Foreign Policies of the Great Powers

From Sadowa to Sarajevo

The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914

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League was unable to cope – although it cost Andrássy some wasted months of effort before he was convinced of this. But he made a good recovery at the Congress of Berlin, and the final settlement undoubtedly strengthened the position of Austria-Hungary. Even the occupation of Bosnia can fairly be described as a creditable defensive success. Although relations with London and Berlin were perhaps slightly closer after the Congress, Andrássy's original idea of a defensive bloc consisting of the Central Powers and Britain still seemed an idle dream. Yet already great changes were occurring on the European diplomatic scene. Even now, after his resignation had been accepted, it was to be vouchsafed to Andrássy to realize, at least in part, the project which for the past eight years had eluded him.

Chapter 4

The Making of the Alliances, 1879–85[1]

> The developments of the past twenty years pushed Austria-Hungary back from her old historic position . . . We have only the East . . . We cannot allow the completion of the Russian ring from Silesia to Dalmatia. A Slav conformation of the Balkan peninsula under Russian material or moral protection would cut our vital arteries.
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> *Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office memorandum*, August 1884[2]

The news of Andrássy's impending resignation caused the greatest consternation in Berlin. Bismarck's neurotic fear of anti-German coalitions reached a new intensity as the prospect presented itself to him that the Taaffe government in Austria, once freed from Andrássy's influence, might complement its

[1] The following works are of particular relevance to this chapter: W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, London, 1956; W. N. Medlicott, 'British Foreign Policy in the Near East, from the Congress of Berlin to the accession of Ferdinand of Coburg', M.A. thesis, London, 1926; Agatha Ramm, European Alliances and Ententes 1879–85, a study of contemporary 'British information', M.A. thesis, London; E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Gustav Graf Kálnoky von Koröspatak, Oesterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von 1881–1885', Doctoral dissertation, Vienna, 1952; A. F. Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary* (2 vols), Cambridge, Mass., 1921; L. Salvatorelli, *La triplice alleanza, storia diplomatica, 1877–1912*, Milan, 1939; E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Oesterreich-Ungarn und Rumänien 1880–83, die Proklamierung des Königreiches und die rumänischen Irredenta', *Südost-Forschungen*, Vol. 25, 1966, pp. 150–284; E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'General Skobelev, die Krise des Jahres 1882 und die Anfänge der militärischen Vereinbarungen zwischen Oesterreich-Ungarn und Deutschland', *Ostdeutsche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 10, 1963, pp. 81–151; A. F. Pribram, 'Milan IV von Serbien und die Geheimverträge Oesterreich-Ungarns mit Serbien 1881–9', *Historische Blätter*, 1921, pp. 464–94; the works by H. Benedikt, G. Drage, F. Klein (ed.), and C. A. Macartney cited in Chapter 1, note 1; W. Wagner, Chapter 2, note 1; and E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, Chapter 3, note 1.

[2] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', pp. 645–6.

pro-Slav domestic policy by persuading the emperor to make an alliance with the tsar. Worse still, the clericals might bring in Catholic France as well, to create that combination most deadly to Prussia, a 'Kaunitz' coalition. This was all the more worrying to Bismarck because he was, for the first time, by the summer of 1879, beginning to feel unsure of Russia, even threatened by her. Her constant complaints about relatively trivial incidents arising from the enforcement of the Berlin settlement, her endless armaments, and the hostile language of the Russian press, which since January 1879 had been blaming Germany for all Russia's humiliations, had combined to produce (for a few gloomy months in the summer of 1879 at least) a radical change in Bismarck's attitude towards Russia. Andrássy's idea of an Austro-German alliance, which Bismarck had for years rejected as likely to cause hostility between Russia and Germany, now appeared to him as a possible remedy for a hostility that seemed already to have developed. When, on 15 August, the tsar sent a further list of grievances to his imperial uncle in Berlin, Bismarck took the opportunity to declare that Russia could no longer be relied on; and to familiarize the emperor with the idea of an alliance with Austria-Hungary (both as a source of assistance in the event of war with Russia, and as a means of ensuring that the Dual Monarchy would not join the ranks of Germany's enemies). Already, on 13 August, he had asked Andrássy to meet him at Gastein.

Although at Gastein, on 28 August, Andrássy was not above playing on Bismarck's fears with an astute reference to Austria-Hungary's ties with Britain and France in the Eastern question, Bismarck soon saw that his apprehensions as to a pro-Slav orientation of Austro-Hungarian policy following Andrássy's departure were groundless. Nevertheless, he still wanted some firm guarantee for the future. So he came straight to the point and proposed an Austro-German alliance. What Andrássy had for so long sought in vain was now being offered for the taking; and he was quick to make the most of the psychological advantage he enjoyed over the anxious Bismarck. On the one hand, he welcomed the idea of an alliance: there was now nobody in the Monarchy, he declared, with any desire for revenge for 1866. Even Archduke Albrecht was now no exception – the eyes of the military party had been opened to the danger from Russia in 1878.

Perhaps this was an exaggeration. Of the sincerity of Andrássy's desire for an alliance, however, there can be no doubt. Russia's truculence with regard to the practical application of the Treaty of Berlin, and the news that in February 1879 she had sounded Italy as to her attitude in the event of an Austro-Russian war, showed clearly enough where the chief external threat to the Monarchy lay. On the other hand, Andrássy was determined that any alliance must be on his own terms: it must be directed solely against Russia, and should not in the slightest jeopardize or restrict Austria-Hungary's relations with the Western Powers. Indeed he hoped, as in 1871, that Britain would eventually join the combination. He made it clear to Bismarck, therefore, that the alliance must not be a general one: any suspicion that Austria-Hungary was abetting Germany against France would offend France's friends in London. Bismarck was slightly disappointed at this, but the two statesmen agreed to pursue further the idea of an alliance after consulting their respective sovereigns. Andrássy promised to defer his resignation until the negotiations were completed, and left Gastein 'very contented'[3] to report to the emperor at the Bruck manoeuvres.

He found Franz Joseph entirely in agreement with the idea of an alliance against Russia; and the emperor congratulated him and authorized him to pursue the negotiations further with Bismarck in Vienna. The Emperor William, however, was of a very different frame of mind, his faith in Russia having been but little shaken by Bismarck's gloomy talk. He went off to meet his Russian nephew at Alexandrovo (3 September) and forbade Bismarck to go to Vienna at all. It needed a threat of resignation from Bismarck to get him to change his mind; and even then he refused to consider anything so offensive to Russia as an alliance directed solely and explicitly against her. He authorized Bismarck to conclude an alliance only in general terms.

This was in fact the central point of the Vienna discussions between Bismarck and Andrássy (23–24 September). Andrássy would still not hear of a general alliance: the existing Waddington government in Paris was eminently peaceful, conservative, and Anglophile; but it might not survive the shock of an Austro-German alliance directed apparently against France. The danger might then arise of a revolutionary alliance between France,

[3] E. v. Wertheimer, Vol. 3, p. 244.

Italy, and a Russia already thoroughly riddled with Panslav revolutionary ideas. Nor, he warned, would he have anything to do with an agreement *à trois* with Russia. Again, such a monarchical league would appear to be directed against France. Austria-Hungary, he emphasized, must be free to say to Britain that she had no commitments whatever against France, provided the latter did not join a coalition against the Central Powers. The alliance, therefore, must be clearly directed against Russia. Apart from this reservation, the two sides were already in broad agreement. The Austrians particularly liked the idea of a strictly defensive alliance, considering that the Monarchy had nothing whatever to gain from an aggressive war against Russia, and might only risk being used as a battering ram by the Western Powers. They raised no objections either when Bismarck suggested a declaration to the Powers (and to Russia in particular) emphasizing the conciliatory spirit of the alliance and making its defensive purpose perfectly clear. In the end, Bismarck gave way. 'Accept my draft,' he said to Andrássy, rising from his seat and drawing himself to his full height, '. . . or I shall have to accept yours.'[4] On 24 September the draft was duly agreed, and after a further tussle Bismarck managed to extract the consent of the German emperor.

The alliance was signed at Vienna on 7 October (Document 8), and Andrássy resigned on the following day. He could be well content with his work. The alliance pledged the two Powers to mutual support if either were attacked by Russia; if either were attacked by another Power, the other was obliged to observe benevolent neutrality only; but if the attacker were supported by Russia, the *casus foederis* again arose. These terms suited the Austrians exactly. Yet this was – for both parties – no *ad hoc* war alliance, like the alliances of the 1850s and 1860s. However strictly limited its terms, it might always have broader implications for the general policy of the contracting parties. Such implications had been in Andrássy's mind throughout the 1870s; and perhaps in Bismarck's in the summer of 1879. Franz Joseph too was aware of them, and was pleased at last to have realized his ideal of a conservative alliance of the two German Powers, which he had vainly sought from a hostile Bismarck in the early 'sixties and from an indifferent Bismarck in the early 'seventies. The question remained, however – what were these broader implications?

[4] E. v. Wertheimer, Vol. 3, p. 284.

Despite the unanimity over the terms of the alliance, there was a wide divergence of view between Vienna and Berlin as to its ultimate purpose. True, for the immediate present, both parties could feel more secure against Russia; and Bismarck had dispelled the threat of a 'Kaunitz' coalition – if that threat had ever existed outside his own mind. On the long-term purpose of the alliance, however, there was no agreement. Indeed, even before the alliance was actually signed, Bismarck had begun to think that a conflict with Russia was perhaps not too likely after all. He had been encouraged in this not only by the Emperor William, who refused to contemplate such a possibility, but by the Russians themselves, who, at the news of the impending alliance, had at once become more amenable. The prospect of a war with both German Powers at once confirmed the tsar in his fundamentally pacific intentions. He decided that he would do well to seek a *rapprochement* with his German neighbours – possibly in the hope of dividing them; and hinted to Bismarck that he would welcome a restoration of the Three Emperors' League. This, of course, had always remained Bismarck's ideal. It was also the implication of his boast to the Russian ambassador that in concluding the alliance he had succeeded in digging a ditch between Austria-Hungary and the Western Powers.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. Andrássy had been scrupulously careful in the negotiations to avoid anything that might cast a cloud over his relations with London and Paris; and Salisbury, in particular, had welcomed press reports of the alliance as 'glad tidings of great joy'.[5] For Andrássy, the alliance was to be a step towards the realization of his old ideal of a grand alliance against Russia. For him, in contrast to Bismarck, suspicion of Russia was no passing mood. 'A warmed-up Three Emperors' League', he declared, would meet with great opposition from public opinion; Russia was 'full of perfidy';[6] and after his recent experiences he would hesitate 'not only as a minister but as a gentleman' to recommend an agreement with her on the Eastern question.[7] Whereas the Dual Alliance was for Bismarck a stepping-stone towards a new Three Emperors' League, it was for Andrássy the tombstone of the Three Emperors' League.

[5] *The Times*, p. 10, 18 October 1879.

[6] E. v. Wertheimer, Vol. 3, p. 297.

[7] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.

Franz Joseph, for whom the construction of a conservative bloc in Central Europe was the essential idea, was more flexible as to whether this could best be reinforced from the west or from the east. It remained an open question, therefore, whether those who came after Andrássy would realize his great objective, or whether they would accept Bismarck's.

There could be no doubt about the personal inclinations of Andrássy's successor, Heinrich, Baron Haymerle. This cautious, unadventurous career diplomat, who had served at Constantinople, Athens, and Rome, and as Andrássy's aide at the Congress of Berlin, was well versed in the details of the Eastern question. The British were hopeful that 'his intimate knowledge of Turkish affairs'[8] would prove a serious obstacle to Russia's supposed designs. 'This,' Beaconsfield confidently declared, 'is an anti-Russian appointment.'[9] By the same token, St Petersburg, where most of Russia's recent humiliations were ascribed to 'expressions insidiously inserted into the Treaty [of Berlin] by Baron Haymerle', was 'very little pleased'.[10] And it was not so much Haymerle's woebegone appearance or nervous manner as his unwillingness to venture into any agreement with Russia that lay behind Bismarck's deprecatory comments on him: 'he is timid, he is not accustomed to high politics, he fears responsibilities'; and behind the notorious jibe attributed to Bismarck, that Haymerle always 'uttered an emphatic "No" three times on waking up in the morning for fear of having undertaken some commitment in his sleep'.[11] From the start, he was determined to continue Andrássy's anti-Russian policy: to stand firm by the Treaty of Berlin, and if possible to enlist British support in forcing Russia to observe it.

The treaty of Berlin had provided Austria-Hungary with a good basis for a strong Balkan policy. Of course, this policy would not be one of territorial expansion – the annexation of more Slav areas could fatally upset the balance of races within the Monarchy – but one of exercising a preponderant influence over the Balkan states. The prospects were inviting. Even in Bulgaria, where Russia temporarily enjoyed by virtue of the Treaty of Berlin a measure of political control over the government and

[8] Agatha Ramm, p. 61. [9] Ibid., p. 86. [10] Ibid., p. 85.
[11] L. Ritter v. Przibram, *Erinnerungen eines alten Oesterreichers*, Stuttgart, 1912, Vol. 2, p. 114.

army that the Austrians felt it wise not to challenge, Austria-Hungary had preserved a strong foothold in the fields of commerce and communications. By Article VIII of the Treaty of Berlin the Great Powers had subjected Bulgaria to the 'unequal' trade treaties of 1860–2, which were designed to hold Turkey down as a ready market and source of cheap raw materials. Customs duties, for example, were fixed at 10 per cent, and according to the Capitulations could not be increased without the consent of the Powers. Even without these measures, of course, the sheer weight of economic imperialism would in any case have served to hold the Balkan economy in fee to the Great Powers.

Austria-Hungary was the chief beneficiary of this system. Over the Western Powers she had enormous geographical advantages. Proximity and the Danube – which provided cheap transport – meant that Austro-Hungarian exports (chiefly light industrial goods) could easily command the Bulgarian market by virtue of their cheapness; and this despite British competition and the efforts of the Bulgarians to develop their own light industries. Links with Vienna were also fostered by the Austrophile inclinations of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie (whose nationalist susceptibilities were in any case offended by Russian bullying), and by the dominant role of Austro-Hungarian capital in Bulgarian railway construction. In 1879 the Orient Railway Company, which controlled the Bulgarian section of the line to Constantinople, had passed from French to Austro-Hungarian control, and had transferred its headquarters to Vienna. In this situation, Russia found herself completely outmanoeuvred. Such capital as her own very primitive economy could spare generally went to easier markets in Asia; and Russian government intervention in Sofia to compel the Bulgarians to accept loans only roused opposition and undermined Russia's political position in the principality. Both Vienna and St Petersburg recognized the great importance of commercial channels as the conductors of political influence; and although it is true that Bulgaria only accounted for about 6 per cent of the total trade of the Monarchy, this 6 per cent was a huge amount for a state the size of Bulgaria. In fact the Monarchy was able to impose successive renewals of the 'unequal' trade treaty, and to maintain its position as Bulgaria's chief trading partner right down to 1914.

In the other Balkan states the Monarchy was in an even stronger

position, in that it did not have a Russian-controlled government to contend with – although it should be said that sometimes, by virtue of its political predominance, it came up against the hostility of that very nationalism that in Bulgaria worked in its favour. The coldly-calculating governments, however, in Turkey, Serbia, Roumania and Greece were still very much haunted by the shadow of the Big Bulgaria created by Russia at San Stefano. They had no doubts as to where their chief enemy lay. Turkey, for example, was already looking to the Central Powers to supply the financial and military-technical aid no longer forthcoming from Britain. Even in Serbia, the government of the Liberal Ristić, pro-Russian by instinct, was now faced with the task of bringing to fulfilment that *rapprochement* with Austria-Hungary over commercial and communications questions on which Serbia, deserted by Russia, had been forced to embark at the Congress of Berlin. In the event, Ristić dragged his feet. He well knew that Serbian opinion had not forgiven the Monarchy for the occupation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina; and that the taxes required to pay for the projected railway links would be deeply resented by his peasant supporters. His resistance was encouraged by Russian agents, and, to some extent, by Britain, who still provided Serbia with one-third of her imports, and who strengthened her negotiating position with a commercial treaty in January 1880. By the summer, however, the Monarchy had forced Serbia to agree to construct the railway line to Hungary before that to Salonica (which would only have furthered British trade). In June Prince Milan, fanatically Austrophile by temperament, paid a visit of homage to Franz Joseph in Vienna; and when Ristić, greatly incensed by this, at last resigned in October, Serbia seemed to be moving completely into Austria-Hungary's orbit.

Roumania presented a similar picture, with fairly strong Austro-Hungarian political influence and nationalist and irredentist counter-currents. On the one hand, Austria-Hungary had been the first Great Power to recognize the independence of Roumania in 1878 (while Germany and the Western Powers were still haggling over the treatment of German bondholders and Roumanian Jews). Both Vienna and Bucharest recognized a common interest in ensuring that Roumania, situated 'entre les deux Russies' as Bratianu remarked,[12] should not become a mere

[12] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Oesterreich-Ungarn und Rumänien', p. 151.

highway from Russia to Bulgaria. A visit by Archduke Albrecht to Bucharest in the autumn of 1879 had produced a general understanding about mutual military assistance in the event of a Russian attack; and Haymerle agreed with Andrássy and Prince Carol that the two states, which together formed a major barrier to the Slavicization of south-east Europe, might some day even make a formal alliance. On the other hand, Haymerle was as resolutely opposed as Andrássy had been to Roumania's hopes of elevation to the rank of kingdom. Such a grandiose gesture could only foster irredentist designs on Transylvania and Bukovina, and encourage similar ambitions in Serbia. More serious, the two governments themselves became estranged over the question of the control of shipping on the lower Danube, which the Congress of Berlin had entrusted to a commission to be established by the Great Powers. For Austria-Hungary, the Danube was still the main commercial route to the Balkans; the Austrian Danube Steamship Company held a virtual monopoly of Danubian shipping; and Haymerle was determined not to permit the subjection of these important interests to control by any Balkan state. In January 1880, therefore, with German and Italian support, he began to seek for Austria-Hungary a controlling influence on the new commission. The Roumanians, with Russian support, were equally determined to prevent this, and by the summer relations between Vienna and Bucharest were seriously strained.

