was obsessed by the preordained mission of the Emperor Alexander. He was 'the elect of God'; he 'had walked in the paths of renunciation'; he was the 'Conqueror of the Dragon'; he was 'a living preface to the sacred history which is to regenerate the world'. For years Baroness von Krüdener had been addressing evangelical letters to Mdlle Stourdza, lady in waiting to the Empress of Russia. These letters predicted the day when Alexander, 'regenerated in the stream of life' would 'partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb'; they also predicted that Napoleon would before long escape from Elba. Mdlle Stourdza showed these letters to the Tsar; he was flattered, comforted, impressed. But he refused for the time being to see the Baroness.

During those spring months of 1815 Alexander had much need of spiritual comfort. He was no longer young; he was becoming stout, he was becoming bald, he was becoming increasingly deaf; even his eyesight was failing him and he would conceal in the sleeve of his uniform a monocle with a tortoiseshell handle which from time to time he would raise to his left eye. He was no longer the liberator of Europe, the idol of the multitude, the Agamemnon of Kings. His people were disappointed, his army disaffected, his generals sullen, his ministers disloyal, his allies suspicious. And now that Napoleon had escaped from Elba the final decision would pass into other hands; into the hands of Wellington, who had had the audacity to oppose the suggestion that he, the Tsar, should be appointed Allied

Commander in Chief; into the hands of Blücher, that 'drunken corporal', whom only a year ago he had patronised and disliked.

It was Alexander's habit, when confronted by obstacles or disappointments, to appeal to some higher, or at least to some other, authority. When Metternich flouted him, he would have recourse to Francis I; if Hardenberg proved obstinate, he would exercise pressure on Frederick William III; when opposed by Castlereagh, he would appeal to the Prince Regent and the Whigs. And now that the enjoyments and the glories of this natural world had turned to dust and ashes, he sought with pathetic evasiveness to invoke the assistance of the supernatural.

He had always been addicted to moods of mysticism; these moods had increased when Napoleon reached the Kremlin; they had been stilled during his two years of triumph; they had returned to him after the disappointments of the Vienna Congress. Leaving the Austrian capital on May 25, he had travelled via Munich to join the Emperor Francis and the vanguard of the eastern armies at Heidelberg. On the night of June 4 he reached Heilbronn in a mood of deep dejection. At any hour he expected to hear that Wellington and Blücher had engaged, and possibly defeated, Napoleon; and this at a moment when the Russian armies had not yet crossed the Rhine. He had contracted the habit of seeking guidance or divination in the New Testament; he had been reading the Book of Revelations. 'And there appeared', he read, 'a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun.' His mind veered round to the letters which Mdlle Stourdza had shown him from that unknown Baroness von Krüdener who believed with such prophetic ecstasy that he, the Tsar, who seemed so out of things, was in fact the predestined instrument of divine intention. And it was at that moment, at midnight on June 4 in the inn at Heilbronn, that his aide-de-camp informed him that a woman had arrived and demanded instant audience. This was no coincidence; it was a sign, a portent; he re-