

THE SLAVE TRADE QUESTION IN EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY,

1807-1822

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PREFACE

Despite the importance of the Slave Trade Question in European diplomacy from 1807 to 1822, historians of this period have neglected it in order to concentrate on Napoleon and the reconstruction of Europe. Scholars of Negro history generally have traced the slave trade up to 1807 and then have turned to the emancipation movement. This thesis represents an attempt to satisfy the need for a diplomatic study of this issue.

Britain, the greatest maritime nation at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the dominant slave trading state, took the initiative in suppressing the Atlantic slave trade by abolishing her own in 1807 and prohibiting slavery in 1833. But British participation in this traffic did not cease in 1807; many Englishmen, indeed, barely hesitated long enough to pull down the Union Jack and run up some other flag before continuing this infamous commerce.

During the post-Napoleonic era (1815-1822), the Congresses of Vienna, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Verona afforded opportunities for international suppression. The issue was raised at each, but no practical measure could be adopted because of conflicting national interests and especially French jealousy of Britain. Even Tsar Alexander, the most advanced internationalist of his day, thought the British

proposal of a mutual right of search and seizure on the high seas would result in too severe an infringement of national sovereignty. All that the combined efforts of the crowned heads of Europe could produce was three pious, but ineffectual, condemnations of the slave trade. A foundation for international suppression, however, had been laid.

Throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the abolitionists lobby in England was the prime mover behind the quest for effective suppression at home and abroad. It was abolitionist pressure, not conviction, which prompted the London cabinet to raise the Slave Trade question at European conferences and in normal diplomatic correspondence. Failing to achieve concrete results from congress diplomacy, Britain turned with greater success to negotiating bilateral conventions which granted a reciprocal right of search on the high seas. But so long as France, Portugal, and Spain offered the protection of their flags to slavers, the black tide continued to flow across the Atlantic. Its eventual suppression, a long and frustrating task, is discussed in an Epilogue.

The major primary sources for the diplomacy of the Slave Trade Question are the British and Foreign State Papers, Castlereagh's Correspondence, Wellington's Despatches, Talleyrand's Memoirs, Villèle's Mémoires, The Life of William Wilberforce, and the Edinburgh Review. The British and Foreign State Papers contains a wealth of government

documents concerning the slave trade. Castlereagh's Correspondence furnishes evidence of the British foreign secretary's outlook regarding that commerce, and Wellington's Despatches supplies slave trade observations of the British plenipotentiary to the Congress of Verona. Talleyrand's Memoirs reveals the French foreign minister's policy on the slave trade issue (1814-1815), while Villèle's Mémoires provides the French premier's attitude toward this question (1822). The Life of William Wilberforce gives an insight into the question from the leading abolitionist's point of view, while the Edinburgh Review reveals the Whig position.

The chief secondary accounts consulted were Sir Charles K. Webster's The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822, Comer Williams' The Liverpool Slave Trade, Waldemar Westergaard's The Danish West Indies, John S. Hall's The Bourbon Restoration, Émile Bourgeois' History of Modern France, Sir Alan Burns' History of the British West Indies, and Lowell Joseph Ragatz' The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean. The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh gives a British view of the European diplomatic scene from 1815 through 1822 and contains extracts from many pertinent dispatches. The Liverpool Slave Trade provides much general information and some statistics regarding the greatest slave trade center of Britain and of Europe. The Danish West Indies discusses the slave trade activities of Danes and of other northern Europeans. The Bourbon Restoration traces the political fortunes of France

under Louis XVIII and Charles X. The History of Modern France provides the French outlook regarding the slave trade during the 1830's and 1840's, and also discusses the French view of continental politics during the nineteenth century, The History of the British West Indies and The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean reveal the British planter's attitude toward the slave trade and its abolition.

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PROLOGUE

THE SLAVE TRADE FROM GENESIS TO ABOLITION

Traffic in Negro slaves became a regular item of European commerce before the Age of Discovery. In 1441 a Portuguese expedition under Antam Goncalvez captured nearly a dozen black natives near Cape Bojador, located on the northern Spanish Saharan coast, brought them back to Portugal, and sold them. Slaves from northern Africa had been sold into the Iberian Peninsula before this time, but there is no evidence that it was a regular trade. After Goncalvez' slave expedition, other Portuguese, and some Castilians, too, in 1453 entered into that enterprise. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, the slave trade declined, for Portugal and Spain offered only a limited market.¹

The discoveries in the New World, however, brought new life to the slave trade. Much cheap labor was required to develop profitably the rich lands of the West Indies. With the urging of Bartolomew de las Casas, the Licentiate, Charles I (of Hapsburg), the Spanish king, reluctantly agreed in 1518 to import 4,000 Negro slaves into the Spanish

¹Sir Alan Burns, History of the British West Indies (London, 1954), p. 59; Elizabeth Donnan, editor, Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America (Washington, 1931), I, 18.

American plantations. Though one of the prime arguments in defense of the slave trade was that the Negro was an infidel, and therefore not fit to be considered as a brother to the white Christian, Charles stipulated that these slaves be Christians. Charles intended that these slaves should be procured from among those already in the Iberian Peninsula, but in this special grant, he permitted the capture of infidels from the Guinea coast, provided that they were converted to Christianity before reaching the western isles.²

Thereafter special privilege followed special privilege for the importation of Negro slaves into Spanish America. The slave trade was profitable, and it attracted entrepreneurs from throughout Europe. In 1538 two German merchants gained the exclusive right (asiento) of supplying slaves to the Spanish possessions. The demand for slaves, however, was so much greater than the legitimate, regulated supply that smuggling of slaves began.³

The leading slave traders of this era were the Portuguese, the Genoese, Dutch, English, French, Courlanders (Poles), and after 1614, the Swedes. The slave trade was

²Ibid., pp. 41-42; proceedings of the Spanish Council of the Indies relative to the abolition of the slave trade, [n. d.] Feb. 1816, Lewis Hertslet, editor, British and Foreign State Papers (London, 1838), IV (1816-1817), 520 (hereafter cited as BFSP).

³Ibid.; Burns, West Indies, pp. 123, 130, 226.

so profitable that a number of governments adopted measures to extract some of the profit for themselves. The Danes in 1659 instituted an African Company in Glückstadt, established factories upon the Guinea coast, and began trading in slaves. King Charles II of England in 1662 granted a monopoly to the Royal African Company to import slaves into English possessions; the King and his brother, the Duke of York, were stockholders in this company. Under the Great Elector, Frederick William I, Brandenburg-Prussia ventured into the slave trade, establishing in 1682 on the Guinea coast the factory settlement called "Der Grosse Friedrichsburg."⁴

During the seventeenth century, the slave trade became more lucrative as a result of a crop change by the West Indian plantations. The colonists there began to grow sugar cane. The demand for products derived from sugar cane was great, and the production of more sugar cane required more labor. To secure cheap labor, the colonists sought more slaves. As the slave trade--licit and illicit--grew, a so-called triangular trade developed. Goods from Europe were exchanged for slaves in Africa; the slaves in turn were bartered in the West Indies for sugar, molasses, and rum, and these products were then sold in Europe.⁵

⁴Waldemar Westergaard, The Danish West Indies (1671-1917) (New York, 1917), pp. 21, 73-74; proceedings of the Spanish Council of the Indies relative to the abolition of the slave trade, [n. d.] Feb. 1816, BFSP, IV, 520.

⁵W. R. Brock, Britain and Dominions (Cambridge, 1951), p. 23.

In 1700 King Charles II of Spain, a Habsburg, died without an heir, but his will named Philip of Anjou, a Bourbon, as his successor. In 1701 with Bourbons ruling Spain and France, a Franco-Spanish treaty was negotiated which gave the slave asiento to the French Company of Guinea. Because a tenet of mercantilism, the predominant European economic philosophy, declared that a mother country should maintain a monopoly of trade with her colonies, this treaty gave France an opening through which she could, and did, build an additionally profitable, though illegal, trade with the overseas Spanish possessions in commodities other than slaves.⁶

The will of Charles II was not acknowledged by all. The dynastic union of Spain and France under the House of Bourbon resulted in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713). By the Peace of Utrecht, which ended the war, the asiento was transferred from France to Great Britain.⁷

During the first half of the eighteenth century, Britain, with monopolies in her own possessions and those of Spain, became the paramount slave trading state. A number of British commercial cities and merchants encouraged the traffic in blacks. Bristol, a port which would "rather than fail . . . trade in men," had long been associated

⁶William Spencer Robertson, France and Latin America (Baltimore, 1939), p. 4.

⁷Ibid., p. 5.

with the slave trade. As early as 1698 Parliament had opened the slave trade to all Britons, provided that they made payments to the African Company for the upkeep of existing facilities: forts, factories, and the like. In 1700 some merchants of Lyme, fearful that the Company should be allowed to re-monopolize the slave trade, requested Parliament for permission "to trade to the plantations, and kidnap on the coast of Africa."⁸

Before 1700 Liverpool possessed no proper harbor and no quay, but in that year it built a dock. Within a decade it could boast eighty-four ships and 900 sailors. Turning to the slave trade as a source of revenue, it sought to surpass Bristol as a center of this traffic. As the port of Liverpool grew, it undersold the merchants of Bristol and the other powerful slave center, London. With astute economy Liverpool merchants pared as many pence as possible from the cost of shipping slaves. The merchants of Bristol and London allowed their captains substantial pay, cabin privileges, and other costly fringe benefits; Liverpool merchants did not. In 1720, the year of the South Sea Bubble disaster, the London merchants almost gave up the slave trade. Liverpool continued to undermine Bristol,

⁸William Law Mathieson, England in Transition, 1789-1832 (London, 1920), p. 35; Averil Mackenzie-Grive, The Last Years of the English Slave Trade: Liverpool, 1750-1807 (London, 1941), p. 468; Ralph Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (New York, 1962), pp. 292-293; Charles Knight and Philip Smith, The Popular History of England (London, 1867-1868), V, 7, 25.

and from about 1730 until 1807, it was the leading slave trade center not only of Britain but of Europe.⁹

As the asiento had opened the door to illegal French imports into Spanish America, so it did likewise for British imports. The Spanish, in the first half of the eighteenth century, levied a 300 per cent duty on legally imported French and German textiles. The enterprising British slave traders found that they could augment their profits by smuggling in similar British goods which were not only cheaper but also of a better quality. Thus the slave trade helped to enrich Britain further by expanding her markets.¹⁰

The British slave market expanded as a result of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). Admiral Rodney and General Monckton made Britain supreme in the West Indies. If Britain annexed Guadeloupe and other French West Indian possessions, as British slave traders demanded, there would be more sugar, rum, and slaves for the carrying trade. The Liverpool slave lobby pointed out that 12,437 slaves had been imported into the British occupied French isles between 1759 and 1762, with the result that British West Indian planters were undersupplied with the best quality of slaves. By the Treaty of Paris of 1763, Guadeloupe was returned to France, a restoration which especially saddened the merchants

⁹Ibid., p. 25; Gomer Williams, The Liverpool Privateers and the Liverpool Slave Trade (London, 1897), pp. 469, 471.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 468.

of Liverpool. They were cheered, however, by the knowledge that the acquisition of Tobago, Grenada, Saint Vincent, and Dominica would require a substantial importation of slaves.¹¹

During the Seven Years' War, William Pitt (the Elder), the Earl of Chatham, had set about to extend the slave trade as a matter of governmental policy, regarding it as the foundation of British shipping and thus the fount of British naval power. This concept continued to influence high governmental circles for some time thereafter. In 1775, after some British colonies had acted to restrict the slave trade, William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth, the colonial secretary, stated that colonies should not be permitted "to check or discourage in any degree a trade so beneficial to the nation."¹²

While they did increase the nation's naval resources, the Liverpool slave merchants needed little governmental encouragement to expand their enterprise, for they were reaping a substantial monetary reward. Their slave ships between 1783 and 1793 carried over 300,000 slaves to the New World, where they were sold for some £15,000,000, of which £4,500,000 returned to Liverpool as profit. While a 30 per cent visible return is great, it should be noted that this profit was calculated from a purchase price in Africa of

¹¹Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 10; V. H. H. Green, The Hanoverians, 1714-1815 (London, 1948), p. 222n.

¹²Mathieson, England, pp. 35-36.

about £25, but that the actual price paid usually was somewhat less than half this amount. The sailors of Liverpool may well have supplemented their incomes through shrewd trading practices and falsifying their account books.¹³

In 1790 the number of slaves annually exported from Africa reached 74,000. Of this total, British traders carried 38,000; French, 20,000; Dutch, 4,000; Danes, 2,000; and Portuguese, 10,000. Britain in 1790 controlled more than half the trade, and Liverpool controlled almost 80 per cent of the British trade. Liverpool maintained her supremacy in that trade and sought to enhance her position in the European carrying trade. As a result of the European wars that began in 1793, that city almost established a monopoly in the slave trade. Between 1795 and 1804, British bottoms carried 380,893 slaves, of which Liverpool ships carried 323,770; those of Bristol, 10,718; and those of London, 46,405. Liverpool's share of the European trade in slaves amounted to over 75 per cent during this period.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the abolition movement gained strength. As early as 1712 English Quakers discussed the abolition of the slave trade, but took no action. In the same year American Quakers at their annual meeting in Philadelphia drafted a resolution denouncing the slave trade and slavery, and sent

¹³Green, Hanoverians, p. 367; Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 12; Williams, Liverpool, p. 680.

it to their co-religionists in London. The next year the British Quakers responded by declaring the carrying of slaves "is not a commendable nor allowable practice."¹⁵ Again in 1715 they affirmed that the slave trade "is a trade not fit for one professing truth to be concerned in." A number of condemnations of this traffic ensued, and British slave owners, fearful for their property rights, sought and received from the government a statement on slavery in 1729. Philip Yorke, the Earl of Hardwicke, the solicitor-general, and Baron Charles Talbot, the attorney general, declared:

We are of the opinion, that a slave coming from the West Indies into Great Britain or Ireland . . . does not become free--and that his master's right and property in him is not thereby determined or varied.¹⁶

But this decision was reversed within the next half century by two famous court cases. In 1765 David Lisle brought to England from the West Indies as his personal servant a Negro slave named Jonathan Strong. Lisle was a brutal master, and when Strong became ill and seemed near death, he ordered him out to fend for himself. Wandering about the strange streets of London, Strong met and was befriended by Granville Sharp, who took him to a doctor.

¹⁵Quoted in Allan M. Rees, "English Friends and the Abolition of the British Slave Trade," Bulletin of Friends Historical Association, XLIV (2) (1955), 74 (hereafter cited as BFHA).

¹⁶Quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 39.

Strong recovered and entered the life of London. One day in 1767 Lisle chanced to meet Strong on the street. The former master obtained a warrant for the ex-slave's arrest, and Strong was incarcerated in the Poultry Compter, a municipal jail. Lisle then arranged for Strong's sale to a planter in Jamaica, but the prisoner sent word of his plight to Sharp, who thereupon persuaded Sir Robert Kite, the Lord Mayor of London, of the injustice done and secured his promise to intervene. The Lord Mayor sent for Strong and heard him. Shortly thereafter, the case came officially before court at Mansion House with Kite himself presiding. The Mayor declared that Strong was a free man.¹⁷

The Strong case, besides freeing one Negro, prompted Sharp to influence the courts to declare that as soon as a slave set foot on British soil he was automatically emancipated. In 1772 Sharp became involved in the case of *Somerset* versus Knowles. *Somerset*, a slave, had been brought to Britain from Virginia by his master, Stewart. He had run away, and following his capture, Stewart had decided to sell him into Jamaica. *Somerset* was given to Captain Knowles, who put him in irons on the Anne and Mary, a ship bound for the West Indies. Sharp heard of the disposition of *Somerset*, and required the captain by a writ of habeas corpus to state by what authority he detained the slave.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 37-39.

The Somerset case came before the court of King's Bench on May 22, 1772, and the court, with Lord Mansfield presiding, found that a slave became a freeman when he set foot in Britain.¹⁸

This decision strengthened the foes of the slave trade and slavery. Of more importance to the abolitionist cause, however, was the spreading knowledge of some of the iniquities of the slave trade. On the west coast of Africa some enterprising natives sought to enhance their material well-being by exchanging their countrymen for European goods. Tribal chiefs made war on one another to gain captives to sell as slaves. Within African tribal society there were a number of crimes (murder, adultery, violating religious taboos), for which a criminal could be enslaved; discovering a crime wave, the native "judiciary" quickly brought "criminals" to "justice" by sentencing them to slavery. Unscrupulous European traders also resorted to "panyaring," a nefarious practice by which liquor was distributed freely to the natives, who, when drunk, were carried aboard the slave ships. Most slavers, however, simply haggled with native brokers.¹⁹

Once aboard the slave ship, the native men were stripped naked, branded with a red hot iron, chained one to another,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 40; Annual Register, XV (1772), 110.