Austria-Hungary's Balkan position in 1879–80 was, therefore, strong but not unchallenged. And behind the threats to it, Vienna discerned everywhere the hand of Russia. Indeed, while Austro-Hungarian policy might be seen objectively, and especially by Russia, as aiming at predominance, it was regarded in Vienna as defensive, as an attempt to prevent Russia from establishing her own predominance. True, Kálnoky reported from St Petersburg, the Russian government, confronted with the Dual Alliance, might well have decided to abandon its blatant opposition to the Treaty of Berlin. This, however, by lulling the other Powers into a false sense of security, only made it all the more difficult for the Monarchy to thwart the now more underhand designs of Russia, which were still being busily furthered by Russian agents and the Russian press. It was to be Haymerle's task to sound the alarm.

With Bismarck, Haymerle made no headway at all. His suggestions in the autumn of 1879 that the Central Powers enlist the

support of Britain, as Andrássy had desired, only drew the crushing retort that the alliance was strictly for defence purposes, and was not designed to support any particular policy in the Balkans whatever. In January 1880, following an irredentist demonstration in Italy,[13] Haymerle tried another approach. It seems, according to a memorandum of Beck's of March 1880,[14] that the Austro-Hungarian government was at this time seriously worried about the possibility of a 'revolutionary' alliance between Italy, France, and a potentially nihilist Russia. At any rate, on 7 February, Haymerle sent Kálnoky to see Bismarck and to convince him of the need to treat Italy kindly.[15] The Monarchy could gain nothing by war with Italy – indeed, this might only present Russia with the opportunity to resume an adventurous policy. Perhaps Britain could be persuaded to restrain Italy, Haymerle suggested, and even to join the Central Powers in a bloc so formidable that Russia would never dare to challenge it. A Roumanian alliance would also be useful. Bismarck would have none of this. True, he wished to maintain the alliance with Austria-Hungary; but at the same time he was immensely concerned to hold on to Russia. The latter, he told Vienna, was now suffering from a nightmare of coalitions, and should be comforted and reassured. Ramshackle Italy could be kept in order by threatening language; and as for Britain, who was gratuitously provoking Russia, her isolation was the price to be paid for Russian friendship.

The Austrians, for their part, were unmoved by Bismarck's arguments. They might be prepared to discuss the occasional specific issue, such as Bulgaria, with Russia; but there was no basis for any habitual *tête-à-tête* or general agreement. This would be tantamount to a revival of the Three Emperors' League, which, Haymerle maintained, nobody in the Monarchy desired, and which Hungarian opinion would never permit. The emperor agreed. When the military attaché at St Petersburg reported on 21 April that the Russian press was full of talk of Russia's Slav mission; that official assurances were worthless in the face of such mighty currents of opinion; and that 'the sooner people admit this and stop deceiving themselves' about Russia the better, Franz Joseph minuted 'very sound assessment' (*Sehr richtige Auffas-*

[13] See below, p. 130–1.
[14] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 247.
[15] Kab. 18, Haymerle, report to Franz Joseph, 7 February 1880.

sung).[16] Besides, Bismarck's startling change of front with regard to Russia since the summer was in itself enough to make Vienna mistrustful. Haymerle decided, therefore, that 'so long as our interests in the Near East are so closely parallel with those of the English, we should be unwise to abandon England.'[17]

Nor did Haymerle allow personal factors to weaken his determination to follow the path dictated by Austro-Hungarian state interests. For example, Gladstone's return to office in Britain in April 1880 might have been a serious obstacle. In January, Franz Joseph had remarked to the British ambassador that 'it would be difficult to feel confidence in the maintenance of the present relations if he returned to power';[18] and during the British election campaign a similar remark was attributed to the emperor by the Viennese press. Gladstone retorted on 17 March with a public denunciation of Austrian interference in British internal affairs, took the opportunity of demanding an end to Beaconsfield's 'Austrian foreign policy', and went on to make a very famous statement: 'there is not an instance, there is not a spot upon the whole map where you can lay your finger and say, "There Austria did good".'[19] At this the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London, Károlyi, talked of resigning if Gladstone came to power. In the event, however, tactful handling of the incident by diplomats in Vienna and London smoothed matters over, and even created what Haymerle was pleased to call 'an entirely satisfactory starting point for our new relations'.[20] He turned a deaf ear to Bismarck who, secretly afraid that Gladstone's anti-Turkish views might tempt Russia and weaken her desire to restore the Three Emperors' League, tried naïvely to convince Vienna that Gladstone was a dangerous revolutionary. Indeed, in April, he rejected yet another German proposal for an agreement with Russia precisely because – by enforcing the closure of the Straits to protect Russia from the British fleet, for example – it would alienate Britain. Haymerle remained determined to co-operate with Gladstone in executing the Treaty of Berlin.

[16] W. Wagner, p. 123.
[17] W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, p. 52.
[18] Agatha Ramm, p. 145.
[19] W. E. Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland (1880)*, Vol. 2, p. 41.
[20] W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone . . .*, p. 62.

He was to be disappointed. The settlement of the outstanding issues inherited from the Congress of Berlin – the delimitation of the Greek and Montenegrin frontiers – was in itself a tedious and exasperating problem which was to put the solidarity of the Great Powers to a severe test. For on both questions the Powers were faced with stubborn Turkish opposition; and in the Montenegrin case with local Albanian armed resistance. Not only this, Haymerle soon began to doubt whether Austro-Hungarian interests were best served by abetting Britain in what was tending to become an increasingly anti-Turkish policy, and one which Russian backing made even more suspect. For example, on a practical level, he disliked the readiness of the other Powers to subject still more Albanians to Montenegrin rule. Already in 1878 the Austrians had seen in the spirited Albanian protests to the Congress evidence of a potentially useful barrier against the complete slavicization of the Balkans. At the same time, they wondered whether the pro-Christian Gladstone would show an equal devotion to international law if it came to maintaining the sultan's rights in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia against a Russian attempt to unite the principality and the province. More generally, and more serious, Haymerle had grave misgivings about the whole policy of coercion, to which the Powers, having exhausted their repertoire of paper condemnations of Turkey, were being steered by Britain and Russia in the summer of 1880. Not only might naval and military action bring British, and even Russian, forces to the shores of the Adriatic (which Vienna regarded as an Austro-Hungarian preserve); it might well provoke serious disturbances in Turkey, even her total collapse, with all the attendant risks of war. This the Austro-Hungarian press was not slow to point out; and by October Haymerle was wondering whether the moment had not come 'to administer a clear and effective diplomatic rebuff (*Schlappe*) to Mr Gladstone'[21] by coming out openly in opposition to further coercion. Since the late summer he had been coming to the conclusion that his pro-British policy had been a dangerous mistake; and that there was perhaps something to be said for a cautious approach to Russia.

It was in this frame of mind that Haymerle sought out Bismarck at Friedrichsruh (4–5 September). Of course, he still wished to base his policy on the maintenance of the Treaty of

[21] Kab. 18, Haymerle, report to Franz Joseph, 4 October 1880.

Berlin; but at the same time he recognized that certain developments – for example the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia – might occur of their own momentum, and Austria-Hungary would be powerless to prevent them. To this extent, therefore, he recognized 'the advantages of standing well with Russia, particularly since England is so actively trying to undermine Turkey and can no longer be counted on'.[22] From St Petersburg, Kálnoky gave him strong support: Russia had probably already squared Britain on the Bulgarian question; Austria-Hungary, therefore, might do well to come to some agreement with St Petersburg to secure her own interests, especially her supremacy in Serbia, so necessary for the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The latter, Kálnoky thought, might well be formally annexed. At Friedrichsruh Haymerle found Bismarck enthusiastic: indeed, he had already sounded the Russians, and he now suggested to Haymerle immediate tripartite negotiations with the Russian ambassador Saburov, for an agreement to give Russia security at the Straits (by maintaining their closure against Britain) and, in return for the union of the two Bulgarias, offering the Monarchy a free hand to annex Bosnia and the Herzegovina.

Haymerle thought such a definite proposal premature, and fobbed Bismarck off with the excuse that he would first have to seek Franz Joseph's instructions. Nevertheless, the Friedrichsruh meeting marked a decisive development in Austro-Hungarian policy in so far as Haymerle now agreed in principle to look into the possibilities of agreement with Russia. As he explained to the emperor,[23] it was a question of safeguarding Austro-Hungarian interests in view of Britain's unreliability and the Monarchy's consequent inability to prevent the union of the two Bulgarias. He did not wish to make an approach to Russia himself at this stage: the Delegations were about to meet in Hungary, and he wished to say that he had his hands free. Perhaps rather naïvely, therefore, he entrusted Bismarck with the task of sounding the terrain at St Petersburg and preparing a draft agreement. At the same time, however, he was careful to spell out to Bismarck the

[22] W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone . . .*, p. 180.

[23] Kab. 18, Haymerle, report to Franz Joseph, 9 September 1880. The full text of Haymerle's reports to Franz Joseph on the Friedrichsruh meeting is in W. N. Medlicott, 'Bismarck und Haymerle: Ein Gespräch über Russland', *Berliner Monatshefte*, November 1940, pp. 719–29.

particular Austro-Hungarian interests which any agreement must safeguard. The union of the two Bulgarias must come about naturally, and not at Russia's instigation or behest; nor must it lead to further Bulgarian expansion into Macedonia, where the Monarchy had interests of its own; nor must it be seen as a condition of Austria-Hungary's annexing Bosnia and the Herzegovina – Russia had already agreed to that in 1877. The Dual Alliance must be in no sense weakened. Indeed, it should be strengthened – there should be some guarantee of Roumania's security against a Russian attack. Finally, Russia must cease to oppose Austro-Hungarian influence in Serbia. What Haymerle was in fact demanding – and his elaboration of Austro-Hungarian interests in his letters to Kálnoky in December make this clear[24] – was the predominance of Austro-Hungarian influence in Roumania and the Western Balkans (by forcing Russia to recognize the intangible advantages gained by the Monarchy at the Congress of Berlin) and also a fair measure of influence in Bulgaria. For example, a union of the two Bulgarias was not to impinge on Austria-Hungary's interests in railways and commerce there: these were to be guaranteed. It was indeed sanguine of Haymerle to suppose that Bismarck would seriously press this policy at St Petersburg.

Of course Bismarck, for whom the negotiations were primarily a means of making sure of Russia, did no such thing – as the Austrians were dismayed to discover when they received the Russo-German draft treaty on 23 January 1881. True, William I tried to sugar the pill, pointing to the desirability of cultivating the conservative elements in St Petersburg; and Franz Joseph was in fact impressed by his argument that a treaty would demonstrate to anarchical elements in Europe that monarchical solidarity could survive political differences. Nevertheless, the Russo-German draft caused the gravest misgivings in Vienna. First, it provided for the mediation of the third contracting party in the event of a dispute between the other two. This the Austrians feared might some day be used by Bismarck to escape from his obligations under the Dual Alliance – if, for example, Austria-Hungary felt obliged to reject the decision of mediators in Berlin. Worse still, on the point of Bosnia, Russia promised merely to accept the *status quo* as defined in the Austro-Turkish convention of 1879, i.e. considerably less than the eventual annexation she had agreed

[24] W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone . . .*, pp. 254–7.

to in 1877. Franz Joseph and Haymerle were quick to object to this; and they again emphasized that the Dual Alliance must in no circumstances be weakened or watered down by the admission of a third party (as the mediation clause implied). They even went on to demand (and Beck was most emphatic on this point) that Austria-Hungary should have an absolute veto on the entry of Russian troops into Roumania, a state of vital strategic importance to the Monarchy; and that the Dual Alliance be extended to cover the case of a threat not only to Austria-Hungary's territory, but to her military capacity (*Kriegsmacht*) – such as would arise from a Russian occupation of Roumania. Bismarck, however, would not consider extending the *casus foederis* to Roumania; and his counter-proposal of a blanket clause making the military occupation of any Balkan state dependent on the consent of the other two partners in the alliance was rejected out of hand by Haymerle: Austria-Hungary could never sign such a clause, which would completely bind her hands in her dealings with her south Slav neighbours. Throughout February the deadlock continued.

The Austro-Hungarian counter-draft of 3 March omitted both the mediation clause and a clause on the closure of the Straits; and demanded a free hand in Bosnia, the Herzegovina, and also in the Sanjak. At the same time, the Roumanian point was now abandoned, and on the whole the reply went a considerable way towards meeting the Russo-German draft. The Austrians were certainly beginning to retreat from their extreme position of December. In the first place, the diplomatic situation had shown no sign of any change in their favour: the deadlock between Greece and Turkey, with its attendant risks that Britain might drag Russia along the path of violent coercion, was not resolved until the Turks suddenly surrendered in March. Second, Bismarck, while with one hand offering Vienna the sop of a formal statement that the Dual Alliance retained its full force, wielded the big stick with the other: on 1 March he informed Vienna that if the negotiations failed, it would be his painful duty to tell St Petersburg who was to blame. Third, the role of Kálnoky, since January promoted to permanent ambassador at St Petersburg, must be emphasized. According to a later account of Aehrenthal, who knew Kálnoky intimately, this was of the greatest importance, and undoubtedly influenced Haymerle's decisions.[25]

[25] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.

The emperor too was a great admirer of the ambassador's dispatches. The case for co-existence with Russia was strongly urged in a dispatch from Kálnoky on 18 February:[26] the Monarchy was simply too weak to implement the only feasible alternative policy of hurling Russia back into Asia for ever; and perhaps the present moment was the least unfavourable and should not be allowed to slip. For Russia was temporarily reasonable (having been weakened by a disastrous harvest in 1880); and whereas negotiations *à deux* would be dangerous for Austria-Hungary as the weaker party, she might do well to negotiate at a time when she could count on the backing of Germany by virtue of the Dual Alliance (Document 9).

If the Austrians really set any store by this latter consideration, they were greatly in error. The subsequent negotiations saw one Austro-Hungarian retreat after another, and all accomplished under brutal pressure from Bismarck himself. The Russians were determined to secure a formal reaffirmation of the principle of the closure of the Straits, but at the same time refused to give Austria-Hungary a free hand in the Sanjak (after all they had in 1878 consented only to its eventual occupation, not annexation). They played their cards well. The assassination of Alexander II on 13 March presented them with an admirable opportunity to delay the negotiations; and they kept the Central Powers on tenterhooks for three silent weeks. They rightly calculated that Bismarck would lose his nerve and put pressure on Vienna. True, the new tsar professed his devotion to his father's policy; but this also included a filial devotion to the original Russo-German draft. Moreover, the situation in St Petersburg was genuinely uncertain: the appointment of Ignatiev as minister of the interior was an ominous sign; and Kálnoky began to wonder how long the conservative Giers would retain any influence at the foreign office. In this situation, Bismarck bullied the Austrians mercilessly, threatening in April to conclude a treaty with Russia without them. During May Haymerle gradually gave way on all points except the right to annex Bosnia, the Herzegovina, and the Sanjak. This should not only be recognized, but recognized in the body of the treaty, as a *quid pro quo* for the Straits clause. Bismarck, surprised at the extent of Haymerle's concessions, promised his support; but when the Russians still held out, he again

[26] Ibid.

abandoned Austria-Hungary. After another appeal from Kálnoky, pointing to the uncertainty of the situation in Russia – the relatively well-disposed Alexander III might at any moment suffer the fate of his father – and another formal summons to surrender from Bismarck, the exasperated Haymerle again gave way. The eventual annexation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina ended up in an annexe, and as for the Sanjak, Russia merely reaffirmed her promise of 13 July 1878 to countenance an Austro-Hungarian occupation.

Nevertheless, considering the diplomatic isolation of Austria-Hungary, and the extent to which her expectations of German support had even turned against her, the Three Emperors' Alliance, signed in Vienna on 18 June (Document 10), was by no means an unmitigated defeat. The reinforcement of monarchical solidarity and of peace between the three empires expressed in the preamble was more than mere phrases. True, Austro-Hungarian and German support for a Russian circular of 31 March proposing an international conference on revolutionary plots, made little headway against the opposition of Britain, France, and Italy. But if the treaty gave the Russian government a breathing space to re-establish itself after the assassination of the tsar, it was also designed to give the new order of things in Bosnia and the Herzegovina time to consolidate itself. Indeed, it may well have been a contributory factor to the firm stand taken by the Austro-Hungarian government against anti-monarchical elements generally in the early 1880s. For example, a spate of assassinations of officials between 1882 and 1884 was met with great severity: anarchists in the Monarchy saw their newspapers suppressed and their societies dissolved; and they lost their right to trial by jury.

Even from a purely diplomatic point of view, the Austrians had not done too badly. The Dual Alliance had been formally declared to have survived unimpaired (18 May); and the obnoxious mediation clause had disappeared without trace. The main clauses of the treaty actually brought some positive advantages. True, Article III, endorsing the principle of the closure of the Straits was a pure gain for Russia; but the sense of Article I at least gave Austria-Hungary rear cover against Italy in exchange for her promise of benevolent neutrality in the event of Franco-German or Anglo-Russian wars. Article II, concerning the principles of action in the Balkans (spelt out in more concrete terms in an annexed protocol)

really only dealt with developments that were in any case regarded as inevitable. And if the Austrians had had to rest content with a mere reaffirmation of existing Russian pledges regarding Bosnia, the Herzegovina, and the Sanjak, they had at least brought Russia to recognize Austro-Hungarian interests in Bulgaria: the union was not to be hastened, nor was it to be extended into Macedonia. Haymerle had been careful to exclude the slightest hint of a division of the Balkans into Austro-Hungarian and Russian spheres of interest, such as would have abandoned Bulgaria to Russia (not that the latter would have been prepared to hand over Serbia and Montenegro to exclusive Austro-Hungarian control either). Thus, if the Austrians had perhaps achieved little in the way of positive gains, they had also given virtually nothing away.

