

TALLEYRAND and the BRITISH

PAPER DELIVERED BY ROBIN HARRIS TO «LES AMIS DE TALLEYRAND» :
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It is a great pleasure to meet Les Amis de Talleyrand. Vitrolles reproached the Prince, during his lifetime, for having no true friends. That was not so then. And it is manifestly not so now.

One feels that Prince Talleyrand would have appreciated this occasion. He was certainly made to feel at home in this Club. Indeed, he always enjoyed London – he would doubtless have agreed with Dr. Johnson that “he who is bored of London is bored of life”, and Talleyrand, despite moments of depression, was never that. The Prince probably had almost as many English friends as French ones. And, of course, always and everywhere, he liked to be the centre of attention. So, yes he would have wished us well.

Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand’s British biographers have also by and large been sympathetic, and rather more so than the French. Henry Lytton Bulwer, writing towards the end of the nineteenth century, doubted “whether [Talleyrand’s] character has ever been fairly given, or is this moment justly appreciated” - and he set out to rectify matters. Duff Cooper’s classic study of 1932, now translated into French, is also very favourable, the author considering that his subject was “a true patriot and a wise statesman”.[1] My own recent biography of Talleyrand has been deemed to be excessively indulgent by one reviewer, the British historian, Andrew Roberts, who thinks that Talleyrand was “one of the most revolting human beings to have besmirched the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries”.[2] Happily, Mr. Roberts is a good deal pleasanter about the book and its author.

It was, of course, more difficult for French biographers to distance themselves from the ideological tumults through which the Prince lived. Some, like Chateaubriand, saw no need to do so – though in that case history’s loss is literature’s glorious gain. Even Lacour-Gayet’s magnificent work is, to English eyes at least, somewhat deformed by his highly critical assessment of the Prince’s European diplomacy, in the light of subsequent disasters, particularly that of the Franco-Prussian War. By contrast, Emmanuel de Waresquiel’s most recent fine biography manages to achieve a truly Anglo-Saxon distance from old quarrels, while shedding a galaxy of new lights on the Prince’s career. All subsequent biographers, including myself, are and will be in his debt.

British views of Talleyrand have been, on balance, more favourable, partly because they could be more objective. But one must not overlook another factor – namely that the British society in which Talleyrand moved at different stages of his career largely shared the values which made him what he was. One of the important insights offered by Waresquiel is the degree to which Talleyrand’s character, outlook and values were formed in the pre-Revolutionary era. As a man of the late eighteenth century – of the period he famously extolled as representing the high point of *douceur* (or perhaps *plaisir*) de vivre – he was well understood and appreciated by an English society which embodied a unique degree of European continuity.

In what follows, I want to consider, first what the British thought of him, and then what he thought of them. Finally, I shall add some reflections upon what constituted the human chemistry between the two.

It was certainly not all plain sailing throughout, and not at all when the still youthful Charles-Maurice arrived as an unofficial envoy of the Revolution in 1792, first on his own and later as the mentor of Chauvelin. George III ignored him. The Queen turned her back on him. Pitt, who had in 1783 stayed in his apartment while learning French, now cold-shouldered him. Such attitudes were mirrored more widely. There is a striking description by Dumont de Genève of how the disapproving British crowd parted in front of Talleyrand, Chauvelin and their colleagues when they visited Ranelagh pleasure gardens. Dumont noted of the experience: “que M. de Talleyrand n’était en aucune manière affecté ou déconcerté, et que M. Chauvelin l’était beaucoup”.[3] Admittedly, during these *travaux* Charles-Maurice found a good deal warmer reception from Whig Opposition politicians, like the Marquess of Lansdowne, and even received well-meant advice about how to counter malicious slanders. But the better his contacts with liberal opinion, the greater the suspicion aroused in Tory and Government circles. And, of course, events in Paris – the growing disorder, the fall of the monarchy, the execution of the King, the onset of war – would leave British liberal Francophiles an increasingly embattled minority.