¹⁹Williams, Liverpool, pp. 582-584.

and then packed like sardines in the hold of the vessel. The women and children likewise were stripped, branded, and put in compartments from which they occasionally were allowed to come on deck. Since the demand in the New World was for able-bodied men, relatively few female slaves were brought over until the nineteenth century. As a general practice, which could be described as a fringe benefit, the slave ship captains not only allowed their crews to "fraternize" with the female slaves but also permitted the women to fraternize with the native men.²⁰

Probably the most important exposé of such proceedings was John Newton, a retired slave trader and captain. After a long and varied career in the slave trade, he forsook that pursuit for the cloth. Becoming an Anglican priest, he served as vicar and curate at Olney for almost sixteen years. There he became the close friend of the poet Cowper, who put the wrongs done to the Negro into verse. After having spoken upon the slave trade for a number of years, Newton, in 1787, published a pamphlet entitled "Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade."²¹

The case of the Zong, however, probably was the most significant single factor which enraged the English abolitionists. On September 6, 1781, the slave ship Zong,

²⁰Ibid., pp. 583-584; Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 130.

²¹Williams, Liverpool, pp. 518-520.

commanded by Luke Collingwood, set sail for Jamaica with 440 blacks from the Portuguese island of Saint Thomas, off the coast of Africa. As the Zong approached Jamaica, the captain mistook the island for Hispaniola, and changed course to where he thought Jamaica was located. On November 29, with food and water running short, with sixty slaves and seven seamen dead, and with many others down with a fever, the captain, fearful of a financial disaster, called his officers together and proposed that those slaves who seemed incapable of surviving be thrown overboard. The captain stated: "If the slaves die on board, the owners will lose, but if we maintain that the slaves were thrown overboard for the preservation of the ship, the underwriters will have to bear the loss." Despite the objections of James Kelsal, the first mate, the captain ordered the sick carried onto the deck and thrown overboard. Most of the blacks, ill though they were, struggled and had to be beaten into submission; a few jumped overboard "to escape the horror." In all the captain caused 132 slaves to drown.²²

Returning to Liverpool, Collingwood informed the owners of his actions. The underwriters were not satisfied with his explanation and refused to pay the insurance claimed by Gregson, Case and Company, the owners of the Zong. In the case of Gregson versus Gilbert which ensued in 1782 and 1783,

²²Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, pp. 137-138.

the court found in favor of the plaintiff. Granville Sharp, meanwhile, devoted himself to making the tragic voyage of the Zong public knowledge throughout England.²³

An immediate consequence of the public outcry against the slave trade provoked by this affair was a pamphlet entitled "The Case of Our Fellow Creatures the Oppressed Africans Respectfully Recommended to the Serious Consideration of the Legislature of Great Britain by the People Called Quakers." Some 2,000 copies were printed in 1783 and distributed to the King and Queen, and other persons in high places. Not until four years later, however, was a united abolitionist movement organized in London with the founding in May, 1787, of the Society for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade. "The Committee," as it became known, consisted of Granville Sharp, William Dillwyn, Samuel Hoare, George Harrison, John Lloyd, Joseph Woods, Thomas Clarkson, Richard Phillips, and Philip Sansom. All of these, excepting Sharp, Clarkson, Sansom, and Dillwyn, were English Quakers, but Dillwyn was an American Quaker.²⁴

The Committee opposed the slave trade and the institution of slavery, but realizing that it was too much to attack both at that time, it decided upon the slave trade as its overt objective. Looking back some twenty years later, Clarkson wrote:

²³Ibid., pp. 138-139.

²⁴Rees, BFHA, XLIV, 79-80; Williams, Liverpool, p. 568.

For, by aiming at the abolition of the slave trade, they [the Committee] were laying the axe at the very root [of the institution of slavery]. By doing this, and this only, they would not incur the objection that they were meddling with the property of the planters, and letting loose an irritated race of beings, who, in consequence of all the vices and infirmities which a state of slavery entails upon those who undergo it, were unfit for their freedom.²⁵

Although Wilberforce had become a convert to abolition when only fourteen, he did not publicly declare his adoption of this cause until 1787. His conversion was brought about no less by "a religious change" than by the direct influence of Sir Charles Middleton, an M. P. from Rochester. Upon the urging of his wife to bring the issue of this disgraceful traffic before the House and demand a parliamentary inquiry into its nature, Sir Charles, wishing to shift the burden, requested Wilberforce, an M. P. from Hull, to raise the question on his behalf. Reluctant to undertake such a task, Wilberforce, at first, demurred but finally agreed and enthusiastically championed the abolitionist movement.²⁶

Looking for support in Parliament, Wilberforce found an ally in William W. Grenville, an M. P. who became Pitt's home secretary in 1789. Grenville, realizing that abolition to be effective must be international, sought to learn the

²⁵Thomas Clarkson, The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 286-287.

²⁶Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, The Life of William Wilberforce (Philadelphia, 1839), I, 16, 61-63.

volume and distribution of the slave trade, to make known the humanitarian motives of the abolitionists, and to gain foreign support. Reports from the Netherlands revealed that the Province of Zealand monopolized the trade and that Dutch merchants were not likely to be impressed by an appeal to humanitarianism. With France in 1788 apparently in need of some sort of free constitution, the time appeared propitious for an Anglo-French accord on the slave trade. It was imperative that France abolish the traffic if Britain did so, since French ships carried almost as many slaves as the British. In 1787 the ratio was 31,000 to 38,000.²⁷

In January of 1788, the Committee took its cause to the electorate, staging a public rally in Liverpool, the center of the British slave trade. Upon the conclusion of speeches denouncing the slave trade as immoral, unjust, and unbecoming of a Christian people, a number of Liverpool citizens, in keeping with the humanitarian principles of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, signified their espousal of the movement by making public financial contributions to the Committee. From all gifts in 1788, the Committee acquired £2,760, which was used to publish its pamphlets.²⁸

²⁷Sir James Harris to Grenville, 4 Jan. 1788, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore, edited by Walter Fitzpatrick (London, 1899), III, 442-443; Pitt to Grenville, 29 Aug. 1788, Ibid., I, 353.

²⁸Williams, Liverpool, p. 570; Lowell Joseph Ragatz, The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833 (New York, 1928), pp. 250-251.

The abolitionists won their first victory in Commons on July 8, 1788, and in Lords three days later, when they passed an act (28 Geo. III. Cap. 54) designed to improve the lot of the slaves in transit by requiring each slave ship to carry a surgeon and to limit the number of slaves to five for each three tons of displacement up to 201 tons, and thereafter, to one slave for each additional ton. A bounty of £50 was granted to the captain and £25 to the surgeon who cut the death rate to 3 per cent; these bonuses were doubled if the death rate did not exceed 2 per cent.²⁹

The slave trade interest, confronted by a threat to its very existence, employed a skillful defender, Father Raymond Harris, a Spanish-born Jesuit of English extraction, who resided in Liverpool. Father Harris published a pamphlet entitled "Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave Trade, showing its conformity with the sacred writings of the Word of God." This Jesuit concluded that holy scripture endorsed "the slave trade as a 'licit' occupation, and that those who did not believe it to be so did not believe their Bibles." So much did this article delight the slave traders that they persuaded the City of Liverpool to reward him with a gift of £100. Neither side lacked pamphleteers, but as a rule, only those who supported the

²⁹Ibid., p. 251; slave trade transactions in Parliament, summer, 1788, T. C. Hansard, editor, Journal of the House of Commons, XLIII (1787-1788), 652-653 (hereafter cited as JHC).

slave trade were paid for their services. Making this "the cause of the angels," the great John Wesley cautioned Sharp that "to hire or to pay" for information or literature could tarnish the movement. Because he "felt a perfect detestation of the horrid Slave Trade," Wesley drew heavily upon personal funds and influence to publish a large volume of abolitionist pamphlets and distribute them throughout England.³⁰

There were, of course, those who sincerely believed that the slave trade was just and humane. James Boswell, the biographer of Samuel Johnson, declared that the abolitionist movement aroused his "wonder and indignation." He admitted that some able men supported abolition, but thought that at best some had joined the movement to gain publicity, while at worst others, simply because they loved to stir up strife. Abolition was evil because it would rob a large number of citizens of their property rights and would, indeed, be detrimental to the welfare of the slaves themselves. He observed that African natives, instead of massacring or enslaving their own captives, sold them to traders, and that the West Indian slaves had a much happier life than they had had in Africa. "To abolish that trade," he affirmed, "would be to shut the gates of mercy on mankind." Wilberforce, discussing this thesis with Boswell, was moved to state:

³⁰Williams, Liverpool, pp. 572-574; Wesley to Sharp, 11 Oct. 1787, John Telford, editor, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. (London, 1931), VIII, 17; Wesley to Funnell, 4 Nov. 1787, ibid., p. 23.

"Be it so, but we have no right to make people happy against their will."³¹

Despite the opposition of the slave trade lobby and men like Boswell and Father Harris, the abolition question came before Parliament on May 12, 1789. The abolitionist cause, with widespread support throughout the realm and especially among the Whigs, might have been victorious but for the division that developed within party ranks. Wilberforce and some of his allies were members of the ruling Tory party, but several party leaders, including some cabinet members, were adamantly opposed to abolition. As a result of the split in Tory ranks, abolition bogged down in Parliament, for without the support of the ministry, the issue was left to the vagaries of parliamentary consensus.³²

This slave trade question continued in Parliament until 1791 before the House of Commons voted upon it. Despite the support of a number of outstanding British statesmen, the abolitionist cause saw the "pygmies" of that House overthrow its "giants." Pitt, Fox, Burke, Grey, Sheridan, Windham, and Lord North all supported a motion for abolition, but when Commons divided on April 19, 1791, the bill was defeated 163 to 88, a victory engineered by the West Indian planters

³¹James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D., edited by Chauncey Brewster Tinker (New York, 1933), II, 155-156; Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 192.

³²J. G. Lockhart, The Peacemakers, 1814-1815 (New York, 1934), pp. 343-344; Wilberforce and Wilberforce, Wilberforce, I, 79.

who argued cogently that cruel or not, the slave trade must continue or they would be impoverished. Without the slave trade their plantations would be wholly dependent on the natural increase of the slave population for a continuing labor supply, but herein lay the dilemma. Women slaves were few in number and difficult to obtain; those "bought or bred" were promiscuous and bore few children; and, moreover, through their mothers' ignorance, infant mortality was high.³³

Undaunted by defeat, abolitionists continued to press the cabinet to take action. From England, Scotland, and Wales, they deluged Parliament in the spring of 1792 with 512 petitions demanding abolition. On April 2, 1792, Wilberforce, still supported by all the leading statesmen, moved for immediate abolition, but his motion was amended to read prohibition by January 1, 1796. The Commons on May 1 heard the first reading of this resolution and approved it 60 to 23, but the Lords took no action. Commons, nevertheless, by a vote of 193 to 125 ordered on May 3 abolition from and after January 1, 1796, a vain effort since defeat by the Lords was a foregone conclusion.³⁴

³³Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, p. 234; slave trade transactions in Parliament, spring, 1791, JHC, XLVI (1790-1791), 435, 736; Mathieson, England, p. 67.

³⁴Ibid., p. 69; slave trade transactions in Parliament, spring, 1792, JHC, XLVII (1792), 755-756, 758, 763-764, 1116-1118.

The protagonist of the slave trade in the House of Lords was His Royal Highness, the Duke of Clarence, later King William IV. After 1792 the Duke continued to campaign for the maintenance of the traffic in blacks. To show its gratitude for his efforts, the City of Liverpool in 1799 gave him "the freedom of the borough" and a gold box valued at £226 which contained a congratulatory resolution and a gift of twenty-five guineas.³⁵

Though defeated in England, the abolitionist movement achieved some success on the continent in 1788. In that year, a group of French liberals, after having corresponded with British abolitionists, founded an abolitionist society called Les Amis des Noirs. This Society had Condorcet for its president, and among its members were the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Abbé Gregoire, Brissot, Clavière, Pétion, Mirabeau, and Lafayette. In the summer of 1789, the fall of the Bastille and the Declaration of the Rights of Man inspired the British abolitionists to hope that France would abolish the slave trade. At Wilberforce's request, Clarkson went to Paris to work for French abolition, and work he did for six months, but to no avail. The time was not yet right for French abolition. Pushing France closer to that time, the Jacobins, who seized power in September 1792, gave the right to vote and to hold office to mulattoes, but after

³⁵Williams, Liverpool, pp. 613, 618.

France declared war on Britain and the Netherlands on February 1, 1793, racial tension became pronounced. French whites of Haiti, preferring British occupation to mulatto and black domination, requested Britain to invade the island. When Jacobin officials in Haiti, seeking support from the blacks, emancipated all slaves in the summer of 1793 and armed them to fight against the invaders, many Englishmen, including the King, identified abolition with radical Jacobinism. George III, who had been sympathetic, now became, and remained, distinctly anti-abolitionist. Thus the war with France produced in Britain a reaction against abolition, and Wilberforce wisely refrained from raising the issue in 1793.³⁶

Denmark, attuned to the intellectual currents of the French Revolution, enacted a law on March 16, 1792, which abolished Danish participation in the slave trade after January 1, 1803. The ten year period of grace was designed to prevent the ruin of the Danish West Indian plantations. Provisions of the act encouraged planters to establish

³⁶Clarkson, History of Abolition, II, 122-124; Mackenzie-Grieve, Last Years, pp. 207, 250; Mathieson, England, p. 94; Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, editors, Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence (Berkeley, 1952), pp. 14-15 (hereafter cited as Christophe-Clarkson Corrs.). The emancipation of the Haitian slaves anticipated the formal abolition of slavery and the slave trade by the Convention on February 4, 1794 (W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870 [New York, 1896], pp. 131-132).

parity between the number of male and female slaves and to promote family life among them.³⁷

Discussion of the slave trade question by the Dutch parliament paralleled that in Britain in 1792 and 1793, but before any action could be taken, the exigencies of war with revolutionary France intervened. For continental Europe, war and revolutionary France occupied the center of the stage for the next two decades.³⁸

With the reaction against Jacobinism having subsided in 1796, British abolitionists resumed their crusade, but Commons on March 15 killed their measure by four votes. Elated, the West Indian interest published on April 4 a cartoon entitled "Philanthropic Consolations after the loss of the Slave-Bill" depicting Wilberforce and Samuel Horsley, the Bishop of Rochester, rollicking indecorously with two Negro women. For the next eight years, the demand for abolition waned, as the war with France absorbed the nation's energies. Across the Atlantic, however, events soon occurred which once more focused attention on the slave trade.³⁹

³⁷Edict of the King [Christian VII] of Denmark and Norway, concerning the slave trade, 16 Mar. 1792, BFSP, I (1812-1814), 971-972.

³⁸Henry Lord Brougham, The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham (New York, 1871), I, 201, 103.

³⁹M. Dorothy George, English Political Caricature (Oxford, 1959), II, 22; slave trade proceedings in Commons, spring, 1796, T. C. Hansard, editor, Parliamentary Debates, XXXII (1796), 901-902 (hereafter cited as PD).

Opportunist that he was, Napoleon took advantage of the respite afforded by the Treaty of Amiens (March 25, 1802) to attempt a restoration of French influence in the Caribbean, this in accordance with a grand design for a new colonial empire. In the treaty itself, Britain had promised to return the French colonies, but Haiti presented a special case. Here, the Negroes, under the brilliant leadership of Toussaint l'Ouverture, not only had established supremacy, but also had conquered on October 27, 1801, Santo Domingo (the Spanish portion of Hispaniola), thus bringing the entire island under their effective control. Determined to regain possession of the disaffected colony, the first consul dispatched an expedition under General Leclerc, his brother-in-law. By treachery, Leclerc captured l'Ouverture on June 2, 1802, and sent him to France, where he was imprisoned in the castle of Joux, near Besançon. Within a year he died of consumption (April 7, 1803). His death, moreover, coincided with the re-establishment of slavery in the French colonies, a measure sponsored by Bonaparte to gain the support of West Indian planters. Throughout Europe, and even the United States, this remarkable leader was revered as a martyr for the freedom of his suffering and enslaved race.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Christophe-Clarkson Corrs., pp. 14-30, 36; Edinburgh Review, XXIII (1814), 131-151; Knight and Smith, Popular History, VII, 418-419; Perry Waxman, The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint l'Ouverture (New York, 1931), pp. 178-180, 195-209, 283-293.

In Britain the tide turned in favor of the abolitionists as their cause now became identified with Francophobia. With British ire thus aroused, the abolitionists in 1804 introduced in Parliament another bill to prohibit the slave trade. Despite its approval in Commons on June 28 by a vote of 69 to 33, the Lords on July 3 killed it. The abolitionist movement, nonetheless, gained momentum. On August 15, 1805, an Order in Council forbade Britons to carry slaves into any British occupied foreign territory and prohibited the outfitting of foreign slave ships in British ports. With the ascendancy in February 1802, of the famous Ministry of All-the-Talents, a coalition of Foxite Whigs and moderate Tories under the leadership of Lord Grenville, a cabinet took office which was pledged to abolishing the slave trade. Under its direction Parliament in May 1806, amended the Order of August 15 so that Britons could no longer carry slaves into a foreign territory, and in July it imposed a two year embargo on new ships entering the slave trade to become effective at the close of the current session.⁴¹

⁴¹Slave trade proceedings in Parliament, summer, 1804, PD (new series), II (1804), 871, 932-933; act of the British Parliament to prevent the importation of slaves (46 Geo. III. Cap. 54), 23 May 1806, BFSP, V (1817-1818), 541-557; slave trade transactions in Parliament, spring, 1806, JHC, LXI (1806), 270, 314; act of the British Parliament to prevent new ships from entering the slave trade for two years (46 Geo. III. Cap. 119), 21 July 1806, BFSP, V, 557-559; slave trade transactions in Parliament, summer, 1806, JHC, XLI, 474, 550-551.