Indeed, the very fact that the treaty said in effect so little, and placed no restriction whatever on the development of Austro-Hungarian influence, particularly economic influence, was a major advantage in Austro-Hungarian eyes; and one which the Monarchy intended to exploit. More than this, though Russia might not have pledged herself not to invade Roumania, Austria-Hungary had retained an equally free hand to coerce Serbia or Montenegro. Further, whereas the renunciation by the three contracting parties of their freedom of military action against Turkey (and Bulgaria was technically still part of Turkey) was an important sacrifice for Russia to make, it cost Austria-Hungary, who had no designs on Turkey or Bulgaria anyway, very little. The Monarchy's Balkan position was therefore at least no weaker after the Three Emperors' Alliance Treaty than before. Indeed, by the joint instructions to Russian and Austro-Hungarian representatives in the Balkans, drawn up supplementary to the treaty in the course of the summer, and ordering them to co-operate and refrain from intriguing against each other, impecunious Russia had renounced what was perhaps her only effective weapon to counter the extension of Austro-Hungarian influence by means of trade. How far Russian diplomats on the spot would in fact obey the joint instructions and abstain from fanning the flames of local nationalism against Austria-Hungary, particularly in Serbia and Roumania, was of course a moot point which no treaty could settle. Nevertheless, in some respects, the prospects for Austria-Hungary had undoubtedly improved.

So confident were the Austrians in fact that they even connived at a slight increase in Russia's political influence in Bulgaria in the summer of 1881. True, they hoped to see even Bulgaria in the Austro-Hungarian camp in the long run, and took good care to cultivate the Prince, Alexander of Battenberg. But for the present they busied themselves with their railway projects and did not attempt to challenge Russia's political supremacy at Sofia. This, they tended to regard as something of a necessary evil, if Alexander were to survive in the turbulent domestic politics of the principality. In July, therefore, Austria-Hungary became the spokesman of the Three Emperors' Alliance in bringing a reluctant Gladstone to accept a Russian-inspired authoritarian constitution to replace the unworkable liberal one granted to Bulgaria in 1879. True, the Austrians here formally abandoned the policy pursued since 1878 of co-operation with Britain to check Russian influence in Bulgaria. Yet Haymerle was perhaps only renouncing a policy inherited from Beaconsfield and Andrássy, which Gladstone was highly unlikely to enforce. (Much the same may be said of Haymerle's conversion to the principle of the closure of the Straits.) Indeed, the one thing on which all members of the Three Emperors' Alliance were agreed was the exclusion of Gladstone's influence from the Near East. This applied not only to the sultan's Christian dominions in Europe, where all three sought only to preserve peace, if not quiet; and to Egypt, where, in the face of British and French meddling in 1881 and 1882, all three paraded their scrupulous regard for the sultan's rights in an effort to ingratiate themselves at Constantinople; but also to Bulgaria and Serbia, where Austria-Hungary in particular was irritated by British commercial competition. In the latter principality, Haymerle had just brought off something of a *coup*.

The replacement of Ristić and the Liberals by the Progressives – the party of Prince Milan – in October 1880, had provided no immediate solution to the issues pending between Serbia and the Monarchy – the construction of the railway links agreed with Andrássy at the Congress of Berlin, and the negotiation of a commercial treaty. The first was delayed partly by the Austrian government, which until the autumn of 1880 refused to pay anything towards the cost of a line which would be built entirely in Hungary; and partly by the Serbs, who in the spring of 1881 were

still toying with the idea of entrusting their section of the line to Constantinople to a British firm. As for the commercial treaty, when negotiations began in November 1880, even the Progressive government jibbed at what the British minister – admittedly an interested observer – described as Austria-Hungary's 'monstrous pretensions'.[27] By the early summer, however, these issues had been settled: the Serbian government placed the railway contract with the Union Générale, a French Catholic-monarchist bank with Austro-Hungarian affiliations; and further agreed to standardize Serbian railway rates with those of the Monarchy (to prevent under-selling by British and French wares coming through Turkey from Salonica). The Austrians for their part had already agreed not to ask Serbia for any money towards the clearance works they were undertaking on the Danube. Finally, on 6 June 1881 a commercial treaty was signed admitting Serbian livestock and agricultural produce into the Monarchy on favourable terms and securing the Serbian market for Austrian light industry.

The commercial treaty was followed by a secret political treaty, negotiated by Prince Milan in person during a visit to Vienna in June (Document 11). As Milan saw the situation, Serbia, deserted by Russia at San Stefano, and estranged from her fellow Balkan states by the vexed question of the eventual partition of Macedonia, needed the support of Austria-Hungary; just as Milan needed it to free himself from the pro-Russian Liberal and Radical parties. The treaty of 28 June 1881 provided for Austro-Hungarian diplomatic support, should Serbia declare herself a kingdom, and should she seek territory in the south in the event of the collapse of Turkish rule in Macedonia. Serbia, for her part, was to abandon hope of gaining the Sanjak or the occupied provinces. Indeed, she was obliged not to tolerate on Serbian soil any intrigues against the Monarchy, Bosnia, or the Herzegovina. More than this, by Article IV – which Haymerle regarded as 'our greatest achievement'[28] – Milan bound himself to conclude no further treaties whatever without prior agreement with Vienna. This last was too much even for the Progressive government in Belgrade, who foretold their own ruin and the return of the Russophiles to power if ever the treaty leaked out. In the end, the

[27] Agatha Ramm, p. 371.
[28] A. F. Pribram, 'Milan IV von Serbien . . .', p. 471.

article was watered down; but Milan gave the Austrians a personal assurance which in effect maintained it in its original vigour.

The difficulty was that the treaty, and indeed the whole position of Austria-Hungary in Serbia, stood and fell with Prince Milan. The treaty had no roots in the wishes of the Serbian population; and Austro-Hungarian propaganda could never hope seriously to compete with that of Russia, which could harp on the enslavement of Bosnia and the Herzegovina. The best hope for the Austrians was to emphasize mutually beneficial commercial links (if agrarian Hungary could be persuaded to take a benevolent view of Serbian competition in the internal markets of the Monarchy), and to keep the population of Bosnia and the Herzegovina happy. Even this – admittedly a forlorn hope against such an inherently irrational phenomenon as nationalism – was in the long run to prove beyond the capacity of Vienna and Budapest. For the present, however, given that Milan was still in control in Belgrade, the Austrians had managed to reinforce their Balkan position with a guarantee that Serbia would neither go over to Russia, nor revive the plans of Prince Michael for a Balkan League.

Only in Roumania did the Austrians make no progress. When, in February 1881, the Roumanians sounded the Central Powers about the possibility of declaring the principality a kingdom, Haymerle maintained his opposition. But he could see that no other Power would help to restrain Bucharest; and so he prepared to make Austro-Hungarian recognition dependent on Roumania's giving way in the Danube question and binding herself in general terms to the Monarchy. The Roumanians, however, got wind of his plans and decided – especially in view of rumours of an impending Three Emperors' Alliance which might freeze the Balkan situation – to rush the proclamation through in March. (It had originally been planned for May.) Haymerle had been made to look rather silly; and in the end he had to join the Russians and Germans in recognizing the new kingdom unconditionally. Worse still, as he and Andrássy had feared, the proclamation did indeed give a boost to Roumanian irredentism. A wave of demonstrations and spectacular excursions to and from Transylvania resulted by August in a veritable press war between Hungary and Roumania. To complete Haymerle's

discomfiture, the other Powers had rejected his project for the Danube Commission, and it was left to the French to prepare another.

Yet despite this setback in Roumania, Haymerle had managed to build fairly successfully on the foundations laid by Andrássy at Berlin. And he had surpassed Andrássy by establishing tolerable relations with Russia at the same time. The German ambassador had reported on 14 June that the negotiations over the Three Emperors' Alliance had 'not increased Austria's love for Russia. I am speaking not only of Haymerle, but also of the emperor and Andrássy, who will not easily forget that the Russians would have preferred to leave Bosnia and the Herzegovina out of the treaty altogether' (*herauseskamotiert*).[29] But in fact, for the rest of 1881 the new Alliance enjoyed a honeymoon. Personal relations between the emperors improved. Franz Joseph saw William I every summer after this; and he warmly approved of the Russo-German Danzig meeting, where the socialist menace was discussed. In an affectionate exchange of telegrams with Alexander III he spoke of his unity with the tsar in the struggle 'contre les dangers qui menacent l'ordre social et qui sapent la civilisation chrétienne'.[30]

Changes of personnel in Vienna reinforced this conservative trinity. On 11 June Beck was appointed chief of the Austro-Hungarian general staff. This was partly because he had found favour with the emperor in fourteen years of personal service as head of the military chancellery; also because it was hoped that he would carry out effectively the reforms of army organization he had so often recommended – and this in fact he did, reorganizing the general staff along more efficient Prussian lines. It was also a political appointment, however, for Beck had long urged that the chief of the general staff be responsible, not to the war minister and the Delegations, but directly to the emperor – another Prussian idea. His wish was now granted, and the lamentations of the liberal press about the 'reactionary' nature of the appointment, and the whittling away of parliamentary control over a major element in the state, were loud. They were not without foundation. For Beck was certainly a staunch conserva-

[29] W. Windelband, *Bismarck und die europäischen Grossmächte 1879–85*, Essen, 2nd edn, 1942, p. 277.

[30] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.

tive – he got on very well with the Inspector General, Archduke Albrecht – and in foreign affairs too he was an appropriate herald of the signature of the Three Emperors' Alliance on 18 June. True, he was anxious that the Monarchy should be fully prepared for war; but he was equally anxious to prevent such a catastrophe for the conservative order by finding a *modus vivendi* with Russia. Five months later the drift to strict conservatism was further emphasized by a change at the Ballhausplatz. Haymerle died of a heart attack in the foreign office on 2 October, the second anniversary of his appointment. In the haste to find a successor, Andrássy was considered, but he could not bring himself, as a liberal, to work with Taaffe and Beck, whom Franz Joseph was determined to keep. The range of talent available was limited: Károlyi had no wish to move from the London embassy to the Ballhausplatz; Kállay, Haymerle's under-secretary and a brilliant expert in Bosnian affairs, had had too little experience as a diplomat; so the emperor's choice finally fell on the ambassador at St Petersburg.

Gustav, Count Kálnoky was born in 1832 of a German Moravian family which had emigrated from Transylvania in the eighteenth century – hence the deceptively Hungarian name. Having spent his early years as a cavalry officer, he always retained a stiff, military manner and, like Bismarck, preferred to wear uniform for portraits and photographs.[31] According to Lützow,[32] most people, especially younger diplomats, dreaded having this dry, reserved man as a neighbour at table; and as his brother reminded Aehrenthal, he was always a severe judge of a diplomat's wife.[33] Entering the foreign service in 1854 he served in Munich and Berlin; and from 1860 to 1870 in London where, confronted with Palmerston's flounderings and Stanley's hesitations, he acquired a deep and lasting mistrust of parliamentary foreign policy. In 1870 he was appointed to the Vatican; but, as a devout clerical he soon quarrelled with Andrássy, who would do nothing to help the Pope, and he left the service for two years in 1872. After a spell in Copenhagen, he was appointed temporary ambassador to relieve the sick Langenau at St Petersburg in 1879. But although he was a success – particularly, as a military man with Alexander II – Andrássy would not hear of making

[31] H. Kanner, p. 4.
[32] P. Hohenbalken (ed.), *Lützow*, p. 75.

[33] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Hugo Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, July 1902.

him permanent ambassador. Kálnoky, for his part, was not ambitious. When the emperor offered him the foreign office he twice refused. For he felt the post demanded someone with parliamentary connexions – it was impossible for a mere diplomat to cope with the politics of Austria, let alone those of Hungary, which so often impinged on foreign policy (Document 12). The Monarchy really needed a chancellor on the German model, he said. But in the end he accepted the appointment, on 20 November, and took over the foreign office from Kállay on 10 December.

The new appointment did not portend any drastic changes in policy. Kálnoky had worked well enough with Haymerle, and shared his concept of the Three Emperors' Alliance as a means of securing Austro-Hungarian interests by agreement with St Petersburg. His experience in Russia had strengthened his conviction that war with that Power could never bring gains sufficient to compensate for the destruction and misery it would cause – indeed, so much so that perhaps under Kálnoky a slight change of emphasis can be discerned in Austro-Hungarian foreign policy. Whereas Andrássy and Haymerle had both had an instinctively 'western' orientation – although diplomatic facts had worked against them in the end – with Kálnoky there was to be more emphasis on the need for the three eastern empires to stand together against the revolution, and of course against the midwife of revolution, war. Kálnoky was sometimes prepared to pursue this policy at a cost to Austria-Hungary's freedom of action, and even state interests, that horrified Andrássy. But with the full support of Taaffe and his aristocratic, clerical and Slav satellites, Kálnoky was not usually unduly perturbed by Magyar opposition. The British ambassador's assessment of him was fair enough: 'he clings to the alliance with Bismarck and to the Dreikaiserbund'.[34]

The Three Emperors' Alliance proved well worth clinging to in the first crisis with which Kálnoky was confronted – the Bosnian revolt of 1881–2. This arose from the government's decision to impose conscription in the occupied provinces – technically an encroachment beyond the powers accorded to it by the Treaty of Berlin – and to enforce the existing conscription law for south Dalmatia (suspended since the rebellion of 1869). The government had so far done nothing to win over the Christians of Bosnia

[34] Agatha Ramm, p. 250.

and the Herzegovina, who had hoped that the occupation would at least be followed by some land reform; nor had its inactivity on this point conciliated the Moslem landowners, who chafed under the loss of the political freedom they had enjoyed under Turkish rule. In November 1881 the discontent exploded into armed rebellion, to which the government's initial response, as in 1869, was inadequate – although it should be said that fighting conditions in the severe winter of 1881–2 were exceptionally unfavourable. Only in March 1882, after prolonged and difficult operations – some of them in snow chest-deep – was order restored. In the meantime, the revolt had raised acute problems.

On the domestic front, the argument was heard again that so long as Turkey was sovereign over the provinces, they would never settle down – an argument which Kálnoky himself had formerly urged on the cautious Haymerle. Against this, Károlyi reported from London that Gladstone, who had only swallowed the conscription laws with some difficulty, would certainly make a fuss if the Monarchy proceeded to annex the provinces. A Vienna foreign office memorandum of April 1882 added the objection that the annexation would be costly; and repeated Andrássy's argument that Turkey was the best possible neighbour for Austria-Hungary, who would have time enough to annex the provinces if Turkey should ever disappear.[35] Kálnoky, however, decided to look into the possibility of annexation, and was supported by Kállay, an ardent proponent of annexation as a preliminary to a thoroughgoing reform of Bosnian law. A conference of ministers of 3 June[36] made no progress on the thorny problem of the ultimate destination of the provinces within the Dual Monarchy; but Kálnoky and Kállay went ahead and in October drew up a draft annexation law, putting the provinces directly under the emperor. In the face of violent Hungarian objections to anything smacking of Trialism this project had come to nothing by January 1883.

There were also weighty external obstacles to it. Kálnoky had been unable to get much sense out of Constantinople, where chaos reigned in high places at the end of 1882; the Russian government might be bound hand and foot by the Three Emperors' Alliance, but Russian public opinion was a very different matter – it would certainly become enraged, and might even force the government

[35] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', pp. 203–9. [36] Ibid., pp. 210–18.

to precipitate a union of the two Bulgarias to recoup Russian prestige; Britain, and probably France, would be hostile; and Prince Milan had told Kálnoky straight out that although he personally would be well disposed, the annexation of the provinces would rouse Serbian feeling to a frenzy and certainly cost him his throne. In view of the difficulties, Kálnoky retreated. Perhaps an opportunity had been missed: Russia's binding commitment was valuable and should perhaps have been exploited while it still held. On the other hand, it was hardly unreasonable in 1882 to hope that the future might produce a rather more favourable situation.

Externally, the Bosnian revolt raised the problems of preventing foreign intervention and of maintaining good relations with Russia, both of which were fairly satisfactorily solved thanks to the forbearance and co-operation of St Petersburg. The revolt naturally caused a stir in the Balkan states. In Bulgaria the Russian minister, Hitrovo, was known to be supplying money and passports to volunteers who sought to help the rebels; and Montenegro had to be bought off by Vienna at the cost of some 100,000 Gulden. (This was still cheaper, Kálnoky reminded the indignant military, than the suppression of a revolt prolonged by Montenegrin assistance.) Prince Milan, of course, was loud in his encouragement of the Austrians, although this only whipped up more anti-Austrian feeling in Serbia and further weakened the throne. Turkey too, wished for a speedy suppression of a revolt which might spread to Albania, and even offered Vienna her assistance in the form of an alliance in February 1882. This, Kálnoky rejected: Turkey was too unstable – Calice, the ambassador at Constantinople, even described her as a dying Power at this time. But Kálnoky let the Turks down lightly – they were commercially important; and they might some day be of use in the big game against Russia. He was careful to humour them over Egypt at this time, telling them that such co-operation showed that an alliance was superfluous. Most important of all, the attitude of the Russian government was scrupulously friendly and correct. In that respect at least, the Bosnian revolt showed the value of the Three Emperors' Alliance. At the same time, however, the virulence of the reaction of 'unofficial' Russia made the Austrians suddenly and painfully aware of its limitations.