By then, Talleyrand, himself, had fled in the wake of the September massacres to find safe haven in London. He and the second wave of French emigrés, the Constitutionalists, knew that while in Britain they had to be careful. Such caution was reinforced by their lack of money. Talleyrand chose to spend time at Juniper Hall and at Lord Lansdowne's Bowood House, not just for the bucolic pleasures, or even for the company of Adélaïde de Flahaut or Germaine de Staël, but because country life was a great deal cheaper than life in the capital. (A fact which you may yourselves be able to confirm!)

Talleyrand was already demonstrating his remarkable ability to charm the English, not least English ladies like Fanny Burney, who started out mistrusting him greatly but was soon won over. As she put it in a letter to her friend, Mrs. Lock: "It is inconceivable what a convert M. de Talleyrand has made of me; I think of him now as one of the first members, and one of the most charming, of this exquisite set...His powers of entertainment are astonishing, both in information and in raillery".[4]

It was with the authorities that his difficulties lay. Talleyrand was for months expecting that he would have to leave Britain, but when the terse instructions finally came he was no less shocked and angry. Despite (unanswered) appeals to Pitt and Windham, he was duly expelled under the Alien Act and finally left for Philadelphia on the *William Penn* on 2 March 1794 – passing, incidentally, via my own home town, the Cornish port of Falmouth.

Talleyrand's experience of the fledgling United States undoubtedly gave him further insights into Britain, and he seems to have employed the occasion to improve his English – though I know of no example of his later using it, apart from occasional words or phrases in letters. In America, he had a strong sense that he was seeing an extension of English civilisation – though like Chateaubriand before him he considered most of the Americans he met very uncultivated. His return to France in 1796 and subsequent service of a succession of régimes allowed him to think further about the Franc-British relationship – and I shall discuss his conclusions shortly. But, following through our theme of what the English actually thought of him, we must fast-forward to his arrival, after an unpleasant Channel crossing, in London as French ambassador to the Court of St. James in September 1830.

The Prince was now very well known and probably as well regarded by his hosts as any such nominee has ever been. The yellow carriage which carried him and the duchesse de Dino around the city was widely cheered. The *Times* breathlessly reported that they had been seen inspecting the improvements in the Strand.[5] Dorothée was amused to witness how when they alighted from their carriage, one day in Kensington, a by-stander lifted his wife up in his arms, so she could catch a glimpse of the French celebrity. When outside the famous London print shop, Colnaghi's, still in Cockspur Street, she heard a revealing conversation. In the window, a print of her uncle's portrait of 1828, by Ary Scheffer, stood by the side of a print of Pitt. Someone looked at Pitt and remarked that there was a man who created great events, but then added, looking at the print of Talleyrand: "That one knew how to foresee them, and wait on them with profit".[6] The legend of the Prince's political foresight had crossed the Channel.

Among the British governing class, Talleyrand still had the benefit of his Whig connections, of whom Lord and Lady Holland were the most intimate. (He had first met Holland as long ago as 1791, when he was still a bishop).[7] But the Prince had also acquired through his long collaboration and eventual friendship with the Duke of Wellington an excellent entrée into Tory circles too. Wellington's somewhat exaggerated praise of Talleyrand's character, when it was attacked by the Marquess of Londonderry in the House of Lords, made the Prince weep with gratitude. But at least as gratifying were surely the attentions of the beautiful, fabulously wealthy and very reactionary Lady Jersey, whose salon was the most prestigious in London. Mérimée describes the Prince performing his revolting nose gargle after some fashionable London dinner party, while Sarah Jersey stood behind and held his towel. On another occasion he found Talleyrand surrounded by peers, whose behaviour was "obsequious and almost servile".[8]

By the end of Talleyrand's stay in London, reactions were, in truth, more mixed. He had seriously fallen out with Palmerston, whose rude behaviour annoyed the Prince and enraged the duchesse de Dino. At the same time he was still close to the Hollands and continued to dine regularly at Holland House. On one occasion, the Prince read out to his hosts the early part of his memoirs, containing the (somewhat mendacious) account of his early childhood. Holland was deeply touched, not only by the contents but by Talleyrand's "shy and nervous" manner of delivery, adding: "I could have sat up till sunrise, and from thence to sunset, to hear these memoirs".[9] Charles-Maurice had lost none of his old ability to put in a performance.