Charles James Fox, who held the post of foreign secretary, died on September 13, 1806, but his work and inspiration made possible the passage of the abolition bill six months later. On February 23, 1807, the House of Commons by a vote of 283 to 16 approved the bill; on March 18, the House of Lords finally concurred; and on March 25, it received the royal assent and became law. This law (47 Geo. III. Cap. 36) declared that after May 1, 1807, no ship should depart from a port anywhere in the empire for the purpose of slaving, and that no slave should be imported into a British colony after March 1, 1808. Three weeks earlier (March 2) the American Congress had forbidden "the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States," after January 1, 1808. The world's two great maritime states officially had abolished the slave trade by 1808. Thus twenty years after the Society for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade had begun its campaign, it achieved its first noteworthy success in the limited prohibition of a traffic which had flourished for three and a half centuries.⁴²

⁴²David C. Douglas, editor, English Historical Documents (London, 1959), XI, 803-804; Knight and Smith, Popular History, VII, 478; an act to prohibit the importation of slaves, 2 Mar. 1807, Richard Peters, editor, The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America (Boston, 1861), II (1799-1813), 426-430. Although its constitution had provided by Article I, section 9, that Congress could not prohibit the importation of slaves prior to January 1, 1808, the United States had enacted a law in 1794, which was amended in 1800, to forbid its citizens or residents to engage in the slave trade in any way other than as importers (An act to prohibit the slave trade, 22 Mar. 1794, ibid., I [1789-1798], 347-349; a supplementary act to prohibit the slave trade, 10 May 1800, ibid., II, 70-71).

In résumé, the tremendous demand for slave laborers in the New World made slave trading very profitable, and drew ships from many nations into that commerce. Britain, through skillful political moves and able, adept merchantmen, became the pre-eminent slave carrying nation after 1713. The eighteenth century Enlightenment, however, taught that all men, by nature, ought to be free, equal, and independent. Romanticism, too, emphasized individual worth and dignity. Thus in the intellectual realm abolition of the slave trade could be described as a child of the Enlightenment succored and supported by Romanticism.

In Britain a few individuals interested in the welfare of their black brothers sought ways to aid them. Taking advantage of the religious revival which stemmed from Romanticism, these humanitarians welded evangelical church groups none too firmly into a unified movement for abolition. The opposition of the wealthy slave trade interest and West Indian planters was aided after 1793 by anti-Jacobinism and the war with France which overshadowed every other issue. A temporary respite in the war and a French reversal of policy toward the Negro, however, combined to provide a favorable climate for renewed abolitionist activity, and abolition shortly thereafter became law in Britain, the greatest maritime nation of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I

BRITAIN'S QUEST FOR EFFECTIVE SUPPRESSION, 1807-1815

Following the passage of the British act abolishing the slave trade, its sponsors did not rest upon their laurels, for they regarded this measure as only the first step toward suppressing this infamous traffic, and the institution of slavery itself, throughout the world. Despite the statutes of Britain and America against it, their merchants, and those of other countries, continued to participate in the slave trade because the rewards remained great enough to justify the risks involved. The reasons for this "black market" were twofold: it was cheaper to import slaves than to rear them on colonial plantations, and effective means of suppression did not yet exist.

Within a month after abolition became law, a group of British abolitionists and their friends met to discuss the welfare of the africans. On April 14, 1807, they formed a society called the African Institution, and elected as president William Frederick, the Duke of Gloucester, a nephew of King George III. For vice-presidents, they chose the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Durham, Earl Grey, Earl Spencer, Lord Holland, Lord Grenville, the Right Honorable George Canning, and

the Honorable William Wilberforce. The African Institution made its primary objective the bringing of civilization to the black savages and its secondary aim the vigilant enforcement of the act of abolition.¹

Seeking to implement the law, the British government in November 1807 dispatched two warships. Their captains carried orders to apprehend any Briton who violated the act and to explain the beneficial results of the law to native chiefs, most of whom were slave dealers. To facilitate the work of the navy, Britain established a Court of Vice-Admiralty in Sierra Leone, a colony to which liberated slaves were taken. Within a month of these actions, the British navy, blockading the ports of Bonapartist Cuba, captured the American slaver, Amédie, bound for Cuba, and a British Court of Vice-Admiralty in the West Indies condemned the ship and freed its slave cargo. Despite an appeal from the owners of the Amédie, the Privy Council upheld the court's decision, declaring on July 28, 1810, that they were entitled to no indemnification, since the vessel had attempted to run the blockade. British abolitionists and American slavers misinterpreted this decision to mean that Britain would capture any slave ship violating

¹Monthly Repository, III (1808), 186; Thomas P. Martin, "Some International Aspects of the Anti-Slavery Movement, 1818-1823," Journal of Economic and Business History, I (November, 1928), 137n.

her own laws and that she had become the official policeman for American as well as British slavers.²

Because of her naval supremacy after Trafalgar, Britain, for the duration of the war, did prevent her own subjects from engaging in the slave trade under the Union Jack. She could not eliminate, however, the practice of sailing under a foreign flag, nor could she very well interfere with the slave traders of friendly states, especially those of her allies. British and American merchants who sought to smuggle slaves in violation of the laws of both countries and to reduce the danger of capture and condemnation by the British took refuge under the flag of one of Britain's Iberian allies. In a move designed to curtail this flagrant evasion, Wilberforce and his friends tried unsuccessfully in 1808 to prevail upon Spencer Perceval, a sympathetic, prominent Tory, to persuade the government to offer the island of Trinidad in return for Spanish abolition. Two years later the African Institution complained that the coast of Africa "swarmed with slave-traders" flying the Spanish and Portuguese flags and that in many proven instances they were British subjects.³

²Monthly Repository, III (1808), 624; Belfast Monthly Magazine, V (1810), 156; Henry Wheaton, Elements of International Law, edited by George Grafton Wilson (London, 1936), pp. 175-176; Edinburgh Review, XVIII (1811), 316-318.

³Ibid., p. 307; Denis Gray, Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister, 1762-1812 (Manchester, 1963), p. 26.

In response to these protests, the London cabinet took steps to strip the aegis of foreign flags from British slavers. On February 19, 1810, a treaty was signed with Portugal whereby that kingdom consented to restrict the taking of slaves to its own possessions and to limit this traffic to Portuguese subjects. In an effort to put its own house in order, Parliament on May 14, 1811, made slave trading a felony, punishable by transportation to a penal colony for a maximum of fourteen years (51 Geo. III. Cap. 23). As a result of this measure, British slave trading virtually came to an end. The War of 1812, of course, made it possible for Britain legally to confiscate American slave ships.⁴

Contrary to the expectations of its exponents, suppression of the slave trade did not always benefit the Africans. In pre-abolition native wars, it behooved a chief to take as many prisoners as possible, for they could readily be sold to European slave traders. With this incentive removed, battles became more bloody and fewer prisoners were taken, as a letter of February 5, 1812, indicates. Fearing certain

⁴Treaty between Great Britain and Portugal, 19 Feb. 1810, BFSP, III (1815-1816), 904n; Annual Register, LII (1810), 144-145; act of the British Parliament for rendering more effectual the abolition of the slave trade, 14 May 1811, BFSP, V, 571-572 (This measure was strongly supported in Commons by Henry Brougham, a founder and editor of the Edinburgh Review).

death if they returned home, many liberated slaves requested their emancipators to be sent elsewhere.⁵

Notwithstanding these unfortunate consequences, which seemed minor in comparison to the humanitarian ideals of liberty and fraternity, the London government continued its efforts to broaden the base of abolition. On March 3, 1813, Britain concluded a treaty with Sweden according to which the latter, in return for Guadeloupe, forbade her subjects to engage in the slave trade or to import slaves into her West Indian possessions. Ten months later, on January 14, 1814, an Anglo-Danish treaty was signed whereby the two states agreed to cooperate in the suppression of the slave trade.⁶

By the end of March, 1814, when the defeat of Napoleon appeared imminent, British abolitionists began preparations for the peace settlement with France. The African Institution sent a delegation to discuss the slave trade with Prime Minister Liverpool, and Wilberforce on March 28 urged Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (the second Marquess of Londonderry), the foreign minister, to threaten France with the loss of her colonies unless she agreed to complete and

⁵Captain Milne of H. M. S. Impetueux at Saint Helena to Home, 5 Feb. 1812, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of Colonel David Milne Home of Wedderburn Castle, N. B., edited by J. J. Cartwright (London, 1902), pp. 152-153.

⁶Separate article to the treaty between Great Britain and Sweden, 3 Mar. 1813, BFSP, III, 886; treaty between Great Britain and Denmark, 14 Jan. 1814, ibid.

immediate abolition. On April 11, 1814, Napoleon abdicated unconditionally, but by the Treaty of Fontainebleau, he received the island of Elba off the Italian coast, a generous annual income, and was allowed to retain the title of emperor. While Europe rejoiced over its hard-earned victory, the British House of Commons on May 3, and the House of Lords two days later, approved an address to the Crown, calling for negotiations with the sovereigns of Europe to end the slave trade. When the Paris Peace Conference met in May 1814, British abolitionists, therefore, were present, observing, and acting. Representing this lobby in Paris, Zachary Macaulay urged that the return of French colonies be predicated upon suppression of the slave trade. French colonial interests, of course, insisted that the slave trade was absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the colonies, but they also realized that the restoration of their colonies was unlikely unless France agreed to abolition. British merchants, on the other hand, argued that if France should retain both her colonies and the slave trade, the cause of humanity would be done great harm, and Britain's own colonial interests would be hurt unless some compensating advantage was extracted from France.⁷

⁷Wilberforce to Castlereagh, 28 Mar. 1814, Charles William Vane, editor, Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry, Third Series (London, 1852), I, 401 (hereafter cited as Castlereagh Corrs.); Macaulay to Castlereagh, 29 May 1814, ibid., II, 47-48; same to same, 30 May 1814, ibid., pp. 48-49; address of the House of Commons to the Prince Regent of Great Britain, 3 May 1814, BFSP, III, 893-895; address of the House of Lords to the Prince Regent of Great Britain, 5 May 1814, ibid., pp. 895-896.

The consensus of the allied diplomats was that abolition of the slave trade was a question to be decided primarily by Britain, but Tsar Alexander I of Russia, then in the salad days of his liberalism, strongly supported immediate abolition and pressed for the inclusion of such an article in the peace treaty. Unfortunately, Castlereagh, who "had been one of the few obstinate opponents of abolition in the Commons," did not support him. By the Treaty of Paris (May 30, 1814), France regained not only her lost colonies but also obtained a five year period of grace (until June 1, 1819) in which to end her slave trade. This postponement was granted in deference to the French desire to import a new supply of slaves into Haiti, whose reconquest the Paris cabinet mistakenly considered to be imminent. The peace treaty, nevertheless, condemned the slave trade as "repugnant," and France agreed to support at the forthcoming Congress of Vienna a declaration against it. On May 31, Castlereagh distributed a circular to the representatives of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, requesting their future cooperation in abolishing this traffic. Their responses were favorable, since no material interests were involved, and by endorsing abolition, they hoped to gain British support for some of their own pet projects.⁸

⁸Lafayette to William H. Crawford, American secretary of war, 26 May 1814, Count James Francis Gallatin, editor, The Diary of James Gallatin (Secretary to Albert Gallatin, A Great Peace Maker), 1813-1827 (New York, 1926), p. 23;

After signing the First Treaty of Paris, Tsar Alexander I, King Frederick William III of Prussia, and Prince Clemens Wenzel von Metternich, the Austrian foreign minister, visited England. There they were exposed to the fiery zeal of the British abolitionists. In conversations with the Duke of Gloucester and Wilberforce, the Tsar complained that Castlereagh had not supported him in the negotiations at Paris. To Wilberforce, Alexander declared, "What could be done, when your own ambassador gave way?"⁹

Despite his private convictions, Castlereagh, in deference to the wishes of Parliament, instigated negotiations with the Netherlands and Spain on the slave trade question. In response to his request and self-interest, the Dutch on June 15, 1814, abolished the slave trade. By this action

Gloucester to Francis Hastings, second Earl of Moira, 15 Oct. 1814, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Reginald Rawdon Hastings, Esq., of the Manor House, Ashby de la Zouche, edited by Francis Bickley (London, 1934), III, 306; Elie Halévy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, translated by E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker (New York, 1949), I, 457; additional article to the definitive treaty of peace between Great Britain and France, 30 May 1814, BFSP, III, 890; Castlereagh to the Ministers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia [circular], 31 May 1814, ibid., p. 887; Nesselrode to Castlereagh, 2 June 1814, ibid.; Metternich to Castlereagh, 2 June 1814, ibid., p. 888; Hardenberg to Castlereagh, 2 June 1814, ibid.

⁹Wilberforce and Wilberforce, Wilberforce, II, 145; Prince Richard Metternich, editor, Memoirs of Prince Metternich, translated by Mrs. Alexander Napier (New York, 1881), I 250 (hereafter cited as Metternich, Memoirs).

the government of the Hague, in imitation of France, hoped to secure the restoration of colonies captured by Britain.¹⁰

In Madrid, meanwhile, British diplomacy met with far less success, for Spain still regarded slavery as a necessary element of her colonial economy. In June 1814, when Sir Henry Wellesley, the British ambassador, broached this subject to the Duke of San Carlos, the Spanish foreign minister, the latter observed that at the time of British abolition the ratio of blacks to whites in the British colonies was twenty to one, whereas the slave population now equalled the European in the Spanish colonies. After prolonged discussions, Wellesley obtained the vague and sonorous treaty of July 5, 1814, whereby Spain condemned the injustice and inhumanity of the slave trade and promised not to allow any foreigner to use the Spanish flag for protection. Realizing that additional concessions would require a greater inducement than an appeal to humanitarianism, Castlereagh on July 30 directed Wellesley to offer Spain the remainder of the war subsidy for that year (about £800,000) in exchange for an agreement to abolish the slave trade within five years and, meanwhile, to restrict it to Africa south of the equator. Such a convention must contain, of course, a provision for reciprocal enforcement. For immediate

¹⁰Decree of the Sovereign Prince of the Netherlands relative to the abolition of the slave trade, 15 June 1814, BFSP, III, 889.

and complete Spanish abolition, Britain would assist Spain in raising a loan of £2,000,000 on the credit of the two governments.¹¹

Urging Wellesley to press for Spanish abolition, Castlereagh declared that since the nation and Parliament were "bent upon this object, . . . the Ministers must make it the basis of their policy." If Spain remained obdurate on this question, a British boycott of Spanish colonial produce could result. Renewing negotiations with San Carlos, Wellesley argued that the slave trade was not really a Spanish enterprise since most of the slavers were Americans or Britons. Few slaves, moreover, ever reached Spanish colonial plantations, for most of those sent to Latin America were transhipped to the United States. He emphasized that Russia, Prussia, and Austria were sympathetic to abolition and would support it at the Congress of Vienna. With these arguments and the promise of a subsidy and a loan, Wellesley urged Spain to abolish the slave trade, but his diplomacy bore little fruit. By an additional article to the Anglo-Spanish treaty of July 5, Spain agreed on August 28 to restrict her subjects to the direct slave trade between Africa and the Spanish colonies. Two months later, in October, San Carlos promised that his government would confine the

¹¹Wellesley to Castlereagh, 17 June 1814, *ibid.*, p. 920; same to same, 6 July 1814, *ibid.*, pp. 920-921; Castlereagh to Wellesley, 30 July 1814, *ibid.*, pp. 923-926.

trade in west Africa to the coast between the equator and 10° north latitude and would abolish the traffic after eight years. Because of this delay, however, Britain withheld her offer of generous remuneration. Despite the rich British inducements which would have eased her distressed financial condition, Spain refused to sanction immediate abolition for fear that such an act would incite to rebellion those colonies still loyal to her.¹²

If statistics cited by the English Monthly Magazine are accurate, the British government had little success in suppressing the slave trade between 1807 and 1814. In 1807, about 100,000 slaves had been transported across the Atlantic; yet seven years after British abolition, their number was reckoned at 80,000, and most of the ships carrying them flew the Spanish and Portuguese flags. Needless to say, this periodical complained that the government was neglecting the cause of humanity despite some 800 petitions bearing nearly a million signatures, and called for the ministry to abolish the slave trade utterly and immediately. The Congress of Vienna seemed to offer such an opportunity.¹³

¹²Same to same, 1 Aug. 1814, Castlereagh Corrs., II, 73-74; Wellesley to San Carlos, 20 Aug. 1814, BFSP, III, 928; additional article to the treaty between Great Britain and Spain of July 5, 1814, 28 Aug. 1814, ibid., p. 922; Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31 Aug. 1814, ibid., pp. 929-930; same to same, 23 Oct. 1814, ibid., p. 932.

¹³Monthly Magazine, XXXVIII (1814), 132.