For four long months the Russian press raged against the Dual

Monarchy; and the minister of the interior, Ignatiev, whether personally approving or merely welcoming a diversion from the government's unpopular domestic policies, seemed to do nothing to restrain it. Feeling ran particularly high in the army; and in January 1882 the popular General Skobelev made a much publicized speech in a St Petersburg restaurant, drawing attention to the fight for faith and fatherland that was going on in Bosnia. He then went off to Paris, where he made a speech about the inevitable conflict between Teuton and Slav. This alarmed many people in Germany, but Bismarck carefully refrained from any diplomatic reaction; and Kálnoky, too, assured visiting diplomats that he trusted in the tsar, not in Skobelev. Nevertheless, his faith in Alexander III had been shaken; especially when his secret, but increasingly urgent, appeals to the Russian government to come out in the open and calm public opinion by disavowing Skobelev produced no result. By March, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador was reporting from St Petersburg that a curious situation had arisen: officially, Russia was on the best of terms with her neighbours; yet public opinion feverishly expected war – there was undoubtedly a great conflict of political forces going on inside Russia, 'and no one can say whether the dam of the state's authority might not one day be swept away'.[37]

True, with the end of the Bosnian revolt, the Russian press at last calmed down – especially after a very energetic protest by Kálnoky (17 March), whose military sensitivities had been touched by a *Novoye Vremya* article alleging Austro-Hungarian 'atrocities' in Bosnia; and the appointment of Giers as minister for foreign affairs on 23 March was certainly a reassuring sign. In July Kálnoky was further gratified to hear of the sudden death, in a Moscow brothel, of Skobelev himself – 'the one man in Russia who might have prevailed against sensible people'.[38] But his confidence had, nevertheless, been severely shaken. And this not so much on account of Skobelev's speeches as on account of the government's, and especially the tsar's, timid reaction to them. Henceforth, Kálnoky had serious misgivings about the efficacy of the Three Emperors' Alliance. The very crisis that had demonstrated its tactical usefulness had shown equally clearly that it could provide no lasting security.

[37] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'General Skobelev . . .', p. 127.
[38] Ibid., p. 151.

The Skobelev crisis was in fact the starting point for a general reinforcement of Austria-Hungary's diplomatic and military defences against the day when the Three Emperors' Alliance should fail her. 'From now on,' Beck declared in February, 'war against this Power [Russia] must be constantly kept in mind';[39] and he recommended approaches to Rome and Bucharest. In the next two years the Dual Alliance was strengthened by a military understanding; an alliance was concluded with Roumania, and a fairly successful effort made to get a firmer grip on the Balkan states. More immediately, the Skobelev crisis precipitated the formation of the Triple Alliance.

Austro-Italian relations had not been happy in the later 1870s. In Italy the government had been in the hands of the Left, traditionally associated with irredentism, since 1876; and Austria-Hungary's Balkan activities in 1877–8 had aroused jealousy across the Adriatic. Andrássy had never concealed his views on Italy's irredentist ambitions, and had warned Rome that 'at the first sign of an Italian annexationist policy, Austria-Hungary would attack'.[40] Nor, indeed, would the Monarchy permit Italy to gain territory anywhere on the Adriatic. In 1878 the decision was taken to fortify the Tyrolean frontier. Yet despite all this the Austrians appreciated the desirability of good relations with Italy. Andrássy hoped that even irredentism might provide common ground for co-operation between the two governments. For it was an object of loathing to both. At least, whatever his ministers thought, the conservative, military-minded King Humbert regarded it as a mere cloak for republican propaganda and detested it as heartily as Andrássy did.

Haymerle – he had not been ambassador at Rome for nothing – was equally anxious to improve Austro-Italian relations. The Austro-Hungarian government was much concerned to play down the repercussions which followed irredentist demonstrations at the funeral of General Avezzana in January 1880, and confined itself to a modest strengthening of the frontier defences. This proved to be just enough to bring a panicky Italian government to proffer its apologies without causing any lasting estrangement. Austro-Hungarian public opinion was more exercised, however, and according to the British ambassador, aggression by Italy would have been met with 'a unanimous alacrity that would

[39] Ibid., p. 134. [40] L. Salvatorelli, p. 30.

be wanting' in the case of any other war.[41] Bismarck did his best to fan the flames. An Austria-Hungary on bad terms with Italy would be more amenable to his plans for a Three Emperors' Alliance. Haymerle's efforts in February 1880 to make sure of Italy as a preliminary to taking a firm stand against Russia, therefore, came to nothing. Yet he did not despair. Indeed, by February 1881, in response to Italian feelers following on Rome's decision of the previous summer to seek a *rapprochement* with the Central Powers, he was prepared to support Italian designs in Tunis, and even to offer Crete, provided Italy renounced her Balkan ambitions. True, he was now engaged in seeking agreement with Russia, but an agreement with Italy would strengthen his position to drive a hard bargain with St Petersburg. For this very reason, however, Bismarck, who preferred a weak and malleable Austria-Hungary, poured cold water on the whole idea; the Italians were indecisive; and the negotiations faded away.

The French occupation of Tunis in May 1881 spurred the Italians to make a more serious effort to escape from their painful isolation. But what was for them a cogent incentive was for the Central Powers a serious obstacle to an agreement. For neither of them had the slightest desire to be dragged into a quarrel with France. Added to this, a violent anti-papal demonstration in Rome on 12 July made Italy an even more questionable ally for the Apostolic King of Hungary. King Humbert's visit to Vienna (27–31 October), therefore, falling in the interlude between the death of Haymerle and the appointment of Kálnoky, signified little more than a *détente* and a willingness to forget past quarrels. It achieved nothing positive, as Kállay rather tactlessly announced in the Delegations. The Italians were disappointed; and were even more dismayed by Bismarck's flattery of the Pope in a Reichstag speech of 29 November. Indeed, some people in Rome seem to have panicked. At any rate, on 23 December Blanc (the secretary-general of the Consulta) formally appealed to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador for an alliance to save Italy from her disastrous isolation, and to give a much-needed boost to the prestige of the monarchy. In the new year, as a token of goodwill, Italy ostentatiously brought her Egyptian policy into line with that of the Three Emperors' Alliance, and ceased to press her grievances about Tunis.

[41] Agatha Ramm, p. 165.

Despite, or rather because of his fears about the strength of irredentist forces undermining the monarchy in Italy, Kálnoky was anxious to do something to strengthen the forces of order there. As the Italian ambassador pointed out, the Central Powers themselves had an interest in preventing the contagion of republicanism spreading from France to the whole Latin world. Kálnoky, therefore, commended the Italians to a hesitant Bismarck, and managed to persuade him that it would be asking too much to demand that the Italian government first come to terms with the Pope. Not that he had any intention of committing Franz Joseph, the leading Catholic monarch, to anything like an acceptance of the Italian view in the quarrel between Quirinal and Vatican. Indeed, it was chiefly for this reason that in February 1882 he rejected a far-reaching Italian proposal for a treaty of territorial guarantee. His own suggestion of a simple neutrality treaty, on the other hand, offered Italy too little – in fact no more than she already had in practice. So Bismarck, impressed by Skobelev's visit to Paris and the spectre of a France in league with Russia, persuaded Kálnoky to offer Italy some support against France. It was on the basis of an Italian draft along these lines that Kálnoky drew up the terms of the Triple Alliance of 20 May 1882 (Document 13).

Despite some unfortunate ambiguities in the text – Kálnoky was no expert in drafting, and he received no help from Bismarck – the treaty suited Austro-Hungarian interests well enough. Austria-Hungary was committed to help Italy only in the extremely unlikely event of an unprovoked French attack; and she maintained her freedom from any obligation to help Germany in the event of a Franco-German war. Although Kálnoky had told the German ambassador that the Monarchy would in fact fight in such a case, Hungarian opinion was still too averse to involvement in Franco-German disputes to permit of any treaty commitment. And even Kálnoky himself, while agreeing to the so-called Mancini declaration which stated that the alliance could not be construed as directed against Britain, would not consider admitting Britain into the alliance – precisely because he was afraid that Gladstone would not keep secret an alliance which would be offensive to France. It is true that Italy had gained security against both her potential enemies, and had offered Austria-Hungary nothing beyond neutrality in return. The

Austrians, however, were not in the least interested in securing positive help from Italy: this would be of little value, and might entail greater commitments against France, or an Italian demand for a voice in Near Eastern affairs. Kálnoky's main aim in concluding the alliance had been to make absolutely certain of Italy's neutrality, and thus to free all the resources of the Monarchy for a possible war in the east. As he explained to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador at Rome on 1 April, the chief justification for the alliance from his point of view lay in 'the dreadful confusion (*Zerrüttung*) prevailing in Russia'.[42]

To that extent, the alliance suited Kálnoky's purposes. It was also a useful reinforcement for the conservative bastion in central Europe: one of the Latin monarchies at least had been strengthened. Kálnoky emphasized this aspect of the alliance in his efforts to dispel the indignation the alliance had aroused in the Vatican. Against the two great revolutionary threats of the day – the Orthodox Church in league with Panslavism, and revolutionary socialism emanating from France – all conservative elements, including, he reminded the Pope, the Italian monarchy, must stand together in defence of the principle of authority, 'qui en dernière analyse est la base de tous les états'.[43]

Otherwise, the alliance had serious weaknesses. Like the Serbian Alliance and the Three Emperors' Alliance, it had no roots in popular feeling on either side. For example, in December 1882 after the execution of Oberdank (a deserter from the Austrian army who had planned to assassinate Franz Joseph during his visit to Trieste) vast demonstrations were held in Italy, where every town of any significance soon had its 'Piazza Oberdan'. The Italian government was scrupulously correct, and publicly disavowed the irredentists; and an unemployed tailor who threw a stone at the coach of the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to the Vatican got three years – more than he would have got in Austria, Franz Joseph observed.[44] Even between the two governments, however, difficulties arose. No solution could be found to the vexed question of Franz Joseph's return visit to King Humbert: whereas the emperor could not offend the Pope by visiting the king at Rome, the Italian government said it could not vouch for

[42] P.A. I/457, Kálnoky to Wimpffen, private, 1 April 1882.
[43] P.A. XI/226, Kálnoky to Paar, private, 7 December 1883.
[44] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', p. 161.

his security from hostile demonstrators if he returned the visit anywhere else. The Austrians now had cause to regret their own shortsightedness in receiving Humbert in Vienna. All the same, so long as the simple soldier-king reigned at Rome, the alliance would be safe; and there was a lull in irredentist activity after 1883. Indeed, by April 1884 Kálnoky was hopefully predicting that it would only be a matter of time before the alliance came to earn that popular approval in the member states which he regarded as 'the final cement' (*den letzten festen Kitt*).[45]

In fact, only one of Austria-Hungary's alliances ever received this 'final cement': The Dual Alliance. And after the Skobelev crisis this alliance was further strengthened by a military understanding. Since 1871 the German military had regarded it as certain that France and Russia would fight together, should Germany become involved in a war with either. Originally, they planned to eliminate France first in such an eventuality; but in 1879 they changed their plans and decided to concentrate on Russia first. Now the Dual Alliance had brought no co-ordination of military planning between the Central Powers. It was only the nationalist ferment in Russia in the spring of 1882 that convinced the German military – and even Bismarck for a short time – of the need at least to find out something about Austria-Hungary's plans. Franz Joseph and Kálnoky agreed to consultations with the Germans, although they put in a caveat against drifting into talk of preventive war; and in April, Beck drew up a long memorandum[46] on the military position. A war with Russia, with her widespread Panslav ramifications, would be like a return to the *Völkerwanderungen*, and the Monarchy would need all the help it could get. The impending Italian alliance would be a great gain; but the Balkan states would still need watching – perhaps Turkey would help here; and there was an urgent need for more fortifications in Galicia, and for more strategic railways to reduce the Austro-Hungarian mobilization time of 44–33 days. Equally urgent, however, was the need to discover Germany's intentions. In a memorandum he wrote in preparation for his talks with Moltke's aide, Waldersee, at Strobl,[47] Beck was far less cautious than the emperor and Kálnoky on the question of preventive war.

[45] P.A. I/457, Kálnoky to Ludolf, 15 April 1884.

[46] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'General Skobelev . . .', pp. 140–2.

[47] Ibid., pp. 142–3.

'The great idea must be the offensive,' he declared, and went on to sketch out an ambitious plan for an Austro-German pincer movement deep into Russian Poland, to encircle and destroy the main Russian army there at the first sign that Russia was making serious preparations for war. Nothing so specific was agreed at Strobl on 3 August, or in Beck's meeting with Moltke at the Breslau manoeuvres in September. But the two general staffs were agreed on a strong joint offensive into Poland – Waldersee even promised that more than half of Germany's forces would be put in the east – and Beck could henceforth be confident of strong German support.

Thus heartened, he proceeded in November 1882 to draw up an important memorandum[48] embodying what was to remain the basis of Austro-Hungarian military thinking down to 1914. The immediate military need, however, was to re-group the Cracow army further east, round Lemberg, and to do everything possible to speed up Austria-Hungary's mobilization plans. For there were, after all, limits to the trust one could put in even the best of allies: if Austria-Hungary wanted to secure a worthwhile share of the spoils, she should not allow the Germans to win the early victories unaided, herself appearing late in the day with a sort of reserve army. Speedy Austro-Hungarian victories would also be of vital importance in holding the Balkan states to an awed neutrality. Kálnoky gave Beck his full support, and persuaded the conference of ministers in February 1883 to pay for more strategic railways in Galicia. By 1885 the Austrians had succeeded in reducing the time needed for mobilization from 40 to 21 days. This suited Bismarck, who was constantly telling the Austrians to trust in their defensive fortifications in Galicia, rather than in desperate tactical offensives. Although the military talks had imposed no binding commitments on the governments of Vienna and Berlin, the understanding reached in 1882 was in practice an important addition to the effectiveness of the Dual Alliance against Russia.

In most other respects, Austro-German relations remained much the same. The Dual Alliance was renewed in the spring of 1883, this time to run on automatically unless denounced. Kálnoky was firm in resisting Bismarck's attempts to extend it to cover the case of a Franco-German war. For the Magyars were insistent that Hungary could not conceivably have any quarrel

[48] P.A. I/466, Beck, memorandum, secret, 11 November 1881.

they fear will beat them'.[51] It was only under pressure from Franz Joseph that he contented himself with an apology instead. The year 1882 saw no improvement. Although Kálnoky managed to insert most of Haymerle's desiderata into the French compromise proposal on the Danube question Roumania steadily vetoed it in the European Danube Commission (in which decisions required unanimity). In 1883 the Great Powers, exasperated by Roumania's obstruction, settled the matter by summoning a special conference in London of the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin (at which Roumania, of course, was not represented). There, Kálnoky managed to secure the main objective to Haymerle's policy: Austro-Hungarian interests were not to be placed at the mercy of the small riparian states. But Roumania obstinately refused to accept the decision of the London conference. And her rage against Austria-Hungary, heightened at this time by a bout of irredentist fever, now knew no bounds.

Matters came to a head in June 1883 at a state banquet held in the presence of the king and queen of Roumania in Jassy, capital of Moldavia and a stronghold of Russophile feeling. Speeches were made expressing regrets for 'the pearls still missing from the crown of St. Stephen the Great'; and the royal guests accepted a toast to 'the king and queen of the Roumanians'.[52] This Kálnoky decided, was too much for a Great Power to tolerate, and he decided to call a sharp halt. On 1 July he sent what was virtually an ultimatum (Document 14): Roumania's explanations were unsatisfactory, and 'we must now insist on an explicit and clear declaration that the government condemns this unlawful agitation against the peace of our border territories, and, as is its duty, will not tolerate them. . . We are completely in the right and will pursue this matter, if necessary, to the point of war (*bis in den letzten Konsequenzen*).'[53] The Bucharest government at last saw into the abyss that yawned before it, and immediately presented an apology virtually dictated by Kálnoky. The success of the firm, if not overbearing, approach, was amply demonstrated: in July, the Roumanian foreign minister Stourdza made the pilgrimage to Vienna to assure Kálnoky that Roumania considered

[51] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', p. 54.
[52] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Oesterreich-Ungarn und Rumänien . . .', p. 228.
[53] Ibid., pp. 242–3.

herself Austria-Hungary's 'born ally';[54] and the emperor congratulated Kálnoky on having brought Roumania so smartly to heel. Kálnoky's 'ultimatum' had set a precedent that was to be imitated several times, and sometimes with less happy results for the Monarchy in the next thirty years.

Kálnoky received Stourdza's assurances coldly; and it was only after seeing Bismarck at Kissingen on 18 August that he began to consider a more positive response. For Bismarck was again temporarily worried about Russia's armaments, and suggested that it might be well to extend the 'league of peace' eastwards by bringing in Roumania. Kálnoky agreed in principle with this idea (and also took the opportunity to inform Bismarck of Haymerle's Serbian alliance). At the same time, however, he insisted that King Carol was weak; that Stourdza had no influence in the country; and that the alliance, if it were to have any value, must be negotiated with the prime minister Bratianu. Even now, as in the case of the Dual and the Triple Alliances, a catalyst was needed in the form of a temporary scare about Russia. On this occasion, it was provided by a serious row in Bulgaria between the tsar and Alexander of Battenberg. Now Bratianu, who saw Roumania's chief enemy in the Panslav threat, was even more alarmed than the Austrians at the prospect of a Russian invasion of Bulgaria. Roumania's fear of Russia, and Kálnoky's unrelenting attitude towards irredentism (a demonstrative tour of Transylvania by Beck at this time had a most sobering effect in Bucharest) combined to hasten the Roumanians along the path to Canossa. King Carol, after a headwashing in Berlin, agreed to the negotiations, which were conducted between Kálnoky and Bratianu at Vienna and Gastein in September.