He was excellent company, as Charles Greville, clerk to the Privy Council and a regular visitor, recalls in his Diary:

“Nothing could be more hospitable, nothing more urbane and kind than he was..Still retaining his faculties unimpaired and his memory stored with the recollections of his extraordinary and eventful career, and an inexhaustible mine of anecdotes, his delight was to narrate, which he used to do with an abundance, a vivacity, and a finesse peculiar to himself, and to the highest degree interesting and attractive.[T]here was an exhibition of conservative wisdom, “of moderate and healing counsels”, in all his thoughts, words and actions very becoming to his age and station, vastly influential from his sagacity and experience, and which presented him to the eyes of men as a statesman like Burleigh or Clarendon for prudence, temperance, and discretion”.[10]

After his final departure the following year, there was, though, much complaining at the advice he had given to Louis-Philippe to distance France from Britain. It was suggested, even by his admirers, that he had allowed his dislike of Palmerston to get the better of his judgment. And the Whigs were particularly incensed at reports – which were true – that he now favoured the Tories.

There is an interesting and amusing exchange on this subject to be found in the Holland House papers, on deposit in the British Library. Writing to Lord Holland from his house at Pont-de-Sains near the Belgian border on 22 June 1835, Talleyrand recalls that he had earlier invited Lady Holland to pay a visit. But:

“-[J]e me garderai bien de lui faire semblable aujourd’hui que je sais trop bien que je suis à ses yeux un Tory déguisé. Je croirais que Conservatif libéral serait plus exact, car à mon âge on veut être libre et conserver ce qui est acquis. C’est pour cela que je ne permets pas que l’on abatte un seul des arbres qui couvrent de leurs vastes ombrages la jeune tête de Pauline..Mes hommages à l’hostile Lady Holland »[11]

The distinction between a covert Tory and a liberal Conservative, I should add, makes a good deal of sense in British terms and reveals Talleyrand’s subtle understanding of the British politics of his day. He is essentially describing himself as a supporter of Sir Robert Peel not of the unreconstructed Tory Right.

At a human level, though, it is pleasant to find a draft letter – I do not know where the final copy is – from Lady Holland protesting that she had never been “hostile”. And, whether true or not, the affection in the rest of the letter shows that politics had not destroyed the friendship. Talleyrand was writing again in January 1837 to say how great a help to him had been “le merveilleux petit fauteuil qui me vient de Holland House”. He had initially been slow in trying it, and this is how he explains his reluctance : “J’ai eu un peu a surmonter pour me décider à l’état du palanquin, et si votre vieille amitié n’en avait pas ordonné autant, je serais encore réduit à mes pauvres jambes”.

This correspondence, in fact, brings me to my second topic – namely how Talleyrand viewed the British. If I begin with his feelings rather than his calculations, that is not because they were more important but because they were more complex than is sometimes suggested. Talleyrand had, as I have said, close English friends. His letters to Lord Holland are intimate in tone, signed “T” or “Talley”, and addressed to “My Dearest Friend” or even (incorrectly but affectionately) “Dearest”. On leaving London to deal with business and family affairs in France, he writes on 23 September 1832 to express his regret:

“Je me soumets à cette nécessité – je dis nécessité parce que la vérité est que je me plais beaucoup en Angleterre. On m’y donne des marques de bonté continuelles, j’en suis très reconnaissant, la vie que j’y mène me convient, le climat, même pendant l’hiver, ne me fait aucun mal, j’y aime particulièrement quelques personnes, et vous à la tête.”[12]

If anything, the duchesse de Dino was even more smitten by the English, but then, of course, Dorothée was younger, more impressionable, and it was her first experience of the country. She writes in rhapsodic tones of London in May (1834), and you can judge for yourselves whether she exaggerates:

“Voici le joli moment de parcourir Londres: cette multitude de squares, si verts, si fleuris ; ces parcs si riches de végétation ; toutes ces vérandas suspendues aux maisons et couvertes de fleurs, ces plantes grimpants qui tapissent les murs de beaucoup de maisons jusqu’au second étage, tout cela est d’un coup d’oeil si doux qu’on regrette un peu moins le soleil, qui aurait rapidement fait justice de tant de fraîcheur »