French instructions for the Congress, drafted in August, 1814 by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Prince de Benevento, the foreign minister, declared that the French slave trade was not subject to debate but was a question to be decided solely by France. The French delegation, however, would cooperate with that of Britain, if it appeared advantageous to the national interest. Believing Louis XVIII to be sympathetic toward abolition, the British Prince Regent requested his cooperation in abolishing the slave trade. The King replied that he would "be happy . . . to do anything to gratify . . . the British nation." Despite this assurance, Louis could, or would, do very little. Talleyrand informed Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, the new British ambassador, that he had no objection to adopting measures to prevent the revival of the slave trade in those places where it had ceased during the war, but he was strangely silent on the issue of suppressing this traffic where it still existed. The French legislature, especially the Chamber of Peers, was so openly opposed to abolition that British merchants were allowed to fit out slave ships at Nantes and Bordeaux.¹⁴

¹⁴Duc de Broglie, editor, Memoirs of [the] Prince de Talleyrand, translated by Raphael Ledos de Beaufort and Mrs. Angus Hall (Boston, 1895), II, 182 (hereafter cited as Talleyrand, Memoirs); Prince Regent of Great Britain to the King of France, 5 Aug. 1814, BFSP, III, 800; Wellington to Castlereagh, 25 Aug. 1814, ibid., pp. 901-902 (Wellington arrived in Paris on August 22 and presented his credentials two days later).

In view of this climate of opinion, it is not surprising that France on the eve of the Congress refused even to restrict the slave trade. British proposals (1) that France should prohibit the collecting of slaves on the northwestern coast of Africa, where it had been suppressed, (2) that a convention conferring a mutual right of search and seizure be negotiated, and (3) that a commercial boycott be invoked against any state which did not abide by an international code governing the slave trade, all met with French intransigence and Talleyrand's bland assurance that His Most Christian Majesty was "determined to restrain the Trade of his subjects on the coast of Africa North of the Line."¹⁵

When apprised of Clarkson's suggestion that France would abolish the slave trade immediately if Britain gave her some desirable colony, Castlereagh affirmed on September 9 that neither Louis nor Talleyrand had mentioned such a possibility to him. He suspected Clarkson of an insidious manuever to get Britain to make such an offer. The next day Clarkson informed Castlereagh that if the cabinet were not ready to take the initiative in securing immediate abolition, there were members of the Opposition who would move that a material offer be made to France. Clarkson, meanwhile, wrote a pamphlet denouncing the slave

¹⁵Wellington to Talleyrand, 26 Aug. 1814, ibid., pp. 903-904; Wellington to Castlereagh, 1 Sept. 1814, ibid., p. 903; Castlereagh to Bathurst, 3 Sept. 1814, ibid., p. 905.

trade, translated it into French and German, distributed it among the allied delegations at Vienna, and sent fifty copies to Castlereagh. When Wellington broached the subject to Talleyrand, the latter was evasive but confessed that perhaps he did mention casually and indirectly to Lord Holland, a member of Lords and a vice-president of the African Institution, some such exchange as that described by Clarkson. Now, however, he pretended disinterest in an arrangement of this sort. Liverpool, though vexed by Talleyrand, whom he regarded as the mischievous originator of the scheme, resolved, nonetheless, to follow through at Vienna with the offer of a pecuniary grant or an island (preferably Trinidad), to France in exchange for immediate abolition. To do otherwise, he feared, would alienate too many people at home.¹⁶

In September, 1814 the Congress began its work. In preparation for formal negotiations on the slave trade, Castlereagh attempted through private talks to impress upon the allied ministers the need for immediate abolition. But his efforts were in vain: France unequivocally refused to be moved; Spain held to her position of partial abolition at once and total abolition in eight years; and Portugal

¹⁶Wellington to Castlereagh, 2 Sept. 1814, Castlereagh Corrs., II, 103; Castlereagh to Wellington, 9 Sept. 1814, ibid., p. 110; Clarkson to Castlereagh, 10 Sept. 1814, ibid., pp. 116-117; Wellington to Liverpool, 13 Sept. 1814, ibid., p. 120; Liverpool to Wellington 23 Sept. 1814, ibid., pp. 132-133.

indicated that for certain material considerations, she would agree to a partial abolition. Official negotiations on this issue began on October 8, 1814, when Castlereagh offered to cede France a colony, or pay compensation, if she would abolish the slave trade, but Talleyrand remained silent, ignoring the British offer. That the foreign secretary disliked this proposal is indicated by his lament to the prime minister:

I am . . . persuaded that we should at this moment be . . . nearer . . . [abolition] if the Government had been permitted to pursue this object with the ordinary means of influence and persuasion instead of being placed in the predicament of being expected to purchase concessions on this point at almost any price.¹⁷

Pursuing his own ideas rather than Clarkson's, Castlereagh proposed to the continental powers a plan for a commercial boycott of any state which did not abolish the slave trade. To Talleyrand, who perhaps sensed the secretary's reluctance to carry out his instructions, Castlereagh seemed indecisive and overawed by Parliament, but "I will . . . inspire him with firmness," the minister confided to his sovereign.¹⁸

¹⁷Castlereagh to Liverpool, 25 Oct. 1814, Sir Charles K. Webster, editor, British Diplomacy, 1813-1815 (London, 1881), p. 215.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 215-216; Castlereagh to Talleyrand, 8 Oct. 1814, BFSP, III, 939-940; Talleyrand to Louis XVIII, 29 Sept. 1814, M. G. Pallain, editor and translator, The Correspondence of Prince Talleyrand and Louis XVIII During the Congress of Vienna (New York, 1881), p. 8.

On November 21, those nations which favored an immediate and complete abolition (Britain, Russia, Prussia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands) issued a memorandum stating their position on this issue and intention to act in concert against France. If France would not abolish the slave trade forthwith, she should be persuaded to abolish it in three instead of five years. Spain and Portugal, meanwhile, would be pressed for abolition. Under pressure from the Great Powers, the Paris government yielded a little and in December issued regulations forbidding Frenchmen to trade in slaves between Cape Palmas of the Ivory Coast and Cape Blanc, the northernmost tip of Africa. In conformity with the First Peace of Paris, France, moreover, proposed on the 14th to the Committee of Eight (comprised of the signatory powers: Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Portugal, and Spain) that a commission be formed "to discuss the abolition of the slave trade." With this proposal, the French cabinet declared its treaty obligation to support abolition at the Congress had been fulfilled and its good faith and devotion to humanitarian ideals made manifest. Immediately following this proposal, Count Pedro de Palmella, the Portuguese plenipotentiary, declared that only those powers with sugar colonies should be represented on the projected slave trade commission. When Count Pedro de Labrador, the Spanish delegate, supported the Portuguese recommendation, a heated discussion ensued which forced the

the Committee of Eight to drop its consideration of a slave trade commission and to adjourn temporarily.¹⁹

Despite the acrimonious debate over the Polish-Saxon Question, which brought the Allies to the brink of war, Castlereagh did not neglect the slave trade issue. On January 2, 1815, he had a cordial conversation with the Tsar on this subject, and on the 22nd, he at last concluded a treaty with Portugal which provided for the immediate abolition of the slave trade north of the equator and for total abolition after January 21, 1823, a deadline later extended to February 1830. But for this convention, Britain paid a high price: £300,000 in compensation, cancellation of almost all of the £600,000 loan of 1809, and nullification of the 1810 commercial treaty which had favored British merchants.²⁰

Meanwhile, on January 16, Castlereagh re-introduced the slave trade question to the Committee of Eight.

¹⁹Memorandum as to the mode of conducting the negotiations in Congress for the final abolition of the slave trade, Castlereagh to Liverpool, 21 Nov. 1814, Webster, Diplomacy, pp. 233-235; Talleyrand, Memoirs, II, 361-362; slave trade regulations of the French government, [n. d.] Dec. 1814, Lewis Hertslet, editor, A Complete Collection of the Treaties and Conventions and Reciprocal Regulations at Present Subsisting between Great Britain and Foreign Powers (London, 1827), III, 84-91 (hereafter cited as Hertslet, Commercial Treaties).

²⁰Castlereagh to Bathurst, 2 Jan. 1815, BFSP, III, 941-943; treaty between Great Britain and Portugal for the restriction of the Portuguese slave trade, 22 Jan. 1815, ibid., pp. 348-354.

Despite the attempt of the Iberian powers to make the issue a colonial question and thus to eliminate the voices of the great continental powers, Castlereagh managed to keep it as a general question upon which all eight powers could speak and vote. Declaring itself on January 16 to be a special conference on the slave trade, the Committee met and issued a protocol. Thereafter it met four more times and issued a protocol each time. Its final protocol (February 8) condemned the slave trade as "repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality . . . [and as] a scourge which has so long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity." This declaration on June 9 became Annex XV of the Final Act of the Treaty of Vienna.²¹

As a final inducement to France, Castlereagh in mid-February offered to pay Joachim Murat, King of Naples, to abdicate if France would immediately abolish her slave trade. Talleyrand approved this proposal, since it would promote

²¹Castlereagh to Bathurst, 26 Jan. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 945-946; protocole de la conférence entre les plenipotentiaires d'Autriche, d'Espagne, de France, de la Grande Bretagne, de Portugal, de Prusse, de Russie, et de Suede; tenue à Vienne, 16 Jan. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 946-949; protocole de la 1ère séance particulière, 20 Jan. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 949-959; protocole de la 2de conférence particulière, 28 Jan. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 959-963; protocole de la 3ème conférence particulière, 4 Feb. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 963-969; protocole de la 4ème et dernière conférence particulière, 8 Feb. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 969-971; declaration of the eight powers relative to the universal abolition of the slave trade, 8 Feb. 1815, Sir Edward Hertslet, editor, The Map of Europe by Treaty (London, 1875), I, 60-61; Frederick von Gentz' memoir, 12 Feb. 1815, Metternich, Memoirs, II, 559.

a Bourbon restoration in Naples, and asked Louis to give it serious consideration, stating:

This arrangement, owing to the mania of the English for the abolition of the slave-trade, would certainly have the advantage of drawing England into a closer alliance with our cause in Naples, and inducing her to second our efforts there.²²

This and other negotiations with France were nullified, however, by Napoleon's unexpected return to Europe. On March 1, 1815, he landed on the southern coast of France and began a journey which passed through Waterloo to the island of Saint Helena in the South Atlantic. The same day that the "Corsican ogre" entered Paris (March 20), Castlereagh reported to the House of Commons on his success in promoting the cause of abolition at Vienna.²³

Napoleon, who hoped to secure British support for his restoration, issued an Imperial Decree on March 29 which proclaimed the immediate and complete abolition of the slave trade. This action inspired G. Cruikshank, a cartoonist, to turn out a production labeled "General Napoleon turned Methodist Preacher," which depicted the Emperor standing in a pulpit, declaiming to a group of disgruntled soldiers:

". . . liberty and peace--plunder and promotions--'No Slave Trade; humanity shudders at the very thought of it!'"

Most English abolitionists, however, were pleased by

²²Talleyrand, Memoirs, III, 50-51.

²³Castlereagh in Commons, 20 Mar. 1815, Webster, Diplomacy, pp. 395-396.

Napoleon's proclamation and regarded his return as divine punishment visited upon Europe for not having abolished the slave trade. He, at least, had "put an end to that idle discussion at the Congress of Vienna." While Europe, unfortunately, suffered more bloodletting, Africans would enjoy a respite from the oppression of slave traders. The London cabinet, though dismayed by cries that "God is the God of the blacks as well as of the whites," and that "Napoleon is at least . . . [Africa's] benefactor," was impressed by the devotion of abolitionists to their cause.²⁴

After the final defeat of Napoleon, Castlereagh contended on July 27, 1815, that the former emperor's decree of March 29 was still valid and binding upon France, since Louis XVIII, while a displaced sovereign at Ghent, had given his assurances that the French slave trade would cease. Talleyrand, of course, rejected this interpretation, declaring on July 30 that all Napoleonic decrees had been nullified, but he admitted that Louis, indeed, had abolished the French slave trade. There was no question, however, that The Hundred Days had scrapped the First Peace of Paris and that another now must be negotiated. On the subject of the slave trade, Article XI of the consequent Second Peace of Paris, signed on November 20, 1815, merely reaffirmed the

²⁴Décret impérial français, qui abolit la traite des noirs, 29 Mar. 1815, BFSP, III, 196n; George, English Caricature, II, Plate 63; Monthly Repository, X (1815), 262.

provision of the First Treaty which had required French prohibition within five years, a dispensation which seems strange, indeed, in view of France's commitment to immediate and complete abolition. From Rouen came the report that the provision for continuing the traffic in blacks was not intended to benefit France, since her merchants did not have sufficient capital, but Britain. There is, however, no evidence to support this speculation.²⁵

By the end of 1815, the nations that had abolished the slave trade were Denmark, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States. Portugal had abolished the trade only in the Northern Hemisphere; France had not implemented her declarations with deeds; and Spain had promised only to restrict the trade to her own subjects and to the west African coast between the equator and 10° north latitude. While endorsing the principle of abolition, the Treaty of Vienna had failed to establish any means for its enforcement or even a deadline. Each state was left free to decide these matters in accordance with its national interest.

²⁵Eclectic Review (new series), III (1815), 71; definitive treaty between Austria, Great Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia, 20 Nov. 1815, BFSP, III, 291, 292; cf. additional article to the treaty of peace between Great Britain and France, 30 May 1814, ibid., 890; proceedings of the Spanish Council of the Indies relative to the abolition of the slave trade, [n. d.] Feb. 1816, ibid., IV, 518.

During the war years, when Britain policed the seas, the slave trade had been reduced to the satisfaction of the British abolitionists. With the end of wartime blockades and surveillance, however, this traffic revived. Reacting to this turn of events, the abolitionists charged that Castlereagh was lukewarm in his efforts to secure effective suppression. Although he was motivated by political expediency rather than private conviction, the meager success of the foreign secretary's diplomacy on this issue was not due to lack of effort or determination on his part, but to the intransigence of France, Spain, and Portugal. These slave trading powers identified this traffic with their national interest, and taking advantage of the domestic attacks upon the ministry, they sought material concessions from Britain in exchange for even partial abolition. Despite criticism at home and procrastination abroad, Castlereagh, between 1807 and 1815, did, at least, lay the foundation for future negotiations.

CHAPTER II

FROM VIENNA TO AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, 1816-1818

Although the Congress of Vienna had produced a pious declaration denouncing the slave trade, it had failed to approve any means for its effective suppression. Britain, the moving force behind abolitionist activities at Vienna, found that humanitarian arguments, material inducements, and even tremendous naval power, all were insufficient to gain support from nations who feared her and distrusted her motives.

Despite the efforts of the London government to promote abolition, English abolitionists complained in April 1816 that almost as much British capital now was being spent on the slave trade as before 1807. The charge of one abolitionist that "Great Britain is at best but 'lukewarm' respecting the actual abolition of the slave trade" appeared to be confirmed by the testimony of Captain Sir James L. Yeo, a British naval officer who had seen duty on the western African coast. Captain Yeo complained that the naval force employed to suppress slave traders was nominal rather than adequate and that profits from this traffic continued to be great. A slave bought at the mouth of Lagos River in

Africa for £5 10s. (\$27.50) could be in sold in Brazil for £80 (\$400).¹

The British West Indies, too, continued to be a good market for slave traders. To close it, English abolitionists urged their government to register all slaves in the colonies. In the West Indies, meanwhile, the friends of abolition, who were drawn largely from the ranks of evangelical missionaries, mistakenly interpreted the registration movement in Britain as a prelude to emancipation. Inspired by these words of hope and incensed by their masters' open hostility to registration, the slaves of Barbados on April 14, 1816, rose in revolt. But the next day a small army of British regulars and local militia commanded by Colonel Edward Codd crushed the insurrection, killing several hundred blacks. Many more were executed after short "trials." During the brief rebellion, only one white man was killed, though property damage was heavy. Already annoyed by the abolitionists, the West Indian planters now accused them of having instigated the uprising on Barbados. Confronted by the specter of racial warfare, many Britons became fearful of abolition and began to doubt the wisdom and justice of this cause. In view of this climate of opinion, the London cabinet was reluctant to

¹New Monthly Magazine, V (1816), 204; European Magazine, LXIX (1816), 392; Yeo to John W. Croker, secretary to the Admiralty, 7 Nov. 1816, BFSP, IV, 127-128, 132-133.

interfere in colonial slave affairs in 1816, but Earl Henry Bathurst, the British secretary of war and colonies, nonetheless, informed the West Indians in May that next year he would sponsor a registry bill, if their colonial assemblies refused to pass one. To this ultimatum, the West Indian legislatures paid lip service by passing registration acts which were so full of loopholes as to be virtually ineffectual.²

While Britain sought to suppress the slave trade within the empire and to solve the many problems created by acute economic depression at home, she pressed the cause of abolition on the continent. Returning to an earlier idea, Castlereagh in 1816 tried to form a "league" for the suppression of the slave trade. Mindful of the Tsar's sympathetic support of this cause at Paris and Vienna, Castlereagh on May 28 instructed Lord Cathcart, British ambassador to St. Petersburg, to combine the slave trade and Barbary pirate questions and to work for an Anglo-Russian entente which would be the backbone of such a league. Some European states which condemned the Barbary pirates for enslaving whites showed little concern for the blacks whom their own subjects carried off as slaves, but an Anglo-Russian initiative to abolish all forms of this traffic

²Annual Register, LVIII (1816), 88-90; Burns, West Indies, p. 613; Chester W. New, The Life of Henry Brougham to 1830 (Oxford, 1961), p. 143.

could be impressive enough to make total suppression a reality. A joint proceeding would, at least, give the abolitionist movement a broader base from which to work.³

According to Castlereagh's plan, all maritime states would submit their shipping and, in effect, their sovereignty upon the high seas to the authority of the British navy. His proposal would, indeed, have ended the slave trade immediately, such was the strength of the royal navy, but no nation which valued its sovereignty was likely to join Britain's anti-slave trade league. The issues of search and seizure and impressment were fundamental causes of the Anglo-American war just ended and Anglophobia was still strong in the United States. Russia, France, and the United States, all weak naval powers and equally distrustful of Britain, shared the view that the foreign secretary's scheme would violate their traditional policy of freedom of the seas. In short, the league idea was simple, practical, and efficacious, but it had no chance of being accepted by powers which desired to undermine British naval supremacy as a means of promoting their own national security.⁴

The revival of the slave trade following the close of the Napoleonic Wars reached such alarming proportions that

³Castlereagh to Cathcart, 28 May 1816, Castlereagh Corrs., III, 255; same to Capodistria, 30 Sept. 1816, ibid., p. 301.