Kálnoky was never at his best in the hard bargaining involved in negotiating alliances. In this case too, he allowed Bratianu to jockey him out of including a clause similar to that in the Serbian treaty which explicitly forbade the toleration of irredentist activities. Nor did he manage to bring Roumania to modify by one jot her stubborn attitude on the Danube question. Indeed, Bucharest remained absolutely unyielding on this even after the alliance was made; and Kálnoky in turn was only wearied by Bismarck's advice to humour Roumania: 'no one outside Austria can have any idea what patience is needed when one is surrounded by a collection of

[54] Ibid., p. 246.

half-barbarian states whose arrogant interpretation of their newly-acquired independence gives rise to perpetual friction.'[55] Despite these setbacks, however, he had achieved a good deal: the Russian minister at Bucharest, who was on his track, was at any rate highly disgruntled, and soundly berated the Roumanians for having gone over to Austria-Hungary, 'who is the enemy of Russia'.[56] True, the alliance depended entirely on the king and Bratianu – not even the whole Roumanian cabinet knew about it, and it had no roots in public opinion. On the other hand, while it lasted, the alliance of 30 October 1883 (Document 15) gave the Monarchy valuable military cover in the south-east in the event of a Russian attack. More important still, Germany's immediate accession to the alliance constituted in practical terms that very extension of the Dual Alliance to cover Roumania that Haymerle had sought in vain from Bismarck in the spring of 1881.

At the same time, the Austrians consolidated their position in the rest of the Balkans. In Serbia, this was mainly a question of maintaining Prince Milan on his shaky throne. In January 1882 the collapse of the Union Générale bank, involving the Serbian government in considerable losses, dealt a severe blow to Milan's prestige and almost brought the Russophile Liberals and Radicals to power. But Vienna stepped in with timely financial aid; and when, in March, in a move to strengthen the dynasty Milan proclaimed himself king, and altered the constitution in his own favour, Franz Joseph made haste to recognize the new kingdom (as of course he was in any case obliged to do by the treaty of 1881). Kálnoky accepted all this. But he had misgivings lest Milan's proclamation, coming at the time of the Bosnian rising, should encourage Panserbian ambitions; and he took care to warn the king that 'we are in those provinces and we shall stay there'.[57] The energetic Khevenhüller, Austro-Hungarian minister at Belgrade, was assiduous in giving advice to Milan, and did much to strengthen Austro-Hungarian influence in his counsels.

In the country, however, Milan's pro-Austrian orientation continued extremely unpopular, associated as it was with higher taxation resulting from the government's railway projects and disastrous financial ventures; and even more with the negation of

[55] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', pp. 488–9.

[56] P.A. I/460, Liasse XIII, Mayr to Kálnoky, 2 April 1884.

[57] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', p. 256.

cherished national ambitions in Bosnia and the Herzegovina. The Austrians, for their part, preferred to adopt a conspiracy theory, and blame Russian agents for fomenting all the opposition to King Milan. Kálnoky, certainly, seems to have been sincerely convinced that this was the root of the trouble. In January 1883, he lectured Giers, who was passing through Vienna, on the need for co-operation between the great monarchies in support of the minor dynasties in the Balkans. None of these dynasties had any roots in its adopted country, and all of them were confronted with the same international revolutionary movement – which only adopted different guises (socialist, nationalist, or liberal) according to varying circumstances.[58] Given the narrowly monarchical nature of most of Austria-Hungary's alliances, there was no doubt a touch of *Realpolitik* in Kálnoky's emphatic insistence that blows to monarchies abroad were indirectly blows to the Habsburg Monarchy; and that it was a 'vital necessity' (*Lebensnotwendigkeit*) for Austria-Hungary to oppose challenges to the monarchical principle wherever they arose.[59] But the argument was a good one to use with the eminently conservative Giers, who promptly promised to support the Obrenović dynasty in Serbia despite Milan's shortcomings.

Not that Kálnoky for his part was in the least interested in stirring up the Serbian government to a positively anti-Russian policy. This could only weaken the Three Emperors' Alliance, his chief means of keeping Russia in order. Indeed, in the summer of 1883 he was urging a very recalcitrant Milan to try to improve his relations with St Petersburg. Nevertheless, he issued another warning to Giers at the same time: Austria-Hungary did not wish to interfere in the Balkan states; but she could not, for reasons of her own security, tolerate openly hostile governments on her frontier in Montenegro or, especially, in Serbia 'which lies so completely within our sphere of influence'.[60] 'We must insist on a friendly government in Belgrade.' If a revolution there produced chaos or a hostile government, the need to preserve the tranquillity of the south Slav frontier districts of the Monarchy would compel Vienna to intervene by force of arms. Hence, Kálnoky told Giers, it would be in Russia's interests not to encourage such revolutions. But he had strung the bow too tight.

[58] P.A. I/469, Liasse XXIII/a, Kálnoky, memorandum, 20 May 1883.

[59] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', p. 274. [60] Ibid., pp. 303–4.

Giers took great alarm at these veiled threats, and protested that the spirit of the treaty of 1881 (which, of course, technically applied only to Turkey and Bulgaria) forbade Austria-Hungary to intervene in Serbia without the consent of her treaty partners. And his protest was effective. Indeed, Kálnoky made an astonishing retreat. For, perhaps only to pacify Giers, perhaps concluding that after all salvation lay only in close co-operation with 'official' Russia, he now made the extraordinary and gratuitous concession of accepting this Russian interpretation of the Three Emperors' Alliance.[61] This involved a serious potential restriction on the Monarchy's freedom of action against Serbia – and one which Haymerle had resolutely resisted. And to this extent there is some justification in Andrássy's complaint that 'whereas the Congress of Berlin led Russia out of the Balkans, my successors brought her back in again.'[62] For the present, however, the question was academic. By the end of 1883 Milan had rounded up large numbers of his opponents, and had engineered a political stability in Serbia that was to last until 1885.

In Bulgaria the Austrians could feel equally sure of themselves. By the end of 1882 the Russians had managed to unite the Prince and all the political parties in opposition to their domination. Kálnoky was, therefore, even more determined to hold to the policy of abstention from open opposition to Russia (which might only provoke a great crisis and the fall of Alexander). He was well content to let Russia go on making herself more unpopular. Indeed, by January 1883 he was coming to the view that a strong united Bulgaria would not be a Russian satellite (as he had feared in 1881) but perhaps the best means of driving Russia out of the Balkans altogether – an extremely dangerous ambition, even if only a long-term one; and one which illustrates well how the originally defensive concept of safeguarding Austro-Hungarian interests against an overweening Russia could be perverted into something extremely offensive against a Russia already in retreat. After all, Austria-Hungary's interests were flourishing well enough despite, or rather because of Russia's fumbling attempts to establish her political control in Bulgaria. In the spring, Kálnoky had had quite a triumph when agreement was at last reached with Turkey and Bulgaria for the construction of the

[61] Ibid., p. 308.

[62] Kab. 19, Andrássy to Franz Joseph, 24 November 1885.

railway links with the Serbian network (which were to be given priority over the strategic lines desired by Russia). During the August crisis, therefore, he stayed calm, and advised Alexander to avoid provoking an actual showdown with the tsar. If Russia were so foolish as to embark on anything so drastic as an invasion, he calculated, this would only compromise her further. It would also – as was observable in Roumania – drive all the other Balkan states into the arms of Austria-Hungary. Besides, if the worst came to the worst, other Powers, notably Britain, might be persuaded to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. At any rate, he himself was careful not to respond when the British very tentatively suggested joint opposition to Russia's designs in Bulgaria. Indeed, in December 1883 he coolly informed London that that was a British, not an Austro-Hungarian interest. The Monarchy could afford to sit and wait.

Kálnoky's growing hopes of Bulgaria largely explain his rebuff to the king of the Hellenes, who in September 1883 approached him about an alliance to support Greek territorial ambitions in Turkey and Greek cultural interests threatened by Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia. Kálnoky hereby broke with Andrássy's policy of supporting the Greeks against the Slavs; but this policy was now outdated. Greece was not worth much militarily; and alliance with her would only estrange the Slavs, particularly Bulgaria; and in any case her impatient greed for Turkish territory was anathema to Kálnoky. Towards the Turks, he successfully continued his policy of friendship without any definite pledges of support. Like his partners in the Three Emperors' Alliance he found in the Egyptian question a cheap means of humouring the sultan; though he was also concerned – or so he told the British in August 1882 – lest Britain contrive by misusing the Concert to give Turkey the impression that all the Christian Powers were in league against her. In May 1883 he refused to support Gladstone's attempt to bring the Turks to implement their promises of reform in Armenia.

By the beginning of 1884, therefore, Vienna was in a fairly confident mood. In February, Beck surveyed the horizon: relations with Italy had become increasingly stable, the only threat to them being a revolution in Rome and a consequent realignment of the Latin races under the republican banner in a battle against the monarchical principle. With Roumania, relations had been

greatly improved and clarified by the alliance (though that state might still hesitate to lend positive assistance in a war). Bulgaria was no longer a problem; but it would be well to keep in favour with Turkey, who could be useful in preventing trouble from Montenegro or in the occupied provinces. Russia, therefore, was in a fairly isolated position – particularly now that her friend France was so busy overseas. Of course much still needed to be done to improve the Monarchy's defences and to reduce the time needed for mobilization. But all in all, Beck decided, 'the year 1883 has brought a real change for the better'.[63]

It was in this contented mood that the Austrians proceeded to the renewal of the Three Emperors' Alliance. They still kept a wary eye on Russia. For example, at Salzburg in August 1883 Kálnoky rejected out of hand a Russian proposal which Bismarck put to him that the alliance be modified in the sense of the Reichstadt Agreement of 1876, to take account of the eventual collapse of Turkey, and even of Russia's designs on Constantinople. The emperor and the Hungarians would never agree to this, he said. Besides, the alliance was strictly defensive; and the Monarchy had no interest whatever in anything remotely offensive to Turkey, who might still prove useful in a war. Nor had he any time for Bismarck's favourite idea of spheres of influence in the Balkans: Russia would not observe the principle in Serbia and Montenegro, and hence it would just be pure loss for the Monarchy to abandon Bulgaria.

During the negotiations for the renewal of the treaty he made only one concession to Russia. That was an important one: the text was amended to extend the prohibition of military action without prior consultation from Turkey proper and Bulgaria to the whole of the Balkan peninsula. Admittedly, he had sold this particular pass to Giers in the summer of 1883; but this formal amendment was to give the Austrians a good deal of trouble in the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885. Otherwise, there were no significant changes. Kálnoky rejected Bismarck's suggestion that Italy might be brought in: this would overthrow the whole basis of existing treaties, he said, in which Italy's role was only as part of the wall he had built against the danger of a Russian attack if the Three Emperors' Alliance failed. (By the same token, he later refused another suggestion of Bismarck's

[63] P.A. I/466, Beck, memorandum, dated '1884'.

to admit Russia to the Triple Alliance, and told Bismarck to confine himself to informing Russia of its conservative monarchical content.) Besides, Kálnoky said, the Near East was no business of Italy's: she would only complicate matters. When Giers seemed to be prevaricating about Bosnia and the Herzegovina, Kálnoky firmly reminded him that their annexation was not to be regarded as a change in the *status quo*; and that it would not authorize Russia to precipitate a union of the two Bulgarias – all of which Giers accepted. On this basis, the treaty was renewed for three years at Berlin on 27 March 1884.

Now during the negotiations Kálnoky had agreed to a Russian suggestion for a meeting between Franz Joseph and Alexander III at the tsar's hunting lodge at Skiernewice in Poland, to take place in the summer. But hardly was the ink dry on the renewed treaty than he began to find Russia's behaviour exasperating. In the spring, there were difficulties over Eastern Roumelia, where in view of the impending expiry of the term of office of the Turkish governor general, Aleko Pasha, a nationalist movement was growing up in favour of union with Bulgaria; and this spread to the principality. The tsar, meanwhile, was pressing strongly for the appointment of a pro-Russian successor to Aleko Pasha – no friend of St Petersburg. All this alarmed Kálnoky: for with a pro-Russian governor general in Eastern Roumelia, the Russians might expel Alexander from Bulgaria, and recover their prestige by bringing about a union under Russian auspices. To make matters worse, Bismarck seemed to be lending the Russians every assistance. For example, in June, he gratified the tsar by delivering a crushing humiliation to Alexander of Battenberg, preventing the prince's marriage to the half-English Princess Victoria of Prussia.

To a certain extent, Kálnoky felt constrained to keep in step with his partners in the Three Emperors' Alliance – at least to the extent of not actually opposing the Russian nominee for Eastern Roumelia. And he co-operated with them in sorting out a Serbo-Bulgarian frontier dispute despite Franz Joseph's indignation at Russia's stiff opposition to Serbia's 'just claims'. On the other hand, a bland suggestion from Bismarck that he should accept that Bulgaria lay in Russia's sphere provoked him too far. Again he declaimed against the doctrine of spheres of influence, which, as he rightly observed, Russia herself did not accept.

Austria-Hungary could never give Russia a free hand in Bulgaria: to do so would be to create that same big Slav kingdom under Russian control that Andrássy had so tenaciously opposed. Such a state would dominate the whole Balkans. Besides, Austria-Hungary had a great material stake in Bulgaria.

On top of all this came an exasperating suggestion from Bismarck that the German emperor should also participate in the Skiernewice meeting. This filled the Austrians with alarm: the participation of Germany in her present frame of mind could only benefit Russia; and it might even look like a downgrading of the Dual Alliance in favour of the Three Emperors' Alliance. Besides, such a spectacular meeting could only cause general wonder and disquiet: 'You can imagine what a noise it will make'[64] Kálnoky complained to the ambassador at London. Yet at the same time, it could do no good to snub the Germans, especially at a time when the Russians were so alarmingly assiduous at Berlin. To make the best of an embarrassing situation, therefore, the Austrians decided to comply with Bismarck's plan, but to make sure that the Skiernewice meeting was preceded by meetings between Franz Joseph and William I, and between Kálnoky and Bismarck, at Ischl and Varzin. This would put the Dual Alliance in the foreground, and give the public the impression that Skiernewice was merely a subsidiary reinforcement of Austro-German solidarity. Franz Joseph was most anxious that Germany should be squared in advance of any tripartite talks. Not that he was expecting much of lasting value to emerge from Skiernewice anyway: 'my distrust of conditions in Russia is so deep-rooted.'[65]

An Austro-Hungarian foreign office memorandum[66] reviewing the situation in August took an extraordinarily gloomy view: the Balkan situation had recently become extremely precarious. Austria-Hungary might well prefer to humour Giers and the conservatives in Russia, but she might nevertheless soon have to call on that Power to halt – for she herself could not retreat in the Balkans without sacrificing the hard-won gains of recent years. Faced with this problem she was virtually isolated: the feeble Gladstone government seemed to have withdrawn from the Near East; and although the Dual Alliance remained the basis of

[64] P.A. I/460, Liasse XIIa, Kálnoky to Károlyi, private, 28 July 1884.
[65] P.A. I/460, Liasse XIIa, Franz Joseph to Kálnoky, 26 July 1884.
[66] E. R. v. Rutkowski, 'Kálnoky . . .', pp. 636–45.

Austro-Hungarian policy, Bismarck, with his talk of spheres of interest was giving the Monarchy virtually no backing. It would be essential at Varzin, therefore, to find out just what Bismarck had in mind. This was also Kálnoky's view, and in the weeks before he went to Varzin, he did his best to humour the Germans. He supported their opposition to an Anglo-Portuguese treaty about the Congo basin, and impressed strongly on Károlyi in London that it was vitally important in the London conference then meeting on Egypt, to lend Bismarck wholehearted support against Gladstone. The latter's policy was in any case 'a disaster' (*höchst unheilvoll*) for Austria-Hungary who had no interest whatever in seeing him continue in office.[67]

In the event, William I showered Franz Joseph with fulsome expressions of loyalty at Ischl; and at Varzin Bismarck, while not having any significant suggestions to make, at least did not return to his obnoxious advice of the summer. The talks at Skiernewice too (15–17 September) were also academic; but they were very remarkable for their cordiality. Indeed, in this respect they surpassed all expectation, and provided a good illustration of summit diplomacy at its most successful. This first personal contact brought a real improvement in the relations between Franz Joseph and the tsar; and from this moment Kálnoky too began to take a markedly more hopeful view of the possibility of lasting co-existence with Russia. Sosnosky's assessment of Skiernewice[68] – 'the electrifying of a corpse, which . . . could deceive only the shortsighted' – certainly underrates the importance of the meeting. The Italians, for example, were not shortsighted in discerning a significant down-grading of the Triple Alliance, the *raison d'être* of which was of course the possible collapse of the Three Emperors' Alliance. They felt resentful at not being invited to join in the junketings of their allies – 'siamo noi servitori?'[69] – and tried in vain to find out what had transpired. The Three Emperors' Alliance had in fact made a real recovery.

Kálnoky had no doubts about this. Indeed, when, in October, Tisza allowed the Hungarian parliament to express its suspicion of Russia in a formal vote, his rage knew no bounds. He even went so far as to tender his resignation.[70] Not only was it

[67] P.A. I/460, Liasse XXIIa, Kálnoky to Károlyi, private, 28 July 1884.
[68] T. v. Sosnosky, Vol. 2, p. 68.
[69] Quoted in Salvatorelli, p. 89.
[70] P.A. I/467, Kálnoky to Franz Joseph, 13 October 1884.

intolerable, he complained to the emperor, that Tisza should allow any debate at all in the Hungarian parliament, rather than in the Delegations, where the minister for foreign affairs would at least have a chance to defend his policy. The content of the Hungarian declaration was even more serious: 'for Austria-Hungary today it is a question of life and death to avoid war with Russia.' At Skiernewice he had managed to secure peace and friendship with Russia, without even a written agreement, 'with a handshake, so to speak'; and here were the Hungarians giving the impression that the Monarchy was now drawing back.[71] In the end, Franz Joseph refused to accept Kálnoky's resignation; and Tisza promised to behave more correctly in future. But the incident is as eloquent of Kálnoky's renewed faith in Russia as of the continuing mistrust of that Power in Hungary.