Dorothee admired the English women with their long blond hair, pink cheeks, white necks, only let down (she judged) by their lack of expression and movement. (We may imagine that her uncle had also noticed these features). She also esteemed the moral qualities of the English. Their conversation was cold, reserved and unimaginative, but beneath lay good sense, integrity and even a certain finesse.[13]

Talleyrand, himself, always had mixed feelings about the British character – ones which, naturally enough, he was usually careful to keep to himself. Echoing his disapproval of the materialism he encountered in the United States, he writes to Louis-Philippe's sister, Madame Adélaïde, describing the population of London as, “quinze cent mille âmes, si l'on peut désigner par âmes les égoïstes qui l'habitent” [14] His criticism of this aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture, which can be heard in Europe today, was almost certainly connected to the Prince's dislike – on aesthetic as much as theological grounds – of the Protestant religion. It was one of his favourite themes, not least at the end of his life. But his reservations about the English also had political origins.

One should remember that Talleyrand was, first and last, a politician. He understood power and thought about its use, even when he exerted none and had little influence either. From his first days as a diplomat, it was on strictly practical grounds that he thought that France and Britain had common interests. In his view, which never changed, France as a predominantly agricultural nation and Britain as a predominantly industrial/commercial nation ought to be able to benefit from each other's resources. He would, in fact, remain an economic liberal to the end of his days. He was also what we in this country would call “a sound money man”. He agreed with his first economic mentor, the financier Panchaud, that whichever of Britain and France was first able to secure its credit by proper management of its debt would prevail. And, unfortunately, he discovered it was Britain. Talleyrand had, in fact, a very British, I might even – despite the provocation involved – say Thatcherite view of economic policy.

Some of his most perceptive insights in this regard are to be found in his lecture of 1797 to the Institut National on Anglo-American Commercial relations. (A slightly different version of the argument is contained in a letter of 1795 to Lord Lansdowne). He had been struck by the fact that just a few years after gaining their independence from Britain with the help of France the Americans were much closer again to the former than the latter. The reasons were two-fold.

The first was the link provided by a common language and by shared legal and institutional systems. But the second was the effect of Britain's wise policy of opening up trade and providing capital. Economic ties thus underpinned political closeness, just as economic and political strength were mutually dependent.

Of still more enduring significance to his thinking was Talleyrand's sympathetic understanding of Britain's Constitutional arrangements. If there was a single consistent thread to his political thinking it was this. He was one of a group of liberal reformers, headed for a time by Mirabeau, who wanted to achieve the kind of ordered freedom and limited monarchy that they saw across the Channel. Talleyrand, for example, resisted those who wanted to end the royal veto. He also wanted to see the creation out of the Estates General of an upper House, similar to the British House of Lords. He thought that the aristocracy in both countries had an important role to play, he distrusted the concentration of power, and above all he feared and disliked demagoguery. What he saw of the Revolution reinforced that view.

British style constitutionalism was, naturally, of little relevance under Napoleon. But Talleyrand never entirely gave up on the topic. Thus in an angry rebuke of Madame de Rémusat, who had been injudiciously praising the Emperor, the Prince exclaimed:

“Tremblez! Insensée que vous êtes, des succès de l'Empereur sur les Anglais! Car, si la constitution anglaise est détruite, mettez-vous bien dans la tête que la civilisation du monde sera ébranlée jusque dans ses fondements. »[15]

After the Bourbon Restoration, Talleyrand showed that his underlying views had not changed at all. It was, significantly, through the Napoleonic Senate that he chose to legitimise the change of régime. Paradoxically, he then found himself arguing against Louis XVIII for an hereditary upper house. The King wanted to retain the power to reward and punish by appointment. The Prince, however, grasped – from the British example – that an hereditary Upper House would entrench the monarchy, even if it limited the Government's power. Talleyrand's short period as President of the Council was notable for its liberalism, which went, indeed, further than his own political interests suited. He repeatedly related his programme

back to British precedents. Thus the name that he gave to the Constitutional document upon which the Restored Monarchy was based – La Charte – echoes the seminal constitutional document in Britain – Magna Carta. So too, in his speech introducing the new monarch to the Senate, Talleyrand observed, in words that Louis can hardly have liked:

“Une charte constitutionnelle réunira tous les intérêts a celui du trône, et fortifiera la volonté première du concours de tous les volontés. Vous savez mieux que nous, Sire, que de telles institutions, si bien éprouvées chez un peuple voisin, donnent des appuis et non des barrières aux monarques amis des lois et pères des peuples”.[16]

Only with the arrival of the July Monarchy did Talleyrand experience a régime and, indeed, a monarch to his taste. Now, indeed, his main worries concerned the threat to order, not to liberty. But, then, his attitudes had anyway become more conservative – as the letter to Lord Holland, which I quoted earlier, confirms.

In the light of all this, it is tempting to see the evidence of Talleyrand’s liberal thinking on constitutional and legal matters as the basis of the Prince’s over all attitudes towards Britain. Maurice Schumann powerfully argued in a lecture on the subject that Talleyrand was even the “prophet of the Entente Cordiale”.[17] But the Prince was an unlikely prophet, and not all his views fit comfortably into such a framework.

It is difficult, for example, to find any sympathy for Britain in Talleyrand’s activity as Foreign Minister under the Directory and under Napoleon. In his memoirs, he blames the First Consul for failing to moderate his ambitions, and in particular for failing to consolidate the *modus vivendi* established with Britain by the Peace of Amiens in 1802. There is little evidence he thought this at the time. Nor, in my view, is there much evidence that in his overall criticism of Bonaparte’s approach he was correct. Britain could not permanently have accepted French control over the Low Countries and domination of Europe, with or without particular provocations - so the resumption of the great struggle was inevitable.

For a better guide to Talleyrand’s thinking during his years as Foreign Minister, one should turn elsewhere. The book entitled *L’État de la France à la fin de l’an VIII* is, of course, mainly propaganda and it was also mainly the work of his assistant, Hauterive. But Talleyrand would doubtless have accepted the underlying analysis. This was that the old balance of Europe had been upset by three developments – Prussian dominance in North Germany, the expansion of Russia into Europe by the partitions of Poland, and, last but not least, the near monopoly of maritime power wielded by Britain.

We should also turn to the contents of his remarkable memorandum to the Emperor of October 1805. The assumption here is that both Britain and Russia will remain hostile to France. The key to defeating or at least restraining them is to peel off Austria, by forcing Vienna to turn its focus towards the Balkans and away from Italy. The long term aim is to force Russia and Britain to compete in Asia. The analysis is based upon classic *Realpolitik*. It shows no attachment to Britain. Only Austria, as the Emperor complained, receives specially favourable treatment.

Talleyrand’s approach at the Congress of Vienna would appear, on the face of it, to be different. His strategy was based, as we all know, on securing British support, and then on drawing France into an alliance on equal terms with Britain and Austria against Russia and Prussia. Again, however, it is national – and inevitably dynastic – interests that dominated his thinking. Britain, like France, is – he argues – “conservative” in that it wants nothing more than the maintenance of its existing possessions and the securing of European equilibrium. This, above all, is what makes Britain the natural ally of France.

Realpolitik is, however, an inadequate description of Talleyrand’s foreign policy thinking, and he would have rejected it. Values do matter to him, because he understands that values and interests are interlinked. The Prince hoped that a liberal French monarchy could look for support from a liberal Britain against the threats posed by the three reactionary powers of Russia, Prussia and Austria – for within a year of the Congress he had begun to view the latter with disfavour.

Of course, after 1820 the Bourbon monarchy was far from liberal, and Talleyrand was anyway out of power. But his preference was unchanged. And from 1830, he could again advance it as a practical option.