⁴Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1949), p. 415.

Castlereagh complained in December 1816 that its volume now exceeded that of its eighteenth century heyday. Improvements in technique and ship design, moreover, reduced the possibility of capture. A system of shore signals which cut the time required to load slaves and the use of swift sailing vessels which neglected the comfort of the cargo made the capture of the slavers more difficult than ever. The foreign secretary on December 23 informed John Quincy Adams, American minister to London, that a substantial number of these slave ships fitted out in the southern United States and that they usually sailed under the flags of Spain and Portugal. To put an end to these violations of her own laws, Castlereagh argued, the United States should join Britain's proposed anti-slave trade league. But these revelations and arguments served only to antagonize Adams, an ardent nationalist, who became secretary of state on March 6, 1817.⁵

France's attitude toward Castlereagh's proposals was no less cool than that of the United States, but early in 1817, the Paris cabinet finally took the first tentative steps toward implementing its promise of July 30, 1815, to suppress the slave trade. On January 8, Louis XVIII ordered French officials to confiscate any vessel attempting to

⁵Entry for 23 Dec. 1816, Allan Nevins, editor, The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845 (New York, 1929), pp. 177-178; entry for 16 Apr. 1817, ibid., p. 180.

introduce slaves from Africa into a French colony. Except for the slaves, who automatically became freemen, the cargo would be forfeited to the Crown, and the convicted captain, if a Frenchman, would be forbidden ever again to command a French vessel. The liberated blacks would be employed by local officials on colonial public works. For France this ordinance was the first real evidence of good faith in promoting the abolition of the slave trade.⁶

In view of France's determination to go it alone, Castlereagh wisely looked elsewhere to gain support for his league idea. On July 28, 1817, he prevailed upon Portugal to grant a qualified right of mutual search of their merchant ships on the high seas and to create mixed courts of British and Portuguese jurists to adjudicate the case of any ship detained under the pact. By the Anglo-Portuguese convention of 1817, the first step was taken to make Castlereagh's plan an actuality. Portugal, her slavers already restricted to the Southern Hemisphere, now required them to obtain a license and declared that the Portuguese flag no longer protected them if they carried slaves to foreign colonies.⁷

⁶Ordonnance du Roi de France qui pouroit au cas où il serait contrevenu aux ordres de sa Majesté, concernant l'abolition de la traité des noirs, 8 Jan. 1817, BFSF, IV, 755.

⁷Additional convention to the treaty of the 22nd Jan. 1815, between his Britannic Majesty and his Most Faithful Majesty, for the purpose of preventing their subjects from engaging in any illicit traffic in slaves, 28 July 1817, Hertslet, Commercial Treaties, II, 81-93.

Two months later Britain secured similar concessions from Spain, but at the price of £400,000, just half the amount offered in 1814. By the Anglo-Spanish convention of September 23, Spain agreed to reciprocal visit and mixed courts, to immediate prohibition of slave trading by her subjects on the African coast north of the equator, and to total abolition after May 30, 1820. While the subsidy undoubtedly was important to the Spanish government, it was not the determining factor, since the merchants of Havana had offered Madrid a bribe of £2,000,000 to continue the slave trade. Spain appears to have made concessions primarily in the hope of receiving in return British assistance in securing a reconciliation with the revolted Spanish American colonies. Britain confided to the Madrid cabinet that she would not use her good offices to reconcile Spain and her rebellious colonies until His Catholic Majesty had concluded a satisfactory engagement to abolish the slave trade. Since most of the emerging Spanish American governments already had abolished this iniquitous commerce, it would be inconsistent for Britain to support a power which would re-establish it.⁸

⁸Annual Register, LX (1818), 20-21; treaty between His Britannic Majesty and His Catholic Majesty, for preventing their subjects from engaging in any illicit traffic in slaves, 23 Sept. 1817, ibid., pp. 215-220; confidential memorandum, 20 Aug. 1817, Sir Charles K. Webster, editor, Britain and the Independence of Latin America, 1812-1830 (London, 1938), II, 355. On October 23, 1817, Britain concluded an anti-slave trade treaty with Madagascar, which, however, did more to promote British economic interests in

While the Foreign Office negotiated to make abolition effectual, British courts restricted the police power of the royal navy. A case in point was that involving the French slave ship, Le Louis, captured by the Queen Charlotte on March 11, 1816, near Cape Mesurado on the northwestern coast of Africa. The British cruiser had put a prize crew aboard the slaver and had sailed her to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where a Court of Vice-Admiralty had condemned the Frenchman. The owners of the Louis appealed the decision to the High Court of Admiralty in London. In the appellate decision issued on December 15, 1817, Judge Sir William Scott declared that the Louis was, indeed, guilty of slaving, but there were no grounds for condemnation since no nation had the right to search or detain a foreign vessel on the high seas except at time of war or unless a convention between the states involved sanctioned such actions. Judge Scott observed, moreover, that the Treaty of Vienna had merely condemned the slave trade, not abolished it. The court, therefore, ordered the Louis and her cargo returned to the owners. The effect of this decision was to set legal limits on Britain's most effective means of curtailing the slave trade.⁹

the Western Indian Ocean than to suppress the slave trade (Treaty between Great Britain and Madagascar, 23 Oct. 1817), Hertslet, Commercial Treaties, I, 354-355.

⁹Judgment of the High Court of Admiralty in the case of the French ship, Le Louis, 15 Dec. 1817, BFSP, VIII (1820-1821), 281-294; case of the French slave ship, Le Louis, the 12th Annual Report of the African Institution, 1818, ibid., IX (1821-1822), 74-76.

Though France had forbidden her own colonies to import slaves from Africa, the French slave trade with foreign nations and colonies continued, and the British navy now could do nothing legally to stop it. In Goree and Senegal, French merchants blatantly collected slaves and exported them while British humanitarians stood meekly by, watching the sorry spectacle. In frustration they petitioned the London cabinet to do something to stop the French slave trading. As one petition lamented, "With pain have your Memorialists witnessed all the labours of philanthropy, the work of ten Years, undone in as many weeks."¹⁰

Calling upon Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia through Annex XV of the Congress of Vienna Treaty, Castlereagh on December 4, 1817, convened in London a five-power ambassadorial conference to which he proposed that (1) the slave trade be ended by 1820 and (2) a qualified right of search be instituted. Thwarting Castlereagh's proposals, Marquis René-Eustache d'Osmond, the French ambassador, declared that the conference should do nothing unless Portugal was represented. The foreign secretary acquiesced

¹⁰Benjamin Meggot Forster, an eminent biologist, to Bathurst, 30 Sept. 1817, *ibid.*, VIII, 278; a memorial of the principal merchants and traders on the coast of Africa, between Cape Blanco and Sierra Leone, to Lord Bathurst, [n. d.] Nov. 1817, *ibid.*

and invited Portugal to participate. Count de Palmella accepted, but the subsequent meetings accomplished nothing.¹¹

Citing eye-witness accounts of the slave trade on the northwestern African coast, Castlereagh on January 24, 1818, protested to Armand du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, the French premier, the revival of this traffic in Goree and Senegal since their return to France. After deploring the iniquity of the "contraband slave trade" at which the natives themselves connived, the foreign secretary asked the premier to give this matter his prompt attention. Richelieu received the British note with good grace and diplomatically inquired what measures Britain would suggest to end this commerce. He immediately launched an investigation which revealed not only that the British report was correct but also that French civil servants in Goree and Senegal were promoting the revival of the slave trade. Embarrassed, Richelieu and the Comte Louis-Mathieu de Molé, the minister of marine, explained to Sir Charles Stuart, the British ambassador to Paris, that the ordinance of January 8, 1817, had forbidden specifically the importation of slaves into a French colony, not their export. Thus colonial officials,

¹¹Protocol of conference between the plenipotentiaries of Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia, 4 Dec. 1817, *ibid.*, VI (1818-1819), 23; protocol of conference, 4 Feb. 1818, *ibid.*, p. 25; protocol of conference, 7 Feb. 1818, pp. 50-51; protocol of conference, 11 Feb. 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 51-52; protocol of conference, 14 Feb. 1818, *ibid.*, p. 52.

by permitting the slave trade, were within the letter of French law, if not its spirit.¹²

Hoping to persuade the Paris government to adopt effective means of suppression, Castlereagh on February 21, 1818, pressed France for a right of mutual search. During the war, he observed, Britain had checked the slave trade along the northwestern coast of Africa by resorting to the belligerent's right of search. Now an international police force was necessary to stop this revived traffic. If France followed the example of Portugal and Spain, other maritime states would follow and the slave trade would cease. Richelieu and Molé, of course, rejected Castlereagh's proposal. All French parties, they alleged, opposed such a convention, and even if one existed, it would create so many conflicts that more harm than good would result. Anglophobia was still a potent force in France, and it was now enhanced by the presence on French soil of British troops who served in the allied army of occupation. But if France would not please England, she pleased herself. On April 15, 1818, the French National Assembly finally enacted a law which immediately prohibited any French subject or ship from participating in the slave trade. To enforce this measure, France on June 24 dispatched a squadron to patrol

¹²Memorandum on the contraband slave-trade, since the restoration of Senegal and Goree to France, Castlereagh to d'Osmond, 24 Jan. 1818, *ibid.*, VIII, 273-276; Stuart to Castlereagh, 19 Feb. 1818, *ibid.*, p. 305.

her African colonial coasts. The ensuing capture of several French slavers off the coast of Senegal seemed to indicate that the Paris cabinet had sincerely espoused the cause of abolition and that the French slave trade at last had ended.¹³

Rebuffed by France, Britain turned next to the Netherlands in her quest for mutual search treaties. Though well disposed toward the idea, the Dutch ministry, without making a formal request, hoped to obtain a monetary award such as that given Portugal and Spain. After three months of negotiations, an Anglo-Dutch convention was concluded on May 4, 1818, establishing the right of reciprocal visit and a system of mixed courts. The Dutch signed this treaty reluctantly, for they were disappointed that no grant had been offered.¹⁴

By the fall of 1818, the total abolition of the slave trade appeared imminent, for all the maritime states of Europe, save Portugal, had abolished this traffic or had set May 30, 1820, as the date for final abolition. Despite the success of Castlereagh's diplomacy vis-à-vis small states

¹³Castlereagh to Stuart, 21 Feb. 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 298-300; Stuart to Castlereagh, 2 Mar. 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 306-307; law for the punishment of French subjects engaged in the slave trade, 15 Apr. 1818, Hertslet, *Commercial Treaties*, III, 100-101; ordinance for the employment of a French naval force on the coast of Africa for the prevention of the slave trade, 24 June 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁴Clancarty to Castlereagh, 10 Feb. 1818, *Castlereagh Corrs.*, III, 406; same to same, 5 May 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 436-437; Anglo-Dutch treaty for the prevention of the slave trade, 4 May 1818, *Annual Register*, LX (1818), 223-231.

since 1815, many British abolitionists, still distrustful of his devotion to the cause, planned to send their own advocate to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), scheduled to begin its deliberations at the end of September 1818. Wilberforce feared that such a lobbyist would embarrass Castlereagh and Wellington, the British plenipotentiaries, but was eventually persuaded to support the idea. His candidate for the mission was Clarkson, whom Wilberforce thought "was formed by Providence for the purpose . . . , since he would be regarded as half Quaker, and may do eccentric things with less offence than . . . someone who was an M. P." James Stephen, an eminent abolitionist in and out of Parliament and the brother-in-law of Wilberforce, informed Castlereagh that Clarkson would go to the Congress as a private citizen to work for the suppression of the slave trade and that France and Portugal would oppose any arrangement for enforcing total abolition. The latter intelligence was hardly news to the foreign secretary, who received the news of Clarkson's mission coolly. Stephen also expounded the completely erroneous thesis that France planned the reconquest of Haiti and, if successful in this venture, would revive her slave trade in that part of the world to the detriment of British political and

economic interests. Neither Clarkson nor Castlereagh, however, placed any credence in this charge.¹⁵

In the allied councils at Aix-la-Chapelle, Clarkson apparently exerted considerable influence. Having met Tsar Alexander before, he had no difficulty in gaining an audience with the Russian emperor on October 9. His object was to convert the known sympathy of the Tsar for abolition into support for his proposals that Portugal should give up the slave trade on May 30, 1820, and that this commerce thereafter should be condemned as piracy. Alexander concurred in these views and agreed to support them at the Congress. Wellington also accepted Clarkson's suggestions for effective suppression and agreed with his conviction that France was sincere in her act of abolition and that Haiti was in no danger of a French invasion.¹⁶

Unfortunately for the cause of abolition, however, Britain and Russia held differing views on how to extirpate the slave trade. On October 24, Castlereagh submitted to the Congress two propositions; the first requested the Congress to urge Portugal to abolish her slave trade on May 30, 1820, and the second solicited allied acceptance of

¹⁵Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians (Cambridge, 1961), p. 503; Stephen to Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, Castlereagh Corrs., IV, 2-4; Stephen, "Hayti, or St. Domingo," ibid., pp. 4-35.

¹⁶Gentleman's Magazine, LXXXVIII (1818), 362-363; Clarkson to Christophe, 30 Oct. 1818, Christophe-Clarkson Corrs., pp. 120-122.

a qualified right of mutual search such as that already adopted by Britain, Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands. Russia, with the support of Prussia and Austria, of course, rejected the second proposal, for acceptance would mean repudiation of her traditional policy of freedom of the seas. The Russian reply of November 7 called for the high seas to remain a neutral area. Recognizing the need for searching suspected slavers, the Tsar, who was still the most advanced internationalist of his day, proposed that the trade be declared piracy and that to repress it an international naval force should police the African coast. This "neutral institution" should have, moreover, an executive council composed of representatives from all civilized states, a judiciary, and a headquarters on the coast of Africa. To it, he suggested, "the right of visit might be conceded by all nations without any national jealousies being aroused." Alexander did not suggest, however, that "this emanation of the Holy Alliance" should be established until Portugal had abolished the slave trade. Despite Austrian and Prussian support for the Russian scheme, Castlereagh had no difficulty in demonstrating its impracticality: it would not become operative until some indefinite time in the future; since it was responsible to no government, it would be irresponsible; and finally, the United States would surely oppose it. But none of these reasons explains Britain's reaction. In reality the Tsar's proposal required too great a sacrifice

of national interests and sovereignty to be accepted. It would undermine the monopoly of sea power then enjoyed by the British Admiralty.¹⁷

Richelieu, who represented France at the Congress, was as opposed as ever to granting any power the right to search French vessels. Since the allied powers had withdrawn their army of occupation and had admitted France to full membership in the Alliance (October 9), such a concession at this time, the premier argued, would humiliate his country and arouse discontent among her people. If she yielded, France then would not really share equity with her allies; she would appear a second class state when her citizens knew that France was equal, if not superior, to any other nation. Would not the grant of a reciprocal right of search appear the price France had to pay for the evacuation of the army of occupation? Jealousy and distrust of Britain was, of course, apparent in these arguments.¹⁸

¹⁷Castlereagh to Bathurst, 2 Nov. 1818, BFSP, VI, 57; memorandum of the British government, n. d. Nov. 1818, ibid., pp. 77-85; opinion du cabinet de Russie, sur la traite des Negres, 7 Nov. 1818, ibid., pp. 66-69; opinion du cabinet d'Autriche, sur la question de la traite des Negres, [n. d.] Nov. 1818, ibid., pp. 75-76; opinion du cabinet de Prusse, sur la traite des Negres, [n. d.] Nov. 1818, ibid., p. 76; Sir Charles K. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822 (London, 1947), pp. 168, 464.

¹⁸Mémoire française, sur la traité des Negres, [n. d.] Nov. 1818, BFSP, VI, 69-75; memorandum of the British government, [n. d.] Nov. 1818, ibid., pp. 77-85. The allies on October 1 agreed in principle to admit France to full membership in the Alliance, but they did not sign the treaty until the 9th.