The Hungarians were at the same time raising obstacles in the way of Kálnoky's Balkan policy. Agrarian Hungary gained little from the Monarchy's commercial treaties with the Balkan states; but so long as she could send 75 per cent of her own exports to Austria and the rest to Germany and Western Europe, she was prepared to admit cheaper Balkan livestock for home consumption. Now in October 1884 foot and mouth disease broke out in Serbia; and when Serbia persisted in sending infected animals into Hungary, the Hungarians reacted drastically and closed the frontier to all livestock from Serbia, Roumania, and Bulgaria. The Serbian government, backed up by Khevenhüller, protested at this; and Franz Joseph and Kálnoky eventually prevailed on the Magyars to relent and reopen the frontier (December). The affair had of course done nothing to raise the popularity of Hungary among the ordinary peasants, who made up the bulk of the population in Serbia. Worse still, in February 1885, infected cattle from Roumania passed through Hungary to Germany, and a major disruption of the international cattle trade resulted. Britain forbade the entry of German cattle, Germany thereupon closed the frontier to Hungary; and Hungary to Roumania. (The Hungarian government wanted to extend the ban to Serbia too; but Kálnoky and the emperor insisted that the Monarchy could not ignore its treaty obligations towards Serbia just because a third party had made difficulties.) Relations with Roumania, of course, became seriously strained. Irredentism was as rife as ever,

[71] Ibid., 22 October 1884.

but Kálnoky had resignedly concluded that no Roumanian government, however well-intentioned, would ever have the power to check it effectively. Now, however, Bucharest decided not to renew the Austro-Roumanian commercial treaty, due to expire in 1886; and the Hungarians, to Kálnoky's dismay, did not seem to care. The Russophile press in Roumania of course had a field day; but Kálnoky's appeals to Budapest went unheeded. He was again feeling the shackles of the 1867 constitution, which allowed the foreign minister only an advisory function in internal and economic questions. He had no legal means of enforcing his views about a commercial policy which was made by others, but which had none the less important consequences in foreign policy for all that.

On top of these difficulties came a political crisis in Serbia, where the king's political embarrassments were now complicated by the fact that his licentious life had alienated his Russian-born queen. The royal pair quarrelled openly in the cafés of Belgrade. Milan now began to despair, and yearned for a life of pleasure in Paris or Vienna. But he had no money. In the summer of 1885, therefore, he hit on the idea of amending the Austro-Serbian treaty. The Austrians could provide him with a pension if he ever abdicated; and they could also educate his son in Vienna, away from the influence of the queen. In return, Milan would allow them to annex Serbia if they saw fit. He concocted a draft with the help of Khevenhüller, who sent it to Vienna.

Kálnoky would have nothing to do with it. He rebuked Khevenhüller, and in June took Milan himself to task in Vienna; monarchs had duties as well as privileges, he told the abject king, and it was Milan's duty to remain in Serbia and govern his people. Unless an openly hostile regime appeared in Belgrade to threaten the tranquillity of Austria-Hungary's southern Slavs, no one in the Monarchy had the faintest desire to intervene in Serbia. 'A flourishing and independent Serbia on friendly terms with us suits our . . . intentions best – in any case, better than the possession of an unruly province.'[72] At the same time, Kálnoky had no illusions about the vital importance of Serbia. That state, he told Taaffe in September 1885, was 'the key to the Monarchy's position in the Near East'.[73] True, he was at the time trying to persuade

[72] P.A. I/456, memorandum by Kálnoky, 9 June 1885.

[73] P.A. I/456, memorandum drawn up by Kálnoky for Taaffe, September 1885.

Taaffe to give Milan some secret service money. Nevertheless he was sincerely convinced that if Austria-Hungary did not control Serbia, Russia would; and 'that moral encirclement by the leading Slav Power, which will always remain the chief danger for Austria-Hungary, would then extend from Montenegro to the banks of the Vistula; Austria-Hungary would be cut off from the Near East.' Worse still, the south Slav idea would then have found a material basis for its political activity and would soon penetrate deep into the Monarchy – which would then find foreign problems turning into domestic problems. This prophecy of doom was remarkably percipient; and even in the immediate future Kálnoky can have drawn but little comfort from the thought that the personality of King Milan was the 'surest and almost the only guarantee against these dangers'.[74]

In this situation it seemed vital to preserve the good relations with Russia achieved at Skiernewice. Certainly, there seemed no hope of salvation from any other quarter, from the Western Powers, for example. On the contrary, Kálnoky found Italy's expedition to Massawa in February 1885 profoundly unsatisfactory, and would have liked Bismarck to tell Italy plainly that she could expect no help from the Triple Alliance if she embroiled herself with France in the Red Sea. By the summer, both Bismarck and Kálnoky had a very poor opinion altogether of Italy; and at Varzin in August 1885 they agreed that although the Triple Alliance was probably still worth renewing, Italy should be given no further concessions whatever. The behaviour of Britain, who in the spring became involved in a dispute with Russia over Afghanistan was equally unsatisfactory. The idea that Britain might choose to fight out this remote quarrel in the Black Sea filled Kálnoky with alarm. For if Turkey allowed a British fleet through the Straits, Russia would take this as an act of war; and the conflagration would spread to the whole Balkans. To avoid this catastrophe, therefore, and in accordance with her obligations under the Three Emperors' Alliance, Austria-Hungary lost no time in joining the other continental Powers in reminding the Turks that they must in no circumstances open the Straits. Not that the Austrians were ready to render Russia any active assistance if Britain actually forced the Straits. They had no desire to see British influence disappear altogether from the Near East,

[74] Ibid.

where it might one day prove a useful counter to Russia's. Nor did they share in the least Bismarck's relish for an Anglo-Russian war. Any gains that might accrue to Austria-Hungary from the weakening of her commercial rival, Britain, would be more than outweighed by the danger of an increase in Russia's prestige or, if Russia were defeated, by the danger of a revolution in Russia which might produce an adventurous, Panslav policy.[75]

Nor was France regarded at this time in Vienna as a potential source of support. Indeed, as Kálnoky came to rely more on the Three Emperors' Alliance, considerations of monarchical principle assumed increased importance; and in this respect he saw in France, perhaps not an enemy as Bismarck did (and after all, Austria-Hungary still had no quarrel of her own with France) but a potential menace to the Monarchy's alliance system and hence to its security. His attitude was therefore less narrowly diplomatic than Bismarck's – Germany was simply confronted with a hostile neighbour who had to be isolated. And at Varzin in August 1885 he impressed on Bismarck that 'the long continued existence of a French Republic, recognized as a fully equal Power, is a dangerous matter for the monarchical principle.'[76] There was more than sentiment to this: the greatest menace was the extension of the republican principle to France's Latin neighbours – 'the realization of the well-known idea of the *confédération des races latines*'.[77] It would be very serious if some eighty million people from Cadiz to Lake Constance, from Syracuse to the North Sea, came to live under a republican system of government. Belgium, with its numerous revolutionary elements would not hold out for long. One dream of the revolution would be realized; and this would threaten the three eastern empires, for the Confederation of Slav States and the United States of Germany were inscribed on the same programme. Clearly, it was more than ever important that the three empires stand together. A few days later (25–26 August) a very cordial return visit by Alexander III to Franz Joseph at Kremsier proclaimed again the Austrians' new-found faith in the Three Emperors' Alliance.

[75] P.A. I/469, Liasse XXIII, Teschenberg memorandum on the possibility of an Anglo-Russian war, April 1885.

[76] P.A. I/460, Kálnoky, notes on a conversation with Bismarck at Varzin, August 1885.

[77] Ibid.

In the summer of 1885 Austria-Hungary seemed to enjoy a reasonable measure of security. This was in great part due to the alliances she had built up in the past six years. True, Andrássy's original simple idea of a grand alliance including Germany, Britain, and Italy to resist Russia had proved unrealizable owing to the vagaries of British policy and Germany's obsessive concern for good relations with Russia. It had been transformed by his successors into a more complex, but basically dualistic, system of alliances. On the one hand, undoubtedly in the ascendant since Skiernewice, was the Three Emperors' Alliance, embodying the desire to co-operate with 'official' Russia and by the exercise of mutual self-restraint to avoid a clash over the Balkans that could only prove disastrous to all three great monarchies. On the other hand, and temporarily of less urgent importance as the Three Emperors' Alliance seemed to be working and the risk of war receded, was the Dual Alliance and its ramifications, which would strengthen the Monarchy in war if the Three Emperors' Alliance should fail to keep the peace. Of these alliances, the Dual Alliance was clearly the most important, with its promise of German military assistance. The Roumanian alliance promised a support that would hardly materialize, and the Triple Alliance no support at all. Moreover, the alliances with Serbia, Italy and Roumania were all plagued with irredentism. Nevertheless, all these alliances were important if the Monarchy needed rear-cover to concentrate its resources on the Russian front. And even in peacetime they were useful, like the Three Emperors' Alliance, in bolstering up the monarchical principle and conservative interests generally. Apart from this, the Monarchy had managed to establish good relations with Turkey, and had a firm foothold in Bulgaria – both of which states might prove useful, even without an alliance, in the event of war. Finally, with Salisbury's return to power in London (June 24) there even seemed a chance of some British support.

Yet even the most elaborate alliance system can hardly provide for every case. The alliance system of 1879–83 offered Austria-Hungary a fair chance of peaceful co-existence with Russia, provided the pacific tsar continued to direct Russian policy; and as strong a military position as she was ever likely to attain in the event of a final armed confrontation with Russia. There always remained the problems of day-to-day diplomacy, however; perhaps of less obvious urgency than the risks of actual war and annihilation, but, none the less, of vital importance when taken together over a number of years. The perpetual struggle for influence in the Balkan states had immense implications for the whole Great Power position of the parties concerned. At least, this was the conviction of those directing policy in Vienna and St Petersburg. It might happen that a diplomatic crisis would prove severe enough to estrange even 'official' Russia from the Monarchy and to destroy the Three Emperors' Alliance, but would yet stop short of that war which would bring the other alliances into operation. Such a crisis would not only intensify the contradictions in the Balkan alliance system, given the conflicting ambitions of the Monarchy's friends and allies in the peninsula; it would also reveal the inadequacy in diplomacy of alliances designed for use in war.

Chapter 5

The Decline of the Alliances, 1885–95[1]

> The Triple Alliance is in a somewhat parlous condition, which I truly deplore. It is mutually suspicious, which is the worst of signs.
>
> *Rosebery to Mallet*, 3 January 1894[2]

By the summer of 1885 the Three Emperors' Alliance had established a *modus vivendi* amongst the Great Powers concerned; yet, by virtue of its very nature as a negative, self-denying agreement, it could never exercise much positive direction over events in the small Balkan states. On 18 September a nationalist *coup* in Philippopolis, capital of Eastern Roumelia, proclaimed the union of the two Bulgarias, which Prince Alexander perforce accepted. To this blow to the Balkan balance as established at the Congress of Berlin the kings of Serbia and Greece (in Vienna at the time) immediately reacted by claiming compensation. The Great Powers, taken completely by surprise, were nonplussed; and their mutual suspicions revived overnight. Whereas Russia suspected a plot between Britain and Prince Alexander to deprive her of the privilege of bestowing unity on the Bulgarians, it was Russia herself who came under suspicion at Vienna. It was essential to prevent the revival of the Big Bulgaria of San Stefano, the emperor and Kálnoky decided; on no account therefore must the movement be allowed to spread to Macedonia. Franz Joseph also stressed the need to bear in mind the 'justified claims' of Serbia

[1] The following works are of particular relevance to this chapter: Margaret M. Jefferson, 'The Place of Constantinople and the Straits in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1902', M.A. thesis, London, 1959; G. Ritter, 'Die Zusammenarbeit der Generalstäbe Deutschlands und Oesterreich-Ungarns vor dem ersten Weltkrieg' in *Zur Geschichte und Problematik der Demokratie*, Berlin, 1958; and the works by H. Benedikt, G. Drage, F. Klein, and C. A. Macartney cited in Chapter 1, note 1; by W. Wagner, Chapter 2, note 1; by E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, Chapter 3, note 1; and by W. N. Medlicott and L. Salvatorelli, Chapter 4, note 1.

[2] Quoted in Margaret M. Jefferson, p. 98.

and Roumania, two states which 'we must at all costs keep within our sphere of influence and on good terms with us'.[3] At the same time, it might be possible to support Alexander and encourage the Bulgarian nationalist movement to take a direction independent of Russia. To this end, the Austrians were initially inclined to the British policy of supporting the prince, while granting Eastern Roumelia only a personal union, not unification, with Bulgaria.

On 4 October, however, Russia came out strongly with a radically different policy, firmly condemning Alexander and demanding the restoration of the *status quo ante*. It was now perfectly clear that the Philippopolis revolution had not been engineered in St Petersburg; and, as innocent Russia also enjoyed the loyal support of Berlin, it was hardly surprising that by 8 October Kálnoky decided to bring Austro-Hungarian policy into line. He was above all concerned to co-operate with St Petersburg and to preserve the Three Emperors' Alliance: but a policy of upholding the Treaty of Berlin would also have the advantage of relieving the Powers of the task of devising compensations for Bulgaria's neighbours. On the other hand, it was not without risks from the point of view of Austro-Hungarian interests. As Andrássy pointed out, the Philippopolis *coup* was designed to create a Bulgaria independent of Russia; whereas a restoration of the *status quo ante* would also restore to Russia the chance of bringing about a union under Russian auspices.[4] The most serious objection to the policy of the Three Emperors' Alliance, however, was its impracticality. As the ensuing conference at Constantinople showed, the Turks were by no means anxious to undertake the reconquest of Eastern Roumelia; and the British for once had the relatively easy task of obstructing action by the Concert. By mid-November, the Constantinople conference had achieved virtually nothing.

In this situation it became increasingly difficult for Kálnoky to restrain the Serbs. In September, he had advised Milan to trust to Austro-Hungarian diplomacy to secure compensation for Serbia, and to do no more than strengthen his frontier defences. In October, when Milan, despite Kálnoky's advice, mobilized the whole army, whipping up feeling in Serbia to a dangerous degree, Kálnoky told him to trust to the Constantinople conference

[3] P.A. XL/55, Franz Joseph to Kálnoky, 20 September 1885.

[4] Kab. 19, Andrássy to Franz Joseph, 24 November 1885.

to restore the *status quo*. When it became clear that the conference would not be able to offer even this sop, the Serbs decided to seek their own salvation. On 14 November Milan's army suddenly invaded Bulgaria. Now the fact that Austria-Hungary's protégé, Serbia, had attacked Russia's – albeit erring – protégé, Bulgaria, caused acute embarrassment in Vienna. Kálnoky decided that Britain, by frustrating the efforts of the Constantinople conference, was chiefly to blame. She seemed to be trying to break up the Three Emperors' Alliance and set Russia and Austria-Hungary by the ears. But she would not succeed.[5] These sentiments were echoed in the Austro-Hungarian embassy at St Petersburg, a notable shrine of the Three Emperors' Alliance. Britain, the ambassador Wolkenstein declared, was a greater enemy of the Monarchy in the Near East than Russia was: 'she is striving for our commercial annihilation.'[6] And the military attaché had little sympathy for the Serbs: 'it is a great pity these nationalist pigs think they have a right to boast of our protection.'[7] The embassy was relieved, therefore, when Kálnoky agreed without much ado to a Russian proposal of 19 November for joint diplomatic intervention by the Powers to stop the Serbian invasion of Bulgaria.

Ironically enough, by 19 November Kálnoky had compelling reasons of his own to agree. For on that day Prince Alexander defeated the invaders at Slivnitsa and in turn invaded Serbia. Kálnoky was now faced with a desperate appeal for help from a panic-stricken Milan; and with the prospect that a continued Bulgarian advance might increase the ferment among the south Slavs of the Monarchy – already alarming enough – to such a pitch that the Monarchy might have to mobilize troops in the frontier districts. To prevent this, Kálnoky determined that the war must be stopped at all costs; and when a joint note from the Powers was accepted by Milan but not by Alexander, he resorted to the famous Khevenhüller mission. The Austro-Hungarian minister at Belgrade (telegraphic communication with Sofia had been cut) was instructed to go to Alexander's headquarters and, using such arguments as he felt necessary, persuade the Prince to

[5] P.A. XV/98, Kálnoky to Károlyi, Tel. 117, 24 November 1885.

[6] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Wolkenstein to Aehrenthal, 27 October 1885.

[7] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Klepsch to Aehrenthal, 15 October 1885.

call a halt. In accordance with the spirit of the Three Emperors' Alliance, Kálnoky showed these instructions to the Russian ambassador, who in turn reported his government's approval.

Unfortunately, such general instructions were dangerous in the hands of one so ebullient as Khevenhüller, who in the event went so far as to warn Alexander that if the Bulgarian invasion caused a revolution in Serbia, Austria-Hungary would occupy the country, whereupon Russia would occupy Bulgaria and depose Alexander. The arguments were efficacious; but caused a nasty contretemps with St Petersburg. Austro-Hungarian diplomats there were anything but pleased: 'Khevenhüller's *coup* was a great surprise for us here at the embassy. No wonder Russia didn't like the threat of a Russian occupation of Bulgaria (which nobody here is thinking of).'[8] But Kálnoky did not take the matter too seriously: Khevenhüller had gone farther than his instructions warranted; and Russia was probably only piqued at seeing Austro-Hungarian prestige increased (Document 16). He assured St Petersburg that no one in Vienna had talked of occupying Serbia; and irritably reminded the complaining Bismarck that Austria-Hungary had acted in order to forestall, not to precipitate, a situation in which she might have had to take measures which would cause strife within the Three Emperors' Alliance.[9]

In the event, the Three Emperors' Alliance survived the incident. True, Andrássy still thought the whole policy of co-operation with Russia misguided, and in a long memorandum to the emperor (24 November)[10] urged that the Monarchy take the initiative and work for the complete independence of a united Bulgaria. On the other hand, the St Petersburg embassy was equally assiduous in extolling the virtues of peace, the Monarchy's only really vital interest. According to Wolkenstein, there was in Europe 'a great revolutionary subversive party just waiting for the crash and for the great conservative Powers to weaken and exhaust each other in the conflict, and then the radical reform can begin'.[11] The Bulgarian victory had in fact helped matters, both by bringing even Russia to recognize that the *status quo ante* was

[8] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Wacken to Aehrenthal, 13 December 1885.