As ambassador, he expressed the thought in a dispatch of 27 November that year to his Foreign Minister, Sébastiani:

“Nous devons donc chercher à nous rapprocher davantage des gouvernements où la civilisation est plus avancée; c’est là que sont nos vraies ambassades de famille. Ceci conduit naturellement à regarder l’Angleterre comme la puissance avec laquelle il faut convenir d’entretenir le plus de relations ; je dois faire observer qu’il y a entre elle et nous des principes communs, et c’est la seule puissance avec laquelle nous en ayons d’essentiels. Si dans quelques points, nous avons des avantages sur l’Angleterre, dans autres aussi elle l’emporte sur nous. Il y a ainsi quelque profit, de part et d’autre, à une réunion plus étroite »[18]

But that final qualification is also important. What if the two countries were not of roughly equal weight? What if closer cooperation was no longer in the interests of the weaker? And that is precisely what Talleyrand had to accept was the case by the end of his mission. It was not just Palmerston’s brutal manner, it was the economic and military imbalance between Britain and France that made him think again about closer Entente. He came to believe that France should seek closer relations with Austria, so as to assert its interests against an increasingly dominant and arrogant Britain. To this end, he even considered a mission to Vienna, scene of past diplomatic triumphs. But neither his health nor international circumstances in the end permitted it.

So he was not in truth an unqualified “anglomane”, as Villèle had earlier described him[19]. Nor is a comment by the historian Michelet, penned in his diary for August 1834 - when he dined with Talleyrand - quite as revealing as it seems. It is, though, striking enough – I first read it quoted by Maurice Schumann in his Lecture and recently looked up the original Journal.

Michelet exclaims (speaking of Britain):

“ Ce pays-ci est l’idéal du monde pour M. de Talleyrand. Il est Anglais, à nous faire frémir, nous autres qui tenons encore à la France »

Two things need to be said. First, if Talleyrand was besotted by England, Michelet was definitely not. Quite the opposite, and this influenced his judgement. The historian in an earlier entry has this to say about us: “Le peuple de Londres est grossier, peu intelligent, féroce”.

Pas très sympathique!

Secondly, Michelet’s disagreements with Talleyrand over dinner were about matters of substance not Anglo-philia or -phobia, as the following exchanges show.

Michelet: “Si ce pays est le premier en tout, comment se fait-il qu’il soit aujourd’hui le plus embarrassé?” [He is referring to the early trade union upheavals of the day]

Talleyrand: “Il ne l’est pas. L’inégalité ne choque pas ici ; elle est dans les moeurs. Le cadet veut que l’aîné ait tout. Il n’y a ici, d’autre misérable que des Irlandais : leur abattement tient uniquement à l’usage du genièvre. Les grandes processions des ouvriers, les associations etc. n’ont rien de sérieux »

In fact, as we know from other remarks, the Prince was not always convinced that order would prevail : he had even compared the Parliamentary discussions of the Reform Bill to those of the Estates General in 1789. He feared for the stability of Britain’s constitution. But he was right to be optimistic about longer term social developments – partly because of his dinner guest’s second line of attack,

For Michelet then challenged Talleyrand to explain how the conflicting economic interests of France and Britain could be reconciled with closer relations. The Prince again refused to accept the analysis, arguing, instead, for free trade – free trade (he might have added) which would keep the price of food down and thus help reduce social unrest. When Michelet said – as Frenchmen have been known to do in modern times – that this would lead to Britain benefiting from its manufacturing advantage while France just produced more wine, the Prince replied – inimitably but perhaps not entirely seriously:

“L’industrie ne fait qu’affaiblir la moralité nationale. Il faut que la France soit agricole »[20]

To sum up: Talleyrand can not, in fact, be fitted into any neat category. His support for close ties with Britain was conditional. He was quite capable of advocating hostile initiatives when the circumstances warranted. And he was not in the least embarrassed by such inconsistency, indeed he relished it. Was it not, after all, in answer to his English friend Lord Alvanley - who asked where recent French military campaigns in Belgium left Talleyrand's favoured doctrine of non-intervention - that the Prince replied that non-intervention "is a metaphysical and political expression that means more or less the same thing as intervention"?[21]

This, in truth, was one of the aspects of Talleyrand's personality that attracted his English listeners - a cynical humour that exposed a falsehood and that also exposed his own cynicism. But there were others. The British liked a Frenchman, every twist and turn of whose long career confirmed his moderation. Beyond that, Talleyrand's partly contrived, old-world manner created an excellent impression, as the young Charles de Rémusat could witness when he visited. For his part, the Prince may have found the fare in British Clubs too heavy - too much beef and port he apparently complained - but the members of those Clubs admired him, and not least this one.