Because of the opposing national interests and prejudices of Britain, France, and Russia, no agreement for the effective suppression of the slave trade was possible at Aix-la-Chapelle. The five great powers which now formed the "European Pentarchy" did, however, draft another pious and eloquent declaration condemning this traffic, which was inserted in a final cabinet letter to King John VI of Portugal, appealing for speedy abolition throughout his dominions.¹⁹

By the end of 1818 all the maritime states of Europe, except Portugal, had legally abolished the slave trade or had set May 30, 1820, as the date for its final prohibition. On the statute books, at least, abolition appeared almost complete.²⁰ The trade in Negroes, however, continued unabated. With the restoration of peace to Europe in 1815, the wartime license of the British navy to suppress the slave trade ended, and the Atlantic slave trade revived. It was one thing to put abolition laws on the statute books but quite another to enforce them.

¹⁹Castlereagh to Henry Chamberlain, 27 Nov. 1818, ibid., VIII, 143; projet de lettre de cabinet, des souverains d'Autriche, de France, de la Grande Bretagne, de Prusse, et de Russie, à sa Majesté le Roi de Portugal, [n. d.] Nov. 1818, ibid., VI, 85-86. John VI of Portugal then resided in Brazil; he did not return to Lisbon until July, 1821.

²⁰Castlereagh to Rush, 20 June 1818, Richard Rush, Memoranda of a Residence at the Court of London, 1819-1825 (Philadelphia, 1845), pp. 33-36.

During the interval between the Second Peace of Paris and the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, British abolitionists worked as hard as ever to achieve effective suppression, but now without the widespread public support they once had enjoyed. The success of British abolition in 1807 and the apparent European success in 1815 at Vienna and Paris convinced many Britons that the quest had been accomplished, and thus they lost interest in it. Despite their weakened position, British abolitionists urged Parliament to enact legislation requiring the registration of slaves throughout the empire but had to settle for colonial registration laws which were full of loopholes. This rebuff aroused them to redouble their efforts to regain lost support at home and to inspire the ministry to negotiate anti-slave trade treaties with other maritime powers.

Castlereagh was ready with a superb plan for suppression but one which had little likelihood of immediate acceptance by major powers because it raised the touchy question of search and seizure on the high seas. He soon, however, concluded treaties with such lesser states as Portugal (1817), Spain (1817), and the Netherlands (1818) establishing a qualified, reciprocal right of visit, though the acquiescence of the Iberian states had to be bought. France, Russia, and the United States, all rejected British overtures to negotiate similar conventions on the ground that such a concession would infringe upon national sovereignty.

The British abolitionists, unable to make headway at home and still doubtful of Castlereagh's zeal for their cause, dispatched Clarkson to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle to influence the allied delegations and to make another appeal to the humanity of the Tsar. At the Congress, Castlereagh urged acceptance of a qualified right of visit, and Alexander proposed an international police force to suppress the slave trade. Opposing national interests, distrust, and jealousies, however, prevented the adoption of either plan. Indeed, its only accomplishment was the composition of another meaningless declaration against the traffic in Negroes which was sent to Portugal. King John ignored the appeal, and the slave trade continued to flourish with the ever increasing demand for cotton. As the British historian C. K. Webster has observed:

The international action that was proposed . . . demanded too great a subordination of national interests and prejudices to a common control . . . to be accepted. These discussions . . . revealed how far Europe was from a common outlook on such matters. To ask Frenchmen to allow ships flying their flag to be searched by British vessels . . . was to awake national prejudices of overwhelming strength, . . . however much a common duty to humanity demanded action.²¹

²¹Webster, Castlereagh, p. 168.

CHAPTER III

THE ROAD TO VERONA, 1819-1822

Among the maritime states of Europe only Portugal had failed to condemn the slave trade by the fall of 1818 and also had refused to fix a definite date for its abolition. Since the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle had done nothing to implement effective suppression, the traffic in blacks continued on a large scale, providing employment for the freebooters of many nations, notably Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United States. The only arrangements for enforcing international abolition were the bilateral treaties Castlereagh had negotiated with the lesser European states, but without the adherence of France and the United States, these agreements had little effect on the slave trade.

While the Atlantic slave trade continued unabated, a change occurred in the attitude of British West Indian planters. As Lord Holland observed on March 4, 1819, they now supported abolition "not only with alacrity and cheerfulness, but even with zeal and eagerness." Jamaica, in particular, he commended for her enthusiasm, a citation which seemed fully justified when a Jamaican jury in July 1819 convicted John Jones and John Hudson for slave trading. The West Indians not only realized the futility of fighting

the British abolitionists but also wanted to handicap their foreign competitors as they had been. Abolition was British law, and it was enforced within the Empire. In contrast to this effective prohibition, France, the Netherlands, and Spain continued to permit the importation of slaves into their colonies and thus held down the cost of production. As late as 1819, British colonial produce still could not compete profitably in the world market with that of her continental rivals. The abolitionist and the West Indian M. P.'s closed ranks and on June 8 introduced in Commons a bill to register all slaves in the British colonies. A month later (July 7) Parliament passed this measure. In view of this triumph, Wilberforce that same day moved that the government renew its efforts to make abolition effectual. Commons concurred without a dissenting vote, and two days later the Lords followed suit. Britain's continental competitors were aware, of course, that behind Britain's efforts on behalf of humanity stood a desire to "share the injury she had inflicted on herself by abolition." With economic rivalry buttressing considerations of a political nature, the maritime states of Europe regarded with disdain any agreement for international enforcement.¹

¹Monthly Magazine, XLVIII (1819), 369; slave trade transactions in Parliament, summer, 1819, JHC, LXXIV (1819), 509, 606, 621, 625, 631; Annual Register, LXI (1819), 84-86; London Magazine, I (1820), 106-107; Hugh G. Soulsby, The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations, 1814-1862 (Baltimore, 1933), p. 13; Frank Joseph Klingberg, The Anti-Slavery Movement in England (New Haven, 1926), p. 167. The court condemned Jones to three years transportation and Hudson to seven years transportation.

To the dismay of the London cabinet no less than of British abolitionists, Spanish and Portuguese slavers, with Dutch connivance, continued to procure Negroes north of the equator in violation of their governments' solemn treaties and promises. Reacting to these unlawful activities, the African Institution protested to Castlereagh that the slave trade was undermining the work of humanitarians in civilizing the natives of the area.²

Despite the court decision in the Le Louis case (1817), Captain Hunn of the Redwing on February 8, 1819, intercepted the French ship, Sylph, carrying 388 slaves from the River Bonny to Guadeloupe, which Sweden had restored to France in 1816. Because Hunn had broken international law, Castlereagh had no choice but to return the Sylph to France and to reprimand the captain. In June he informed Sir Charles Stuart, the British ambassador to Paris, of the capture and promised reparations to France, but he strongly urged "a mutual arrangement" between the two states to avoid a repetition of such incidents. Marquis Jean Joseph Dessolle, the French premier and foreign minister (1818-1819), replied curtly on June 29 that a French warship had captured "a British ship employed in the same traffic." Because of Dessolle's opposition to granting a reciprocal right of visit

²The secretary of the African Institution to Castlereagh, 30 Mar. 1819, BFSP, VIII, 156-157.

to Britain, Stuart took up the issue with other members of the French government, but to no avail.³

As a result of the Sylph affair and similar cases, the British government on March 10 directed its consuls at Nantes, Bordeaux, Bilbao, and Corunna to report all French vessels fitting out for the slave trade. Reports indicated that some French merchantmen sailed from French to Spanish ports to obtain papers and colors before engaging in the slave trade. From information collected by British consuls and sea captains and transmitted by the Foreign Office to the Paris government, the Rodeur, Oscar, Élize, and Thetis appeared to be notorious French slavers. After months of bombarding the French cabinet with lists of ships, captains, and ports involved in this commerce, Britain's new policy of harassment finally bore meager results. Early in December 1819 the French Foreign Ministry sent instructions to colonial officials to enforce the law, and on December 22, Louis XVIII established a special commission to study the slave trade and to recommend means of enforcing French abolition. Notwithstanding the action of the Paris cabinet,

³Hunn to Governor McCarthy of Sierra Leone, 20 Feb. 1819, ibid., p. 320; Castlereagh to Stuart, 7 June 1819, ibid., p. 319; Stuart to Castlereagh, 1 July 1819, ibid., p. 321.

most Frenchmen still were inclined to ignore the slave trade or to promote it.⁴

To compel France to take more decisive actions, Castlereagh on January 20, 1820, directed Stuart to secure the cooperation of Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian ambassador at Paris, in persuading Baron Étienne Denis Pasquier, the new French foreign minister, to do something about the slave trade. The foreign secretary favored some sort of mutual system, but if France did not concur, he would consider any French proposal for enforcing abolition. Without consulting di Borgo, Stuart immediately approached Duc Élie Decazes, the French premier (1819-1820), and Pasquier. The foreign minister declared that British reports of French slave trade activity were exaggerated, that much of the "French" slave trade was actually British, and that it was unfair to single out France as the culprit in this nefarious commerce. When Decazes asked what France could do, Stuart replied that

⁴Circular to British consuls at Nantes, Bordeaux, Bilbao, and Corunna, 10 Mar. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 319; Stuart to Desolle, 15 Oct. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 326; Captain Kelly of H. M. S. Pheasant to Croker, 29 Oct. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 374; Collier to Lords of the Admiralty, [n. d.] Oct. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 178; Castlereagh to Palmella, 28 Oct. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 174; Stuart to Desolle, 7 Nov. 1819, *ibid.*, p. 326; *Quarterly Review*, LXVIII (1822-1823), 171-172; *Annual Register*, LXIII (1821), 113. The British abolitionists claimed that only a few copies of the *Bibliothèque Ophtalmologique* carried the statement that Captain Boucher of the *Rodeur* threw thirty-nine blacks overboard. They suspected, therefore, official censorship. Stuart to Castlereagh, 6 Dec. 1819, *BFSP*, VIII, 329; French ordinance establishing a special commission to enforce the slave trade laws, 22 Dec. 1819, Hertslet, *Commercial Treaties*, III, 117-118.

if France would not agree to a mutual search treaty, she should equip a squadron of French ships to patrol the coast of Africa jointly with Britain. Contending that naval squadrons alone were not capable of enforcing abolition, Pasquier asserted that suppression could be attained only if the slaves in all colonies were registered, and if Britain prohibited London insurance companies from insuring slavers who sailed under foreign flags. Realizing that he could make no headway against French intransigence by himself, Stuart now secured di Borgo's assistance before renewing discussions with Decazes, Pasquier, and Baron Pierre Barthélemy Portal, the minister of marine and colonies. Decazes and Portal acknowledged that France should do something to show her sincerity, but Portal explained that little could be expected as long as Portugal maintained the slave trade and Britain insured slave ships.⁵

Between 1820 and 1822, the slave trade not only flourished, but French participation in it became more active than ever before. Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre, and Honfleur, all were deeply involved in this traffic. During the first ten months of 1820, twenty-five slavers flying French colors appeared off the coast of west Africa, and Commodore Sir George L. Collier, commander of the British

⁵Castlereagh to Stuart, 20 Jan. 1820, BFSP, VIII, 329; Stuart to Castlereagh, 3 Feb. 1820, ibid., pp. 331-333; same to same, 7 Feb. 1820, ibid., p. 333.

slave trade squadron, counted thirty more in Havana harbor in September. From November, 1820, to July, 1821, 126 slavers (eighty-six Frenchmen and the rest Spaniards), sailed from the River Bonny country, north of the equator. Not all of these ships, of course, were really French. After May 30, 1820, when Spain formally abolished the traffic in blacks, many of her subjects and other nationals simply substituted the fleur-de-lis, or any other flag that seemed safe, and continued their infamous vocation.⁶

As the slave trade increased, flesh merchants became so brazen as to openly flout British naval patrols. Aware that Britain's treaties did not permit her to take a ship into custody unless slaves actually were aboard, some slavers, upon the approach of a British cruiser, put their victims into dinghies, rowed them to shore, and marched them back and forth to taunt the frustrated policeman. Others, when faced with capture on the high seas, chained their Negroes, tied weights to the chains, marched them on deck, and threw them overboard. Even when arrests were made, condemnation was difficult to obtain. On April 10, 1820, Captain Edward Trenchard of the U. S. S. Cyane, captured ten vessels which appeared to be American, but

⁶Paper on the French slave trade, 10 Nov. 1820, ibid., pp. 365-369; extract of letter, Antigua, 16 Oct. 1820, ibid., pp. 376-377; Captain Léeke of H. M. S. Myrmidon to Commodore Mends of H. M. S. Iphigenia, 12 Sept. 1821, ibid., X (1822-1823), 538-539; same to same, 7 Nov. 1821, ibid., p. 540.

found them so completely covered by Spanish papers that he reluctantly released them. When Commodore Collier intercepted four French slave ships (the Marie, Catherine, Jeune Estelle, and Joseph) in May 1820, in violation of international law since Britain had no relevant treaty with France, Castlereagh, as in the Sylph affair, returned them with apologies, although he observed that the Frenchmen had broken their own nation's slave trade law. Collier, however, suffered only a mild rebuke for his overzealousness. The foreign secretary merely advised him that in the future he should not insult the French flag nor violate international law. The French position, needless to say, remained unchanged. It was reaffirmed by Premier Richelieu in December, 1820, when he declared "his wish to omit no measure to put down . . . that detestable traffic," except a mutual arrangement with Britain. Without French and American cooperation, the slave trade could not be suppressed. As John Quincy Adams observed on August 15, 1821, when he turned down a similar British proposal: "So long as . . . [the right of mutual search and seizure] shall be declined by any one Maritime State, however inconsiderable, its adoption by all others, would leave it altogether ineffectual."⁷

⁷Collier to Croker, 13 Jan. 1820, ibid., VIII, 790; case of the schooner St. Salvador, 25 Jan. 1820, ibid., pp. 86-88; Annual Register, LXIII (1821), 113; U. S. Ship Cyane, 10 Apr. 1820, Asbury Dickins and James C. Allen, editors, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, second series (Washington, 1858), V, 96; suppression of the slave

Confronted by the wanton and monstrous evasion of her treaties with the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain, Castlereagh on September 22 bitterly attacked the practice of putting slaves overboard to escape capture and condemnation, a procedure which was contrary to the spirit of their treaties. From each he demanded a declaration which would preclude such evasion. Reluctant to commit themselves on this issue, all three procrastinated two years before making reply at the end of 1822. On December 10, Spain, hoping for assistance against a threatened French invasion, acceded to Britain's request. Portugal on the 18th flatly refused to amend the 1817 treaty, and Marquis Silvester de Pinheiro, the Portuguese foreign minister, frankly declared it was better for his country to protect her golden goose--the

trade, 12 Apr. 1822, ibid., pp. 140-141. On March 3, 1819, the United States appropriated \$100,000 to pay for enforcement of her acts of abolition. To show her abhorrence of the slave trade, the United States made it piracy on May 15, 1820 (an additional act to prohibit the slave trade, 3 Mar. 1819, Peters, United States Statutes, III [1813-1823], 532-534; an act to continue in force "an act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy," 15 May 1820, ibid., pp. 600-601); Castlereagh to Stuart, 25 May 1820, BFSP, VIII, 334; same to same, 25 May 1820, ibid., p. 335; same to same, 26 May 1820, ibid., pp. 335-336; Stuart to Castlereagh, 21 Dec. 1820, ibid., pp. 377-378; Adams to Stratford Canning, British minister to Washington, 15 Aug. 1821, ibid., IX, 82.

slave trade--than to kill it. The Dutch on December 31, 1822, and January 25, 1823, agreed to the British proposal.⁸

Notwithstanding Portuguese obstinacy, most British abolitionists thought the French government and nation were fully responsible for the continuation of the slave trade. This opinion was shared by the Duke of Wellington who declared: "There exists no moral feeling in France against the traffic; and it is believed that our measures are founded upon views of interest."⁹ Summarizing the abolitionist view of France in October 1821, the Whig Edinburgh Review observed:

With not one fact to substantiate the charge of British participation in the slave-trade carried on under the flag of France, and with endless proofs of the extent and cruelty of that traffic, . . . [the Paris cabinet] at once relieves France from all responsibility and all guilt; and transfers both by a word to Great Britain.¹⁰

⁸Castlereagh to British ambassadors in Spain and the Netherlands, and to the British envoy in Brazil, 22 Sept. 1820, ibid., VIII, 228-229; additional articles to the Anglo-Spanish treaty for the prevention of the slave trade, 10 Dec. 1822, ibid., X, 87-88; E. M. Ward, minister to Portugal, to Canning, 18 Dec. 1822, ibid., pp. 212-213; additional articles to the Anglo-Dutch treaty of May 4, 1818, 31 Dec. 1822 and 25 Jan. 1823, ibid., pp. 554-561.

⁹Stuart to Castlereagh, 16 Apr. 1821, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst, preserved at Cirencester Park, edited by Francis Bickley (London, 1923), p. 496; Wellington to Macaulay, 8 May 1821, Duke Arthur Richard Wellesley, editor, Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshall Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K. G. (London, 1867), I, 170 (hereafter cited as Well. Desp.).

¹⁰Edinburgh Review, XXXVI (1821-1822), 47.