[9] P.A. XV/85, Kálnoky to Széchenyi, 14 December 1885.

[10] Kab. 19, Andrássy to Franz Joseph, 24 November 1885.

[11] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Wolkenstein to Aehrenthal, 16 December 1885.

an unrealistic aim, and by disposing of any Serbian hopes of compensation. Nevertheless, Kálnoky seemed for a moment to waver, and at the turn of the year considered seizing the initiative and asking Russia to show her colours. But Bismarck, who hoped that Britain and Russia might come to blows if only left alone, was strongly opposed to any such step. Kálnoky, once more in a minority within the Three Emperors' Alliance, again came into line.

Bismarck was wrong; and in the event Britain and Russia came together to determine the Turco-Bulgarian settlement of February 1886. Kálnoky was content for the most part to stay in the background and hold to the Three Emperors' Alliance. The personal union proposed for Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia suited Austro-Hungarian interests well enough; and he even supported a Russian-inspired clause limiting Alexander's tenure of office in Philippopolis. The Monarchy played a similarly self-effacing role in the naval demonstration by which in the spring the Powers brought Greece to abandon her strident claims to compensation. In the Serbo-Bulgarian peace negotiations at Bucharest, however, the Austrians assumed the role of honest broker with some success. The settlement – confined to a simple restoration of peace – was realistic. The Austrians secured their main point: Serbia was not burdened with a war indemnity. Although they had some trouble from King Milan, who threatened to abandon the alliance and appoint a Radical ministry if Austria-Hungary permitted any aggrandizement of Bulgaria, Kálnoky sharply reminded him that Serbia's sad predicament was only the result of her having ignored Vienna's advice in the autumn; and he found the Serbian foreign minister, Mijatović, sensible enough. At the same time, he managed to avoid offending Bulgarian susceptibilities. Altogether, he could be well content with the negotiations at Bucharest.

The Three Emperors' Alliance continued in good health until the summer. In August Archduke Karl Ludwig paid a highly successful visit to St Petersburg; and Kálnoky prepared to dispel any doubts among the public by announcing that 'Austria-Hungary has no intention of weakening the relationship that was sealed at Skiernewice and Kremsier, and which came into practical operation in the last Bulgarian crisis.'[12] In this situation, reinsurance in the west against the collapse of the Three Emperors'

[12] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.

Alliance seemed, of course, less necessary. In July Kálnoky humoured St Petersburg by refusing to join Britain in denouncing Russia's unilateral abrogation of the Batum clause of the Treaty of Berlin. And the Triple Alliance was certainly at a discount. Italy's attempts to initiate an active Balkan policy – albeit in support of the Three Emperors' Alliance – in the Bulgarian crisis, and her hints that the Balkans should be brought within the purview of the Triple Alliance, were coldly received in Vienna. At Kissingen and Gastein in the summer of 1886 Bismarck and Kálnoky remained firmly of the opinion that if the Triple Alliance were renewed, there could be no question of amendments or concessions to Italy.

The state of the Monarchy's Balkan alliances inspired less confidence. By November 1885 King Milan – whom Kálnoky had been describing in September as the only support of Austro-Hungarian influence in Serbia – had shown himself to be devoid of military virtues (a failing that counted for much with Franz Joseph and Kálnoky); and his continued misgovernment and threats to tear up the alliance convinced Vienna that his political sense was of an equally low order. Yet Kálnoky, perhaps lulled by the apparent success of the Three Emperors' Alliance, perhaps at a loss for an alternative policy, viewed these developments with remarkable aplomb. In November 1885 he told Franz Joseph that he 'had always thought it would be wrong to base our position in Serbia' too exclusively on Milan.[13] If the latter fell as a result of Serbia's defeat, Kálnoky advised co-operation with a regency under the queen, the essential point being to maintain the Obrenović dynasty and keep the Russophile Nikita of Montenegro off the Serbian throne. The dynasty, plus what he optimistically termed a hard political fact, namely Serbia's inevitable dependence on her powerful northern neighbour, provided a better basis for influence than any amount of chasing after Milan or ephemeral public opinion. Such arguments were perhaps only an attempt to make the best of an obviously bad job. At any rate, Kálnoky's Serbian policy henceforth became increasingly passive, and steered clear of the maelstrom of Serbian domestic politics.

The Roumanian alliance was beset by still greater difficulties. During the Serbo-Bulgarian war Bucharest was in a very anti-Serbian mood; and it even looked as though Russia was counting

[13] P.A. I/456, Kálnoky to Franz Joseph, 22 November 1885.

on irredentist designs on Transylvania to turn Roumania actively against the Monarchy in the event of a great war. The political alarm subsided in the spring of 1886. Not so the Austro-Roumanian commercial quarrel. Kálnoky's efforts to persuade the Hungarians to make some concession, such as re-opening the frontier to Roumanian livestock, came to nothing – even though in a conference of ministers in January 1886 he emphasized the evil political consequences of allowing the commercial treaty to expire, and pointed out that in economic terms too the Monarchy would be the chief loser.[14] The treaty duly expired in June 1886, and the resultant tariff war lasted for seven years. It brought some benefits to Hungarian agriculture, now sheltered from Roumanian competition; but Austrian industry suffered heavily, and lost most of the Roumanian market to Germany, Britain, and Belgium. The Monarchy's imports from and exports to Roumania fell by 90 per cent and 40 per cent respectively between 1885 and 1887. Such a state of affairs could only bode ill for the alliance.

The only bright spot on the Balkan horizon was Bulgaria. True, public opinion there had tended to associate Austria-Hungary with the marauding Serbs in the crisis of 1885–6; and Kálnoky was always somewhat sceptical of Alexander's more effusive protestations of loyalty. But he nevertheless recognized in the prince 'a convinced and sincere enemy of Russian influence',[15] whom it was in Austria-Hungary's interests to support. For Kálnoky was still not prepared to tolerate Russian control of Bulgaria and the encirclement of the Monarchy that he feared would follow. Yet far from seeing in his defence of Bulgaria from enslavement by Russia a source of danger to the Three Emperors' Alliance, he relied on the Alliance to restrain Russia from pressing Bulgaria too hard. And for this greater end, even Alexander was expendable. When the prince was kidnapped by Russian officers on 19 August and released from Russia into Austria a week later, Kálnoky advised him not to return to Bulgaria without the blessing of the tsar; and when this was crushingly refused and Alexander abdicated, Kálnoky obligingly agreed with Giers on 11 September that the simplest solution would be the speedy election of a new prince.

A few days later, however, when Alexander's supporters had

[14] P.A. XL/294, Ministerratsprotokoll, 7 January 1886.
[15] P.A. XV/99, Kálnoky to Károlyi, 11 February 1886.

recovered control in Bulgaria and were clearly preparing to elect a like-minded successor, St Petersburg decided that the election should be delayed, and an effort made to influence Bulgarian opinion in Russia's favour. Suddenly, and without prior consultation with his partners in the Three Emperors' Alliance, the tsar sent General Kaulbars to Sofia. To Vienna this looked suspiciously like a bid for the political control of Bulgaria; and this Kálnoky was not prepared to tolerate. Bismarck's bland suggestion that Bulgaria was after all in Russia's sphere of influence, he rejected out of hand: if Russia occupied Bulgaria, the Monarchy might not fight immediately; but the prospect of a prolonged Russian occupation was 'unthinkable for Austria-Hungary. The question of what would happen to Roumania is automatic and unanswerable.'[16] But he found no support whatever in Berlin. Nor had he enough confidence in the British to abandon the Three Emperors' Alliance and cast in his lot with Salisbury.[17] He may have been hoping that Britain would come forward alone and oppose Russia, allowing Austria-Hungary to preserve her good relations with St Petersburg. At any rate, for about two weeks London and Vienna circled each other in a strange diplomatic quadrille, each waiting for the other to take up a firm position. Even when the British did so, on 30 September, suggesting Anglo-Austro-Italian co-operation at Sofia and Constantinople to support the Bulgarians against Kaulbars, Kálnoky in the end decided that that would involve too great a risk of war with Russia. That being the case, he had left himself with little alternative but to try unaided to bring the Russians to reason within the framework of the Three Emperors' Alliance.

The Alliance availed him little. The Russians offered Vienna only the vaguest explanations as to their intentions, which only made Kálnoky fear the worst. His own views – stated openly by Tisza in the Hungarian parliament in October – that no European treaty gave any Great Power a special position in the Balkan states, which should be left to settle their own affairs without interference, caused immense irritation in St Petersburg, where memories of 1877 were still fresh. The Russians claimed to be seeking to liberate Bulgaria from 'a regime of terror and violence' and accused the Austrians of collaborating with 'cosmopolitan

[16] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.
[17] W. N. Medlicott, *British Foreign Policy in the Near East . . .*, pp. 320ff.

radicalism to transform Bulgaria into a hotbed of anarchy and hostility to Russia'[18] – a neat variation on Kálnoky's favourite theme; but the Austrians discerned in all this a bid for political control. There was no room for compromise. Indeed, Kálnoky was not even prepared to allow Russia the position she had enjoyed before the Philippopolis revolution: this had no basis in treaties, he decided. A new note of acrimony was added when the whole debate was given a public airing in the Delegations at Budapest in November. True, the Vienna foreign office strove hard against Hungarian pressure for war, and attributed Andrássy's fulminations in the debates to injured vanity.[19] Nevertheless, Kálnoky felt bound to reaffirm that the Bulgarian question could be settled only by Europe, not by General Kaulbars; and threatened Russia pretty clearly with war if she proceeded to use force against Bulgaria. Kálnoky's speech of 13 November, and a similar one by Salisbury, stiffened Bulgarian resistance immeasurably. The tsar's policy collapsed in ruins, and on 20 November the Kaulbars mission was withdrawn, an utter failure.

Kálnoky's victory had only been bought at a price. True, the Russians were thankful that they had to deal with him rather than the warlike Andrássy; but they were none the less bitter. By mid-December they were hinting that the days of the Three Emperors' Alliance were numbered; and the Austro-Hungarian embassy at St Petersburg, which had had no business to transact for some weeks, gloomily concluded that diplomatic relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary had to all practical purposes been broken off.[20] Such conciliatory gestures as Kálnoky felt at liberty to make – and he was very much restricted by his determination to preserve the autonomy of Bulgaria – were largely ineffective. He promised not to oppose the Russian candidates for the Bulgarian throne – two relatives of the tsar, and the Prince of Mingrelia (son of a Georgian prince who had sold his crown to the tsar), whose drunken and licentious wife the Austrians wryly observed seemed an appropriate counterpart to Kaulbars.[21] But the Bulgarian regents would not consider these candidates; and Kálnoky warned the Russians against resorting to coercion, and

[18] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.
[19] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Pasetti to Aehrenthal, 17 November 1886.
[20] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Wacken to Aehrenthal, 23 December 1886.
[21] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 5, Tavera to Aehrenthal, 20 November 1886.

lent them no support in their efforts (ably countered by Britain) to persuade the Turks to replace the council of regents by a caretaker government more amenable to St Petersburg. By the summer of 1887 Russia had still made no progress whatever in Bulgaria; and Kálnoky's repeated advice to allow the regents to proceed with an early election was received with very bad grace at St Petersburg.

If the obvious bankruptcy of the Three Emperors' Alliance were not depressing enough, it was becoming increasingly clear that the other alliances which were kept in reserve to meet just such a contingency were all well below par. The Dual Alliance had been worse than useless in the crisis. Only a very categoric statement from Vienna in October had brought Bismarck to cease his irritating incantations about spheres of influence; and Kálnoky never succeeded in winning Germany's moral support in Bulgaria, even when he warned Berlin that the attitude of the German press, which defended Russia's machinations, was destroying the faith of the populations of the Monarchy in the Alliance.[22] Bismarck's famous 'Hecuba' speech of 11 January 1887, proclaiming to the Reichstag and the world that 'it is a matter of complete indifference to us who rules in Bulgaria and what becomes of her',[23] finally convinced Kálnoky of Germany's diplomatic uselessness. And this was matched by doubts as to her military reliability. In a memorandum of 7 March Archduke Albrecht wondered whether Germany would still be prepared to co-operate in the east, where thirty-six Austro-Hungarian divisions were likely to face sixty-two Russian divisions in the event of war. He went on to suggest that if Austria-Hungary could not extract a definite promise that eighteen German divisions would appear in the east, she should declare herself freed from all obligations to her ally.[24]

Kálnoky still thought the Dual Alliance worth clinging to, for all its defects, and tried to calm the Archduke down. He pointed out that with the revival of French military power since 1885,[25]

[22] P.A. I/464, Liasse XVI, Kálnoky memorandum on a conversation with the German Ambassador, 6 October 1886.
[23] Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke*, Vol. 13, p. 213.
[24] P.A. I/466, memorandum by Archduke Albrecht on military co-operation between Germany and Austria-Hungary, 7 March 1887, with comments (*Gegenbemerkungen*) by Kálnoky.
[25] Ibid.

Germany was simply no longer in a position to put as many men in the east as she had planned to do in 1882. Moreover, in his view France was quite as dangerous as Russia, and quite as much in need of watching. For if she ever defeated Germany 'the republican and socialist menace would sweep through Europe like a flood when a dam has been broken.' In any case, Austria-Hungary would do well to avoid being too specific in her own military promises: if the Italian monarchy fell, Montenegro provoked a rising in the occupied provinces, and Roumania proved disloyal, the Monarchy would certainly not be able to put up anything like thirty-six divisions against Russia. Nor could one declare oneself freed from obligations to an ally because that ally refused to comply with demands made subsequently. The Monarchy had after all done something to strengthen its own defences; and the Delegations had just accepted a large military budget with a heartening unanimity unusual in that heterogeneous body. Kálnoky was right not to panic. By the early summer the situation looked much brighter. He rejoiced that Bismarck had been able to give France 'a real fright' in 'the ridiculous Schnaebele affair', and calculated that once Boulanger was out of office Russia too would begin to behave with more circumspection.[26] Nevertheless, as he confided in a secret and private letter to Széchenyi, the ambassador at Berlin,[27] grave doubts had taken root among the public about the value of the Dual Alliance. And this, he said, was no wonder, considering the ostentatious indifference towards Near Eastern questions shown in official speeches and the semi-official press in Germany; and Germany's continued 'harshly negative' attitude in commercial questions.

Meanwhile the Triple Alliance, plagued from the start with the problem of mistrust between the populations of Austria and Italy, had had to undergo the ordeal of a formal renewal which considerably increased mistrust between the governments of Vienna and Rome. In October 1886 Bismarck, alarmed at developments in France and, above all, anxious to make sure of Italy's assistance, was willing both to extend Germany's obligations and to bully the Austrians into extending theirs. Kálnoky, on the other hand, had no relish for the amendments proposed by Rome: that the

[26] P.A. I/460, Kálnoky to Wolkenstein, private and confidential, 7 May 1887.

[27] P.A. I/464, Liasse XVII, Kálnoky to Széchenyi, private and secret, 12 May 1887.

allies should support Italy if she got into war with France over the Tripoli question; and that in the event of changes in the *status quo* in the Balkans, Italy should be granted compensation. He was as anxious as ever not to increase Austria-Hungary's commitments against France, and almost as unwilling to bind the Monarchy's hands *vis-à-vis* Italy in the Near East or to recognize an Italian sphere of influence there. Besides, the cloven hoof of irredentism was all too evident in the compensations proposal. Nevertheless, under strong pressure from Berlin, and enticed by Italian hints of possible military assistance against Russia, he seemed ready by mid-December to give way.

In January 1887, however, he suddenly withdrew all his concessions and declared for the simple renewal of the alliance unchanged. The decisive factor, he explained to Széchenyi,[28] was Bismarck's 'Hecuba' speech, which had disheartened Austria-Hungary's friends and supporters everywhere, and clearly showed that she would have to rely on her own strength to defend her Near Eastern interests. She could not afford to dissipate that strength, therefore, by assuming increased commitments in the west: the more Germany concentrated on France, the more the Monarchy would have to concentrate on the east. This produced further German pressure and a stern reminder from Bismarck that although Italy might not be able to give Austria-Hungary much help, she could do her a good deal of harm by going over to France and Russia. This argument was unanswerable. There was no denying that the eastern crisis had completely transformed Italy's bargaining position since the summer of 1886. Kálnoky, consoling himself with bitter reflections on Italy's '*Trinkgeldpolitik*',[29] at last gave way. On 2 February he agreed to an additional Austro-Italian treaty covering the Balkans (similar in form to a German-Italian additional treaty on Tripoli) (Document 19, n. 2). Franz Joseph was most emphatic that the annexation of Bosnia should not be held to constitute a change in the *status quo* warranting compensation under the new treaty; and that whatever compensation Italy might receive should not come from Austro-Hungarian territory. The Italian ambassador in Berlin stated that this was 'obvious'.[30] It was nevertheless remarkably ingenuous – or

[28] P.A. I/462, Kálnoky to Széchenyi, secret, 20 January 1887.

[29] P.A. I/461, Széchenyi to Kálnoky, private and secret, 1 April 1887.

[30] L. Salvatorelli, p. 117.

slipshod – of Kálnoky to content himself with the ambassador's verbal declaration as a sufficient guarantee. It was certainly not binding on any Italian government – as the Austrians were to find to their cost in 1915.