He fitted in. England had not yet acquired the ponderous and earnest virtues of the Victorian age. In Regency society, where a degree of eccentricity and a hint of corruption were both part of the prevailing style, he was a welcome addition to the social scene.

He carried his magic with him. When, after his departure, his English friends visited him and the duchesse de Dino at Valençay, there too they could feel at home. Barante, in his description of the château and its estates, remarked that one found there, "tout ce qu'on raconte des grands châteaux d'Angleterre". It is a significant comparison.

And finally, trivially but tellingly, there were, of course, those inevitable dogs - dogs which the English, then as now, could not be without. Throughout his life, Talleyrand was almost as likely to be accompanied by a dog as by a beautiful woman. Canines crop up at every stage - Pyrame, who snapped at his chasuble as the schismatic bishop of Autun prepared to celebrate La Messe de la Fédération; or the unnamed dog which followed him round on his amorous trysts in Philadelphia; above all, the famous spaniel - a Springer, I think - called Carlos, named outrageously after the lover of his wife, and which, to Talleyrand's amusement, bit the surgeon who performed that last, unbelievably painful operation; and other dogs, too, who just slip in and out of the Prince's story, like the "pretty little dog" that one of his English friends brought him in Valençay in October 1834, or the "trois petits chiens du Prince" whose traces are left in a receipt of July 1836, shown me by the great Talleyrand expert, André Beau - whose absence we miss so much here today.

So perhaps there was, after all, something oddly "English" - as you Frenchmen wisely call us, not "British" which means too much or too little - about this most enigmatic of Frenchmen. At least, the English, themselves, seemed to think so.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Notes

[1] Duff Cooper, Talleyrand (London: Phoenix press, 1988), p. 332.

[1] Andrew Roberts, Review of Robin Harris, Talleyrand : Betrayer and Saviour of France (London : John Murray, 2007), in The Sunday Telegraph, 25 February 2007.

[1] Etienne Dumont de Genève, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau et sur les deux premières assemblées législatives, ed. J. Bénétruy (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1951), p. 225.

[1] Diaries and Letters of Madame d'Arblay, edited by her Niece, V (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), p. 336: Letter, February 1793.

[1] The Times, Thursday, 7 October, 1830.

[1] Duchesse de Dino, Chronique de 1831 à 1862, ed. Princesse de Radziwill née Castellane, I (Paris : Plon, 1909), p. 64.

[1] Henry Richard Lord Holland, Foreign Reminiscences, ed. Henry Edward Lord Holland (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850), , p. 34.

[1] Prosper Mérimée, Correspondance générale, ed. Maurice Parturier, I (Paris : Le Divan, 1941), p. 210.

[1] The Holland House Diaries 1831-1840: the Diary of Henry Richard Vassall Fox, Third Lord Holland, with Extracts from the Diary of Dr. John Allen, ed. Abraham D. Krieger, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 117.

- [1] The Greville Diary Including Passages Hitherto Withheld from Publication, ed. Philip Witwell Wilson, I, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), pp. 86-87.
- [1] BL, Add. Ms. 51,635, fos 129-130.
- [1] Ibid., fo. 90r-v.
- [1] Dino, Chronique, I, pp. 75.
- [1] Mémoires complets et authentiques de Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand prince de Bénévent, III (Paris: Bonnot, 1967), appendix, p. 451.
- [1] Mémoires de Madame de Rémusat 1802-1808, ed. Paul de Rémusat, III (Paris : Calmann-Lévy, 1880), p. 107.
- [1] Talleyrand, Mémoires, II, p. 171.
- [1] Maurice Schumann, 'Talleyrand: Prophet of the Entente Cordiale (The Zaharoff Lecture for 1976-77)' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
- [1] Talleyrand, Mémoires, III, p. 413.
- [1] Mémoires et correspondance du comte de Villèle, II (Paris: Perrin, 1888-1890) , p. 250.
- [1] Jules Michelet, Journal, ed. Paul Viallaneix, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), pp. 124-125, 154
- [1] A Portion of the Journal Kept by Thomas Raikes Esq. from 1831 to 1847, I (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longma