After the Ultra-Royalists came to power in France (December, 1821), Britain continued without success to press for effective suppression of that traffic. On January 28, 1822, Stuart commented to Vicomte Matthieu de Montmorency, the pious French foreign minister, that despite repeated assurances that France would abolish her slave trade, it still existed. Britain, moreover, for all her efforts, had succeeded unfortunately in alienating the French people. Montmorency replied on February 3 that it was his intention to meet the wishes of the British government respecting that traffic. To prove his sincerity, he sent to Stuart that same day a written commitment to abolition.¹¹

Dissatisfied with French dilatoriness, abolitionist societies in Britain and the United States bypassed their own governments and pelted the French legislature with petitions and memorials, demanding immediate, definitive action. Duc Victor de Broglie, a Doctrinaire, responded to these humanitarian pleas by introducing an anti-slave trade bill in the Chamber of Peers on April 1, 1822. But after hearing its sponsor call for strict enforcement measures, that body killed the proposal by voting to adjourn. Three days later in the Chamber of Deputies, Benjamin Constant, a Liberal, interjected the slave trade question into a

¹¹Stuart to Montmorency, 28 Jan. 1822, BFSP, IX, 19; Montmorency to Stuart, 3 Feb. 1822, ibid., p. 20; Stuart to Castlereagh, 7 Feb. 1822, ibid.

debate on marine and colonial expenses. The Deputies, however, were not sympathetic and allowed the subject to drop.¹²

As the summer of 1822 progressed, Castlereagh's mental and physical health noticeably failed. When Castlereagh, the victim of a persecution mania, committed suicide on August 12, three days before his scheduled departure for the Congress of Verona, his mission was given to Wellington (August 17), but influenza and the business of appointing George Canning as foreign secretary and leader of the House of Commons delayed the Duke's departure until September 17. Meanwhile the instructions which Castlereagh had drafted for his own guidance received the approval of the cabinet and were transmitted to his Grace by Lord Bathurst, under-secretary of foreign affairs, on September 14. Regarding the slave trade, Castlereagh had stated tersely: it requires no comment.¹³

On his way to the Congress, Wellington stopped in Paris on September 20 to confer with Comte Joseph de Villèle who had been appointed premier on the 4th. To the Duke's

¹²Stuart to Castlereagh, 7 Mar. 1822, ibid., X, 227; same to same, 4 Apr. 1822, ibid.

¹³Instructions for the Duke of Wellington, 14 Sept. 1822, Well. Desp., I, 287; Webster, Castlereagh, p. 488; Harold W. V. Temperly, The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827 (London, 1925), p. 313; Frank H. Hill, George Canning (New York, 1887), p. 168; Richard Aldington, The Duke: A Life of Wellington (New York, 1943), pp. 288-293.

suggestion that France expand her slave trade laws and impose a degrading punishment for slave trading, the premier replied that the legislature would not approve of such, and if it did, the courts would be very reluctant to convict any one so accused. The French people looked upon abolition as a British imposed burden, and every effort to enforce it as "a national disgrace." Villèle protested that he could not put an end to the slave trade because to do so would anger the French people. These views were shared by Vicomte François René de Chateaubriand, French ambassador to London, and also a delegate to the Congress. As the romantic littérateur explained in his Memoirs: France found it difficult to enforce abolition "because it is an article of the treaty made upon . . . [Wellington's] victories." Chateaubriand did not mention it, but his father had earned a fortune in the slave trade.¹⁴

From Paris Wellington travelled to Vienna where he was intercepted by William Allen, a Quaker and an abolitionist, who was intent upon going to the Congress. For the cause of

¹⁴Vicomte François René de Chateaubriand, The Memoirs of François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, Sometime Ambassador to England, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York, 1902), I, 12-13; Chateaubriand, The Congress of Verona (London, 1838), I, 69-70; John C. Villiers, M. P. for Queensborough, to Wellington, 2 Sept. 1822, Well. Desp., I, 270; Wellington to Canning, 21 Sept. 1822, ibid., pp. 295-296; André Maurois, Chateaubriand (New York, 1938), p. 2; John R. Hall, The Bourbon Restoration (London, 1909), p. 323; Émile Bourgeois, History of Modern France, 1815-1913 (Cambridge, 1922), I, 52.

international abolition, Allen carried an appeal from Wilberforce to Tsar Alexander, but because Austria had blocked entry into Verona to all except official delegates, he could not continue his quest. The Duke, to assist his mission, made him a British courier. In this capacity, Allen rode into Verona, where he not only delivered the letter but also lectured "Kings and Emperors, and their ministers, daily upon the iniquity of the slave-trade."¹⁵

Canning, meanwhile, united the colonial and slave trade questions. On September 30, he directed Wellington to secure (1) a boycott of Portuguese colonial (Brazilian) produce, unless Portugal abolished her slave trade, and a boycott against the colonial produce of all other states "who notoriously continue" that traffic (i.e., Spain and France), (2) a renewal of the slave trade declaration of the Congress of Vienna, and (3) a convention declaring the slave trade to be piracy. But the foreign secretary, realistically, did not expect much from the Congress of Verona. The Paris cabinet would do nothing to further abolition since any ministry which pushed the issue faced repudiation by the National Assembly. The French public did not regard the slave trade as a moral evil, but did have a strong conviction that every French act to enforce abolition amounted to kowtowing to Britain. The belief that Britain's interest

¹⁵Wilberforce and Wilberforce, Wilberforce, II, 224; G. R. Gleig, The Life of Arthur, Duke of Wellington (London, 1903), p. 300.

in abolition was economic rather than humanitarian was widespread on the Continent. People and governments throughout Europe observed that Portuguese colonial produce was driving that of Britain out of the market. Many suspected that Britain wished to abolish the slave trade to save her colonial economy. To Canning the prospects for furthering abolition at Verona were "discouraging." That this appraisal was correct was soon indicated by Wellington's report of October 23 that France would reject a declaration making the slave trade piracy and that the continental powers were only slightly less opposed to it. To the Duke's proposal that the allies prohibit the importation of Brazilian sugar, the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian delegations only "smiled." After all, Brazilian sugar was the same as British except for price, and it was brought to Europe by the British merchant marine, which Britain could regulate. When Wellington remained adamant, however, the Tsar yielded, agreeing on November 17 to support all British proposals except that calling for a boycott of Brazilian produce. The French plenipotentiaries pleaded with the "Iron Duke" to modify his memorandum on the slave trade, but he refused.

On the 24th, he submitted it to the general conference of the allied powers.¹⁶

Replying for France on November 27, Chateaubriand assailed what he regarded as the

. . . three unreasonable [British] pretensions: 1st. the right of visiting and inspecting vessels; 2nd. the right of assimilating the slave trade to piracy, in order to attack with impunity all the navies of the world; 3rd. the right of interdicting the sale of merchandize produced in the European colonies cultivated by negroes; that is to say, the exclusive privilege of substituting for this merchandize the productions of India and Great Britain.¹⁷

The Vicomte declared that France abhorred the African slave trade on moral and religious grounds but could not do more than she already had done. The French public remembered that Haitians (Negroes) had murdered many Frenchmen and that the British had forced abolition upon France in their peace treaty. British colonials, moreover, had had twenty years to prepare for the day when the slave trade would end, but the sugar plantations of other nations had had almost no time. Observing that the French constitution prohibited confiscation, Chateaubriand concluded that Wellington's

¹⁶Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, Well. Desp., I, 322-329; Wellington to Canning, 28 Oct. 1822, ibid., pp. 449-453; Wellington to Canning, 29 Nov. 1822, ibid., pp. 547-548; British memorandum on the slave trade, 24 Nov. 1822, BFSP, X, 95-100; Villèle to Montmorency, 18 Oct. 1822, Comte Joseph de Villèle, Mémoires et Correspondance du comte de Villèle (Paris, 1904), III, 133.

¹⁷Chateaubriand, Verona, I, 85-86.

demands not only were offensive to French national honor and public opinion, but also were unconstitutional.¹⁸

Count Christian von Bernstorff, the Prussian foreign minister, also condemned the slave trade on moral and religious grounds but recommended merely the renewal of the Vienna Declaration of February 8, 1815. Prince Metternich affirmed that the slave trade was morally wrong, that the Vienna Declaration should be renewed, and that the traffic in blacks should be declared piracy. The latter endorsement was a meaningless gesture to please Britain since the Austrian chancellor knew that France would never permit the slave trade to be labeled piracy.¹⁹

Informed that the Tsar again had changed his stand on the slave trade, Wellington on November 27 visited Count Karl Robert von Nesselrode, the Russian foreign minister, for clarification. Upon reading the Russian reply to his note, he discovered that Russia now supported only a general declaration condemning this commerce and requested, moreover, that Portugal and Brazil should be given time to abolish the slave trade. Appalled by this unexpected shift, he reminded Nesselrode of the Tsar's promise of support and threatened

¹⁸French response to Wellington's memorandum on the slave trade, 27 Nov. 1822, BFSP, X, 102-106.

¹⁹Prussian response to Wellington's memorandum on the slave trade, 27 Nov. 1822, ibid., pp. 106-107; Austrian response to Wellington's memorandum on the slave trade, 27 Nov. 1822, ibid., p. 102.

to insert a declaration in the Congressional protocol that the Tsar had reneged on this promise. Nesselrode thereupon agreed to include in the note a provision that the slave trade should be declared piracy.²⁰

While the allied powers concurred that the slave trade was morally wrong, cruel, and unchristian, they objected to calling their statement a "Declaration," since such a title would appear to give the slave trade an undeserved high status. Renaming the condemnation a "Resolution," they adopted it on November 28, 1822. To soothe Wellington's dissatisfaction that nothing practical had been accomplished at Verona, Tsar Alexander promised him on the 29th that after the Congress, Russia would support Britain's diplomatic efforts to suppress the slave trade. The following day the Duke left for home.²¹

While the crowned heads of Europe and their ministers debated international problems at Verona, Wilberforce, who remained in London, became concerned that Canning would sacrifice abolition to economic advantages. To allay his fears, Canning reaffirmed his opposition to the Brazilian slave trade, but frankly confessed that Britain would not

²⁰Wellington to Canning, 29 Nov. 1822, Well. Desp., I, 617; Russian response to Wellington's memorandum on the slave trade, 27 Nov. 1822, BFSP, X, 107-109.

²¹Wellington to Canning, 29 Nov. 1822, Well. Desp., I, 617; slave trade resolution of the Congress of Verona, 28 Nov. 1822, Hertslet, Map of Europe, I, 695-696; Oliver Brett, Wellington (New York, 1929), p. 193.

give up her trade with Brazil even if the continental powers did so. 'I am afraid,' he replied, 'that would amount to sacrificing the import and re-export of her sugar and cotton, and who would dare do such a thing, without consulting fully the commercial part of the nation.'²²

When Brazil declared her independence on October 12, 1822, Britain hoped that Portugal, faced with the loss of the Brazilian slave market, would finally accept abolition. Perhaps the offer of British recognition of Brazilian independence could, moreover, secure that country's suppression of the slave trade. But these hopes were quickly dashed by Dom Pedro I, Emperor of Brazil, who considered the traffic in Negroes as the keystone of his nation's economy. On October 21, he confronted Portugal with the choice of war or continuing "ancient commercial relations" between the two states. Then, seeking to exploit the British desire for abolition, Mariscaldo Campo Brant, the Brazilian commissioner to London, hinted on November 14 that Brazil would, indeed, abolish the slave trade if Britain immediately recognized the independence of Brazil.²³

With the slave trade hanging about Britain's neck like an albatross and with no hope of success at Verona, Canning

²²Canning's cabinet memorandum, 15 Nov. 1822, *Webster, Br & Latin Amer, II*, pp. 397-398., *ibid.*,

²³Proclamation of the Emperor of Brazil to Portugal, 21 Oct. 1822, *BFSP*, X, 945-946; Brant to Canning, 14 Nov. 1822, Webster, *Britain and Latin America*, II, 397n-398n.

on November 15 requested the cabinet to recognize Brazil as soon as that state embraced abolition. The British West Indian economy, he declared, would suffer as long as the Brazilian slave trade continued. Brazilian abolition, moreover, would be a great step toward general suppression. But Britain must act quickly; if another power recognized Brazil first, Britain's offer would not be as attractive. But the cabinet demurred, wishing the mother country to be the first to recognize her disaffected colony. Not until August 1825, did Britain recognize Brazil.²⁴

As the year 1822 ended, the Atlantic slave trade continued on a larger scale than ever before, despite pious condemnations and theoretical abolition by the major maritime powers of the world. The number of slaves taken from Africa rose from an estimated 60,000 in 1816 to 100,000 in 1822.²⁵ Castlereagh had made no significant progress in making abolition a reality, and Canning, during his first four months in office, had succeeded only in closing a few of the loopholes in the treaties negotiated by his predecessor. Realizing the futility of trying to suppress the slave trade through international action, Canning shifted his approach to the problem by concentrating on the two states, Portugal

²⁴Canning's cabinet memorandum, 15 Nov. 1822, *ibid.*, pp. 397-398.

²⁵Report of the London African Society, [n. d.] Dec. 1816, *BFSP*, VI, 26; *Quarterly Review*, XXVIII (1822-1823), 164.

and Brazil, which openly sanctioned this commerce. The new foreign secretary expected little of the Congress of Verona, and, therefore, was not disappointed that it accomplished nothing of practical value relative to this issue. The slave trade question had become a mixture of economic, political, and humanitarian considerations. Wellington, with the firm support of Alexander, might have achieved more than a meaningless resolution, but the Tsar's support was shifting sand. Undaunted, the British abolitionists continued to civilize the blacks and to promote abolition regardless of the vain efforts of the Foreign Office, and many of them remained suspicious of the ministry's sincerity even after Castlereagh's death. From the Congresses of Vienna, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Verona, they learned, too, that words were cheap when no action was intended.

CHAPTER IV

THE SLAVE TRADE: A RETROSPECT

By the end of the fifteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade seemed on the verge of extinction, when the voyages of Columbus and the conquistadores revived it. To develop their vast, fertile dominions in the New World, the Spaniards needed much cheap labor. To provide this manpower, Bartolomew de las Casas, the Licentiate, urged Charles I of Spain to introduce Negro slaves into the colonies. In 1518 Charles reluctantly agreed to experiment with 4,000 African blacks in the West Indies. Finding a rich soil and a favorable climate in the Spanish plantations, slavery took root and grew rapidly. With the ever increasing demand for slave labor, the traffic in humans became quite profitable, attracting the merchants of many nations, often as smugglers.

The financial success of Spain's slave-labor plantations stimulated other states to establish their own. Thus the black tide assumed flood proportions in the eighteenth century. Britain, through skillful political moves and able, adept merchantmen, became the pre-eminent slave carrying nation after 1713. The Enlightenment, however, taught that all men, by nature, ought to be free, equal, and independent

and Romanticism emphasized individual worth and dignity. Among evangelical church groups in Britain, particularly the Quakers, a consensus developed which deplored slavery and the slave trade. A few individuals, e.g., Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce, took it upon themselves to end this infamous commerce. Realizing that the abolition of slavery would be very difficult, they decided to work first for the suppression of the slave trade. These humanitarians welded the sympathetic church groups, none too firmly, into a unified movement for abolition, and proceeded to educate the British public and the rest of Europe concerning the iniquities of the slave trade. The British slave interest, of course, opposed abolition, and after 1793 anti-Jacobinism and the war with France overshadowed every other issue. A temporary respite in the war and a French policy of subjugating and re-enslaving the Negroes of Haiti, however, combined to provide a favorable climate for renewed abolitionist activity, and abolition shortly thereafter (March 25, 1807) became law in Britain, the greatest maritime nation of the nineteenth century.

Following the passage of the British act abolishing the slave trade, its sponsors did not rest upon their laurels, for they regarded this measure as only the first step toward suppressing this traffic, and the institution of slavery itself, throughout the world. Despite the statutes of Britain and the United States against it, their merchants

and those of other countries, continued to participate in the slave trade because the rewards remained great enough to justify the risks involved. The reasons for this "black market" were twofold: it was cheaper to import slaves than to rear them on colonial plantations, and effective means of suppression did not yet exist.

Supreme at sea after Trafalgar, Britain, for the duration of the war, did prevent her own subjects from engaging in the slave trade under the Union Jack. She could not eliminate, however, the practice of sailing under a foreign flag, nor could she very well interfere with the slave traders of friendly states, especially those of her allies. Britain, nevertheless, succeeded in curtailing this traffic on the west coast of Africa, but contrary to the expectations of its exponents, suppression of the slave trade did not always benefit the Africans. In those parts of Africa saved from the slave trade, endemic tribal wars became very bloody since it was no longer profitable to take prisoners.

Meanwhile the war with Napoleonic France raged, and Britain made some progress with her allies in promoting abolition. Portugal agreed in 1810 to restrict the taking of slaves to her own possessions and to limit this traffic to Portuguese subjects. Sweden in 1813 prohibited her subjects from engaging in the slave trade in exchange for the cession of the island of Guadeloupe. And in 1814, before

Napoleon's abdication, Denmark consented to cooperate with Britain in the suppression of the slave trade.

On April 11, 1814, Napoleon abdicated, and peace returned for a season to Europe. The next month, when the allies assembled in Paris to draft a peace treaty with France, the abolitionists were present, trying to persuade Castlereagh that the return of British held French colonies should be contingent upon the immediate abolition of the French slave trade. By the First Treaty of Paris, the foreign secretary, himself a former advocate of the British slave trade, restored the occupied French colonies and imposed upon Louis XVIII the specific obligations of abolishing the slave trade within five years and of supporting Britain's efforts for international suppression at the forthcoming Congress of Vienna. Russia's Tsar Alexander I, who had profusely proclaimed his devotion to abolition, declared to Britain's abolitionists that Castlereagh had not supported his call for immediate French suppression of the slave trade. The British abolitionists reacted by renewing their agitation for immediate and complete abolition. Discovering adamant support for abolition in Parliament, Castlereagh, with renewed energy, set about to promote abolition. Soon thereafter (June 15, 1814), the Dutch abolished their slave trade in the vain hope that Britain would restore their former colonies. In Spain Sir Henry Wellesley, the British ambassador to Madrid, tried in August 1814 to purchase that

country's immediate abolition of the slave trade, but on the 28th he was able to secure only the pledge that this commerce would be restricted to Spanish subjects. In October, after further negotiations, Spain promised that her slavers would confine their activities in Africa to that region between the equator and 10° north latitude.

At the Congress in Vienna, Castlereagh pressed for complete and immediate abolition but with little success. France paid only lip service to her treaty obligations. Spain refused to go beyond the promise of October, 1814, for fear that abolition of the slave trade would trigger rebellion in the few remaining loyal Spanish American colonies. Portugal shrewdly agreed to abolish her slave trade in the Northern Hemisphere in return for £300,000 in compensation, cancellation of almost all of the £600,000 loan of 1809, and nullification of the 1810 commercial treaty which had favored British merchants. Although Austria, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Prussia, and Russia, all supported abolition at Vienna, the Congress's only achievement relative to this issue was a pious but ineffectual declaration condemning the iniquity of the slave trade.

Shortly thereafter Napoleon began his Hundred Days, scrapping the First Treaty of Paris, and driving Louis XVIII to seek refuge with the British at Ghent. In a vain attempt to gain support for his restoration, Napoleon abolished the French slave trade. Following Waterloo, Louis declared that

Napoleon's edict of abolition was not binding upon his government. When Britain reminded him that, while a refugee at Ghent, he, too, had abolished the traffic in blacks, Louis affirmed that the slave trade had indeed been outlawed. Nonetheless, in the Second Treaty of Paris, Britain and France renewed the provision of the First Treaty of Paris that allowed France five years in which to suppress her slave trade. After many British overtures, France in 1818 finally put a definitive act of abolition on her statute books.

As the result of persistent British efforts, by the end of 1818 all the maritime states of Europe, except Portugal, had legally abolished the slave trade or had set May 30, 1820, as the date for its final prohibition. On the statute books, abolition appeared to be virtually complete, but in practice the trade in Negroes continued unabated. With the restoration of peace to Europe in 1815, the wartime license of the British navy to suppress the slave trade ended, and the Atlantic slave trade revived. It was one thing to put abolition laws on the statute books but quite another to enforce them.

After 1815 the British abolitionists continued to work as hard as ever to achieve effective suppression, but now without the widespread public support they once had enjoyed. The success of British abolition in 1807 and the apparent European success in 1815 at Vienna and Paris convinced many

Britons that the quest had been achieved, and thus they lost interest in it. Their attention, moreover, was absorbed by the deepening economic depression which resulted from the abrupt end of wartime spending and production. Despite their weakened position, British abolitionists urged Parliament in 1816 to enact legislation requiring the registration of slaves throughout the empire but had to settle for colonial registration laws which were full of loopholes. This rebuff aroused them to redouble their efforts to regain lost support at home and to inspire the ministry to negotiate effective anti-slave trade treaties with other maritime powers.

Castlereagh was ready with a superb plan for suppression but one which had little likelihood of immediate acceptance by major powers because it raised the touchy question of search and seizure on the high seas. He soon, however, concluded treaties with such lesser states as Portugal (1817), Spain (1817), and the Netherlands (1818) establishing a qualified, reciprocal right of visit, though the acquiescence of the Iberian states had to be bought. France, Russia, and the United States, all rejected British overtures to negotiate similar conventions on the ground that such a concession would infringe upon national sovereignty.

The British abolitionists, unable to make headway at home and still doubtful of Castlereagh's zeal for their cause, dispatched Clarkson to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle

to influence the allied delegations and to make another appeal to the humanity of the Tsar. At the Congress, Castlereagh urged acceptance of a qualified right of visit, and Alexander proposed an international police force to suppress the slave trade. Opposing national interests, distrust, and jealousies, however, prevented the adoption of either plan. Indeed, its only accomplishment was the composition of another meaningless declaration against the traffic in Negroes, which was sent to Portugal. King John ignored the appeal, and the slave trade continued to flourish with the ever increasing demand for cotton.

Because Britain's colonies could no longer avail themselves of the huge supply of cheap African labor, their produce could not compete profitably in the world market. The continental powers perceived that international abolition would materially benefit Britain's colonial economy. The slave trade question thus became a mixture of economic, political, and humanitarian considerations. Castlereagh made no significant progress in promoting abolition, and during his first four months in office, George Canning, who succeeded Castlereagh in September 1822 as foreign secretary and leader in the House, closed only a few loopholes in the treaties negotiated by his predecessor. Realizing the futility of trying to abolish the Atlantic slave trade through international action, Canning shifted his approach to the problem by concentrating on the two states, Portugal

and Brazil, which still openly sanctioned this commerce, but again without constructive results. The new foreign secretary expected little of the Congress of Verona, and, therefore, was not disappointed that it accomplished nothing of practical value relative to this issue. At the Congress, Wellington, with the firm support of Alexander, might have achieved something more than another meaningless condemnation, but the Tsar's support was shifting sand. The slave trade continued on a substantial scale; in 1822 alone, 100,000 Negroes were taken from Africa.

In retrospect, this thesis concludes that (1) abolition became law in Britain and an international question as the result of the efforts of a few individuals who wished to promote the general welfare of mankind; (2) the slave trade became even more profitable as the movement to stop it grew; (3) Foreign Secretary Castlereagh became an advocate of abolition for reasons of political expediency rather than private conviction, and a number of abolitionists, including Thomas Clarkson, regarded his diplomacy with suspicion; (4) notwithstanding genuine humanitarian motives, Britain pressed for international abolition partly because effective suppression of the slave trade within the empire had hurt her West Indian planters; (5) French, Portuguese, and Spanish national interests, jealousies, and distrust, and the opposition of the United States, all contributed to the failure to establish a multilateral convention that would

have effectually suppressed the slave trade; and (6) the movement to make abolition both effective and international was almost entirely British in origin and leadership.

As a Tuscan diplomat observed: "I see clearly that we have not yet begun the age of gold."¹

¹Quoted in Webster, Castlereagh, p. 168.

EPILOGUE

THE SLAVE TRADE: A LINGERING LEGACY

Following the Congress Era (1815-1822), Britain continued her efforts to end the slave trade, but without immediate success. Spain, a leading participant in this traffic, refused to implement her 1822 pledge to close the loopholes in the Anglo-Spanish convention of 1817. By 1826 that promise was manifestly meaningless, and scores of slavers sailed under the Spanish flag. In the Spanish colonies, some officials gained wealth by accepting bribes from slave traders. On Cuba, for example, the standard pay-off rate was one doubloon (\$17.50) for each slave landed.¹

But Spain, of course, was not alone in fostering this commerce. Portugal and France, too, contributed to the continuation of the slave trade. In 1830, however, the July Revolution in France replaced Charles X and the fleur-de-lis with Louis Philippe and the tricolor. To gain British support and to further the cause of humanity, but not at the expense of French national honor, the new monarch instructed Prince Talleyrand, his ambassador to

¹Thomas Fowell Buxton, The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy (London, 1840), p. 217; William Law Mathieson, Great Britain and the Slave Trade, 1839-1865 (London, 1929), pp. 14, 17.

London, to negotiate a mutual search treaty with Britain. On November 30, 1831, Talleyrand and Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, the foreign secretary, concluded such a convention. But Palmerston, convinced that this treaty was too qualified, pressed France to revise it. François Guizot, the French minister of public instruction, believing that the goodwill obtained by additional concessions would offset domestic resentment, successfully used his influence to satisfy the foreign secretary's requests. On March 22, 1833, France and Britain signed a supplementary treaty, but the thought of conceding anything to Britain still was so repugnant to most Frenchmen that the Chamber of Deputies refused to ratify the supplementary convention. Despite this rejection, Britain had gained by the 1831 treaty the opportunity to sweep many more slavers from the seas.²

A revolution had paved the way for a mutual arrangement with France, and a civil war in Spain achieved a similar result. In 1833 Ferdinand VII died, leaving rival claimants to the throne: Isabella, his daughter, and Don Carlos, his brother. During the resultant civil war, Britain, France, and Portugal on April 22, 1834, concluded a treaty for the pacification of Spain. In return for British aid to her

²Anglo-French convention, 30 Nov. 1831, BFSP, XVIII (1830-1831), 641-644; supplementary convention, 22 Mar. 1833, ibid., XX (1832-1833), 286-301; Bourgeois, Modern France, I, 245-246; Du Bois, Suppression of the Slave Trade, p. 143.

victorious cause Queen Isabella on June 28, 1835, granted Britain the right to condemn Spanish merchantment that were equipped for slave trading. Lauding this treaty, the Edinburgh Review declared that "a fatal blow has been struck at the slave trade in one of its oldest and surest strongholds."³

As a result of the Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1835, many of the slavers who had sailed under the Spanish flag adopted the Portuguese standard. In the fall of 1835, Palmerston, who sincerely desired the complete suppression of the slave trade, presented Portugal a draft treaty similar to that just concluded with Spain. The Lisbon government graciously entered into negotiations with London, and on December 10, 1836, Portugal's Queen Maria II issued an ineffectual decree that forbade the export of slaves from any Portuguese possession. The Anglo-Portuguese talks, meanwhile, proceeded with agonizing slowness. Vexed by Portuguese procrastination, Palmerston in 1838 introduced in Commons a bill authorizing the British navy to intercept Portuguese slavers, British courts to condemn them, and the grant of a bounty to the British ship which captured a slaver, if the latter were convicted. When the bill passed the House, Ambassador

³Treaty between Great Britain, France, and Portugal for the pacification of Spain, 22 Apr. 1834, BFSP, XXII (1833-1834), 134-141; George Villiers, British minister to Spain, to Palmerston, 28 June 1835, ibid., XXIV (1835-1836), 183; Edinburgh Review, LXIII (1836), 3393-394; Douglas Johnson, Guizot (London, 1963), p. 304.

Moncorvo of Portugal attacked the measure. Whereupon Palmerston "simply told him he could declare war if he liked and thus make the job an easier one." Undaunted, Moncorvo enlisted the support of the Duke of Wellington, who mobilized enough Ultra-Tory votes in the Lords to kill the measure. Palmerston and the abolitionists were furious. Palmerston declared that he would not alter one line of the proposed Anglo-Portuguese treaty "which the British fleet was going to enforce whether Portugal signed it or not." Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the Atlantic slavers relied more and more on the Stars and Stripes for protection, for the United States, the world's greatest maritime state after Great Britain, remained adamant in defending the "freedom of the seas" from infringement.⁴

When Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia signed the Quintuple Treaty on December 20, 1841, it seemed that an international league for ridding the seas of slavers finally had been established. By this treaty, the powers declared slave trading to be piracy, conceded a qualified right of mutual search to one another, and invited all states not bound by a similar treaty to accede to this one. Lewis Cass, American minister to Paris, regarded this treaty as a

⁴Portuguese royal decree, 10 Dec. 1836, BSPF, XXIV, 782-788; Annual Register, LXXXI (1839), 242-243; Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841 (London, 1951), I, 491-492; Mathieson, Slave Trade, p. 17; Du Bois, Suppression of the Slave Trade, p. 143.

threat to American sovereignty no less than to the freedom of the seas. Would not this convention lead to an unrestricted British right of search on the high seas? Consequently, he violated diplomatic protocol by interfering in French domestic affairs to secure a disavowal of the treaty. His intrigue resulted in the Chamber of Deputies' refusal to ratify it, a rejection which temporarily confirmed the United States and the slave traders in their freedom of the seas.⁵

In the spring of 1842, Alexander Baring, Baron Ashburton, arrived in Washington to settle the long-standing Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute. During the course of his negotiations with Daniel Webster, the American secretary of state, he touched upon the delicate question of the slave trade. In an attempt to prevent further Anglo-American friction over this issue, they stipulated in Article VIII of the treaty, signed on August 9, 1842, that the United States should maintain on the African coast a squadron which would cooperate with Britain's in capturing slave traders. But this agreement did not achieve its objective. Because the United States already was divided over the question of slavery at home, there was no strong mandate for an African naval force. According to the African Repository, the voice

⁵Treaty between Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia, 20 Dec. 1841, BFSP, XXX (1841-1842), 209-198; Frank B. Woodford, Lewis Cass (New Brunswick, 1950), pp. 204-210; Soulsby, Right of Search in Anglo-American Relations, pp. 78-79.

of the American Colonization Society, a determined group of Southerners in the United States navy rendered the work of the squadron ineffectual.⁶

In 1858 Britain, tiring of American indifference toward the slave trade, began to search American ships in international waters. When Cass, now secretary of state, protested these illegal actions, James Howard Harris, Earl Malmesbury, the British foreign secretary, yielded, acknowledging the Britain indeed had no right to search a ship, except when authorized by a treaty. Cass and most Americans were satisfied with this diplomatic response, but the abolitionist dreams of ending the slave trade remained.⁷

As the Southern demand for slaves increased in the late 1850's, so did the number of slaves smuggled into the South. Responding to renewed Northern attacks upon their peculiar institution, Southerners stoutly defended slavery, and some even called for the legalization of the slave trade. The election of Lincoln in November, 1860, was followed swiftly

⁶Webster-Ashburton treaty, 9 Aug. 1842, Annual Register, LXXXIV (1842), 498; African Repository, XXXVI (1850), 303-308; Soulsby, Right of Search in Anglo-American Relations, pp. 78-79.

⁷Woodford, Cass, pp. 318-320; Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The British Right of Search and the African Slave Trade," Journal of Modern History, II (March, 1930), 37.

by the secession of Southern states from the Union, which brought on the Tragic Era in April, 1861.⁸

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Britain hoped the Washington cabinet would quickly conclude with her a treaty for the effective suppression of the slave trade. But the federal government, on the contrary, immediately cut the number of cruisers in African waters to one in order to strengthen the blockade of Southern ports, thus creating a paradox: New York City now became the world's leading slave emporium. The Lincoln administration, however, vigorously enforced the existing slave trade laws, and many arrests and convictions resulted. Seeking to gain British sympathy for the Union, William H. Seward, the American secretary of state, on April 7, 1862, concluded with Earl Richard Bickerton Lyons, the British minister to Washington, a convention which granted the royal navy a qualified right of mutual search, and, thereafter, the Atlantic slave trade gradually disappeared. Finally, on May 13, 1888, Brazil, the only state in the Western Hemisphere which still sanctioned slavery, abolished that institution, and thus brought about the end of the Atlantic slave trade.⁹

⁸Woodford, Cass, p. 317; Willis O. Boyd, "The American Colonization Society and the Slave Recaptives of 1860-1861: An Early Example of United States-African Relations," Journal of Negro History, XLVII (April, 1962), 110-111.

⁹Treaty between Britain and the United States, 7 Apr. 1862, Annual Register, CIV (1862), 207-212; Soulsby, Right of Search in Anglo-American Relations, p. 174; Mathieson, Slave Trade, pp. 174-175; Felix Reichmann, Sugar, Gold, and Coffee (Ithaca, 1959), p. 135.

In many parts of the world, however, slavery and the slave trade continued. Seeking to bring a definite end to the African slave trade, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, in cooperation with the British government, convened a slave trade conference in 1889 in Brussels. The Brussels Act of July 2, 1890, the so-called Magna Carta of the African slave, created an international structure for the suppression of the African slave trade. The next international step toward ending the slave trade was taken on September 25, 1926, when the League of Nations signed a convention for the suppression of slavery and the slave trade. Ratified by forty-four nations and reaffirmed by the United Nations, this treaty is still in force, although it has been supplemented by the Geneva Slavery Convention of September 1956.¹⁰

Slavery and the slave trade, however, still persist. Ethiopia in 1942 legally abolished slavery, but British officials reported in 1955 that slaves from Ethiopia's Wallega province had crossed into The Sudan seeking asylum. In 1958, C. W. W. Greenidge, the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society of the United Kingdom from 1941 to 1956, estimated that there were, at least, 500,000 slaves in Saudi Arabia, and unofficial reports indicated that African slaves still

¹⁰Brussels Act, 2 July 1890, C. W. W. Greenidge, Slavery (London, 1958), pp. 205-223; slavery convention of the League of Nations, 25 Sept. 1926, ibid., pp. 224-227; United Nations supplementary convention on slavery, Sept. 1956, ibid., pp. 228-232.

were being imported. The great task begun by Sharp, Clarkson, and Wilberforce remains unfinished.¹¹

¹¹Ibid., pp. 43-47.

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