The Triple Alliance had survived. Indeed, its existence was at last published to the world in March 1887. But it had gained nothing in internal strength, nor, from the Austro-Hungarian point of view, in usefulness. The Italian hints of military aid were eventually explained away as a misunderstanding. Not that Kálnoky, who had 'never attached much weight'[31] to Italian assistance, was worried or surprised. Indeed, he doubted whether Italy would observe even neutrality if the Monarchy were involved in war in the east. Széchenyi agreed: 'but what can one expect from a country where the mob rules the sceptre?'[32]

Even so, the Mediterranean scene had its brighter spots. The British, after the failure of their soundings at Vienna in September 1886, had managed to establish a link with Italy – the agreement of 12 February 1887 for diplomatic co-operation to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and neighbouring seas. And this they saw as a chance to resume contact with Austria-Hungary. On 8 February the British ambassador, Paget, had suggested to Kálnoky that Britain might be able to help Austria-Hungary in a war with Russia; and Kálnoky had enthusiastically agreed. The recent crisis had cured him of his illusions about the Three Emperors' Alliance: and if it really came to a war Britain and Austria-Hungary might not be able to destroy Russia, but they could at least secure a lengthy breathing space by co-operating to bleed her white.[33] He was already assuming, he told Paget, that Britain's own interests would bring her into any Austro-Russian war, whether a prior agreement existed or not. On 19 February the British took a further step: Paget informed Kálnoky of the Anglo-Italian agreement; and Kálnoky enquired in London as to the possibility of a similar Anglo-Austrian agreement. Károlyi reported back that Salisbury personally would stake his political existence on coming to the aid of the Monarchy in a war with Russia, a promise which the ambassador said was as good as an

[31] P.A. I/462, Kálnoky to Bruck, private and secret, 15 February 1887.
[32] P.A. I/462, Széchenyi to Kálnoky, secret, 12 February 1887.
[33] P.A. I/461, Kálnoky, memorandum on a conversation with Paget, 8 February 1887.

alliance in principle. Kálnoky, certainly, was content with a mere 'agreement to agree' should trouble arise. It entailed no onerous commitments for Austria-Hungary in the western Mediterranean (although she now broke with the Three Emperors' Alliance in Egypt, and promised her diplomatic support to Britain); and yet it ensured that British policy would not 'wander away again' (as it had done in 1885). On 24 March the Monarchy acceded to the Anglo-Italian agreement; and in May, this group was further reinforced by the addition of Spain. Neither Kálnoky nor Bismarck would consider Italy's idea of bringing Spain into the Triple Alliance – geographical factors prevented the Central Powers ever rendering Spain any effective assistance. But Vienna welcomed the Italo-Spanish exchange of notes on general lines of policy (4 May) because it strengthened conservative and monarchical ideas in Spain against 'the dangerous idea of a republican brotherhood of Latin races'.[34] Austria-Hungary formally acceded on 22 May.

The Monarchy's eastern alliances, on the other hand, continued to decay. In Serbia the feud between the king and queen was reducing political life to utter confusion; and Milan's mental state, his threats to abdicate, to change his foreign policy, and to bring Ristić and the Liberals to power dismayed Vienna. By August 1887 the legation at Belgrade remarked on the advancing decay of Austria-Hungary's connexions there: the ministry of foreign affairs, formerly very co-operative, was now always difficult to handle. Yet Kálnoky still held to the bland assumption that Serbia, 'despite all her dislike of us, does not want to become Russian, and in the long run will not be able . . . to escape from our influence'.[35] Perhaps a more active policy would only have hastened the collapse of the alliance. Still, it must be admitted that Kálnoky's passivity brought few returns. Perhaps he himself saw this and was secretly galled by it. At any rate, when Baron Hengelmüller, minister at Belgrade, lectured him at length on the futility of a passive policy, Kálnoky rewarded him with a decoration and the Washington legation, where he spent the next twenty years bewailing Kálnoky's obtuseness and his own ruined career.[36]

[34] P.A. I/461, Kálnoky to Bruck, private and very secret, 19 March 1887.
[35] P.A. I/460, Kálnoky to Wolkenstein, private and confidential, 7 May 1887.
[36] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 1, Hengelmüller to Aehrenthal, 6 October 1900.

Relations with Roumania were still bedevilled by the tariff war, described by the Austro-Hungarian legation at Bucharest as 'a disaster' for the Monarchy.[37] Stourdza's government, weak, and faced with a feud between the king and Bratianu, simply could not afford to make any concessions. But Kálnoky condemned its openly anti-Austro-Hungarian attitude[38] and toyed with the idea of establishing contacts with the traditionally pro-Russian Conservative party. Bismarck lent Vienna no help at all; and even Count Agenor Goluchowski, appointed to Bucharest in February 1887 and, thanks to his geniality and his august connexions (his wife was a princess Murat) a great personal success there, 'could not move mountains' in the commercial question, which for Roumania was 'more important than all others'.[39] This being the case, it was small consolation that the overthrow of Alexander of Battenberg had given the Roumanians a healthy fright, bringing Stourdza to Vienna with assurances of loyalty; or that in October 1887 Kálnoky and King Carol agreed to regard the alliance as prolonged for another three years. The very crisis that inspired these gestures of loyalty had shown their limitations: in February 1887 Archduke Albrecht had told the Roumanians that the Monarchy would need all its forces for the crucial offensive in Galicia, and would have none to spare to assist Roumania directly.

The Three Emperors' Alliance, of course, was in full dissolution. In the spring of 1887 the news of its existence – leaked to the press by Saburov – had called forth a Panslav outcry which had almost driven Giers from office. By 7 May Kálnoky was admitting to Wolkenstein:[40] 'I cannot boast that my years of effort to establish stable and friendly relations with Russia have been successful; but I don't regret them, and can say with good conscience that I have done what I could' – there had never been any spirit of reciprocity in St Petersburg. He nevertheless told Wolkenstein to raise the question of the renewal of the treaty; but he thought the chances slim, and was not surprised by the tsar's refusal. Bismarck's attempt to repeat the tactics of 1879 – he persuaded

[37] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 1, Heidler to Aehrenthal, 3 October 1886.

[38] Ibid., Heidler to Aehrenthal, 25 August, 6 September 1886.

[39] Ibid., Heidler to Aehrenthal, 16 February 1887.

[40] P.A. I/460, Kálnoky to Wolkenstein, private and confidential, 7 May 1887.

Kálnoky to agree to the communication of the actual terms of the Dual Alliance to Russia, in the hope that such a display of solidarity would bring her into line – failed completely. For the tsar, already mortally offended by the Monarchy's opposition to the Kaulbars mission – his own brainchild – had been deeply impressed by the public outcry against the alliance. The Three Emperors' Alliance expired on 18 June 1887.

Kálnoky was not unduly worried. Indeed, it was Russia who seemed to have lost most from the disappearance of the Alliance. For the Monarchy was now freed of even a moral obligation to humour St Petersburg; and when in June Russia proposed, with German support, that the three empires take the lead in replacing the recalcitrant council of regents in Bulgaria by a single provisional regent – such as the Russian General Ehrenroth – she was frustrated by Kálnoky's refusal to co-operate. Her clumsy tactics in Bulgaria (for example, she gave open *post factum* approval to an abortive military *coup* in March) only precipitated a further and more spectacular Russian defeat. The Bulgarians now made haste to secure themselves against Russian influence once and for all; and on 7 July a special sobranje unanimously elected Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Koháry to the Bulgarian throne. As an Austrian army officer, a member of the Hungarian branch of the Saxe-Coburg family, a relative of the British ruling house, and especially as a Roman Catholic, Ferdinand was from the point of view of St Petersburg the most obnoxious candidate conceivable. A Russian circular of 13 July declared the election to be illegal, 'an unworthy comedy staged by the most wretched rabble'.[41] Yet even the Austrians were not entirely happy about such a spectacularly anti-Russian choice. Franz Joseph thought it politic to refrain from receiving Ferdinand at Ischl; and on 7 July Kálnoky reminded Ferdinand that before he could be legally installed in Bulgaria he would need the approval of the signatory Powers, which was not likely to be forthcoming. Not that the Austrians, for their part, intended to stand in his way, for they considered the election perfectly legal and correct. But when Turkey also raised objections, Kálnoky again warned Ferdinand that he could expect no positive support from Austria-Hungary.

Ferdinand set out for Sofia none the less; and once he had arrived in Bulgaria, the Austrians swallowed their irritation and

[41] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.

decided that they had better support him. For he was clearly popular there: Russia's suggestion that the Turks expel him would inevitably have entailed the shedding of a good deal of Christian Bulgarian blood, and was regarded in Vienna as a particularly shameless example of her cynical ruthlessness. The Russians, with Bismarck's support, were still angling at Constantinople for the appointment of a provisional regent – the Ehrenroth plan – and this Franz Joseph told the Germans he could never accept. He had no designs on Bulgaria himself: but he could not allow Bulgaria to become a Russian province – Roumania, Serbia, and Montenegro would soon follow. Besides, he felt obliged to consider his partners in the Mediterranean agreements. The latter were indeed proving of sterling worth. Throughout the autumn the three Powers waged a masterly campaign of passive resistance in the face of attempts by Russia and her French and German suitors to move the Turks to action. This gave Ferdinand time to consolidate his position in Bulgaria. By November Russia was ready to call off the diplomatic campaign at Constantinople, and to try the less exhausting tactics of fomenting plots at Sofia. Her fury had by no means abated; and expressed itself in massive troop concentrations in Poland which were to cause a serious crisis at the turn of the year. But her defeat in Bulgaria was none the less complete for that.

Throughout the wearisome diplomatic struggle over the fate of Bulgaria, the Mediterranean *entente* had been of more use to Austria-Hungary than all her alliances put together. And from the late summer of 1887 negotiations were in progress to extend the *entente* to guard specifically against Russian machinations at Sofia, Constantinople, and the Straits (Document 17). For France and Russia still carried great weight at Constantinople, Russia ruling the sultan according to Calice, 'by intimidation'.[42] In the summer, for example, they had bullied the sultan into rejecting the Drummond-Wolff Convention (by which the British had sought to extricate themselves from Egypt while keeping the door open for a re-occupation should the need arise). And this despite the fact that Britain had Germany as well as the Mediterranean *entente* behind her. By August, Germany had suddenly gone back to supporting Russia – in Bulgaria. This, Kálnoky said, completely confused the sultan's view of Great Power alignments, and was

[42] P.A. I/458, Liasse VIIIb, Calice to Kálnoky, private, 24 September 1887.

'the most harmful element in the present situation'.[43] The Austrians were not hopeful, therefore, of the chances of drawing Turkey any closer to what they liked to refer to as 'our group' at Constantinople. Nevertheless, on 19 September Kálnoky approved the academic discussions that Calice was holding with his British and Italian colleagues about possible ways of restraining Turkey, by threats or even by force, from throwing in her lot with France and Russia. He still felt the need to tread cautiously. For example, when Calice drew up a draft agreement of eight points, some of the suspicions of 1886 revived. On 25 September, Kálnoky reminded the ambassador that it would be well to emphasize Constantinople and the Straits – a pre-eminently British interest – rather than the Balkans, lest Britain try to push Austria-Hungary forward and shelter behind her (*zu sehr hinter uns verkrieche*).[44]

Nevertheless, when he saw in Bismarck's reception of Crispi at Friedrichsruh on 2 October a sign that Germany might be willing to lend her moral support, Kálnoky decided to take the initiative. The Germans had in fact been irritated by Russia's flirtations with France for some time now. At Gastein in August Franz Joseph had been pleased to note that even the old emperor's faith in Russia had been much shaken: 'after no other meeting with the Emperor William have I had such a favourable impression.'[45] Moreover, despite, or perhaps because of, the secret Reinsurance Treaty of 18 June, by which Germany had pledged her support to Russia at Sofia and Constantinople, Bismarck could only welcome it if another group of Powers would assume the task of deterring Russia from actually precipitating a crisis. On 9 October, therefore, Kálnoky told Calice that his draft would do as a basis; and that he would approach London and Rome. The essential point, he said, was to get an agreement *à trois*, for without Britain, Italy was not worth much. And he was still suspicious of Italy and her attempts to tie the Monarchy's hands in the Near East. It was partly for this reason that he turned down an Italian suggestion that the agreements should be extended to deal with the final break-up of Turkey. The spirit of Reichstadt had long been banished from the Ballhausplatz.

[43] Ibid., Kálnoky to Calice, 18 August 1887.
[44] Ibid., Kálnoky to Calice, secret telegram, 25 September 1887.
[45] W. Wagner, p. 157.

After a pause to make sure of Bismarck's co-operation, Kálnoky sent the draft agreement to London on 25 October, together with a warning: Austria-Hungary would never be able effectively to defend the Straits and Constantinople, even with Italian support. Here Britain was in the first line, and the Monarchy only in a supporting role. The suggested agreement would still give Vienna enough confidence to hold to the policy of keeping Russia out of Constantinople, but if Britain withdrew, Austria-Hungary would also have to retreat and concentrate on guarding her narrower and more vital interests in the Balkan peninsula. For she could more easily tolerate Russia in Constantinople than in Macedonia and Bulgaria.[46] This argument, and a letter of commendation from Bismarck, impressed Salisbury; and by 12 December – Kálnoky insisting on keeping the lead in the final formalities 'as the matter has been furthered so much by our initiative'[47] – the agreement was completed (Document 17). All in all it was a felicitous conclusion to the Bulgarian triumphs of 'our group'.

Even so, according to a gloomy Austro-Hungarian estimate of October 1887, Russia's sullen response to her Bulgarian defeat (a formidable concentration of troops in her western provinces) had cancelled out all the advantages the Monarchy had gained from speeding up its mobilization programme in the last four years. It had also caused disquiet in Berlin; and the Germans, who always thought the Austrians took too casual a view of their military obligations, advised Vienna to look to the defences of Galicia. For Bismarck, this advice was merely the military counterpart of his blessing the Mediterranean *entente*: a militarily prepared Austria-Hungary could more effectively deter the Russians from blundering into some *coup* which might make war inevitable. The military in Berlin went further, of course: on 12 December Moltke actually proposed to Vienna a joint preventive attack on Russia, drawing the response from Beck that the Monarchy would be ready to fight by 15 January 1888. But the civilian authorities in the Monarchy would have none of this. Neither Franz Joseph nor Kálnoky believed that Russia was seriously preparing to attack; and in any case, midwinter was the worst conceivable time for major troop movements to Galicia. They contented themselves

[46] P.A. I/458, Liasse VIIIb, Kálnoky to Biegeleben, private, 25 October 1887. [47] Ibid., Kálnoky to Bruck, Tel. 92, secret, 3 December 1887.

with a few precautionary measures there; but not on such a scale as to provoke Russia to greater efforts, or to necessitate a sensational summoning of the Delegations.

This proved sufficient. The Russians were impressed, if somewhat put out, and made haste to assure Vienna on 23 December that they were not contemplating war or the shedding of a single drop of blood for Bulgaria. Kálnoky countered with assurances of Franz Joseph's peaceful and defensive intentions, but he still remained decidedly sceptical about Russia. In a memorandum of 1 January 1888[48] he analysed the nature of her grievances, concluding that they originated with the rise of Germany to Great Power status, and the formation of the Dual Alliance. These developments had ousted Russia from the artificially inflated position she had enjoyed in Europe since the Napoleonic wars. Hence, as both the German Empire and the Dual Alliance were there to stay, there could be no real prospect of an end to Russia's hostility. Indeed, unless Russia came into line with the Central Powers (and the state of Russian opinion made this unlikely) or unless France deserted her (and opinion in France was in fact becoming more pacific), it would be the sword which would ultimately have to decide 'whether Slavic Russia will dominate Europe or not'. On the next day he told Lobanov, the Russian ambassador, that the time was not appropriate to discuss the restoration of lasting good relations; and at the end of the month he was still telling the Germans that 'Russia desires war'.[49] Bismarck, by contrast, was completely satisfied with Russia's chastened attitude, and on 11 January proclaimed in the Reichstag that all danger of war had disappeared.

Unfortunately for Bismarck, however, the original German advice to arm had roused some powerful demons in the Monarchy; and a conference of ministers on 18 December[50] was much exercised with the question of a preventive war. Kálnoky, after justifying the limited nature of the preparations in Galicia, went on to describe the idea of preventive war as 'madness'. The Monarchy was neither militarily, nor, above all, diplomatically prepared. The Dual Alliance was strictly defensive (and Germany, preoccupied in the west, would in any case be unable to render much

[48] P.A. I/469, Kálnoky, memorandum, 1 January 1888.
[49] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 316.
[50] P.A. XL/294, Ministerratsprotokoll, 18 December 1887.

assistance); relations with Britain and Italy were on a purely defensive basis; and, as the Monarchy relied on an army of conscripts, public opinion would also have to be considered. He threw out a sop to the warmongers with a reference to the ultimately inevitable settling of accounts between Germanism and Slavdom; but his main point was that the Monarchy could only proceed in complete accord with Germany. This, even Tisza had to admit, although he still thought that the Monarchy could only lose by delay, for the Slavs were at that moment still loyal – they might not be so after a few more years of Russian propaganda. Opinions differed on this point – in a conference of 5 January Kálnoky[51] argued that the Central Powers stood to gain by delay, as both Germany's armaments and Russia's financial embarrassments would grow. And even on this occasion, when he had no illusions about Russia's apparent change of heart, and described the situation as 'bad, because the basic causes of the evil have not disappeared', he still advised that 'at present there is nothing we can do but put up with it'. That being the case, the conference of 5 January decided against any further armaments increases – unless Bismarck should change his mind and decide on war.

Nevertheless, the debate had not been completely barren. Kálnoky had decided to seize the opportunity to clear up a contentious aspect of the Dual Alliance. When, in the conference of 18 December the war minister pointed out that Galicia could not be defended except by an offensive thrust into Poland, Kálnoky explained that he was about to ask Berlin whether in fact the terms of the Alliance would permit of such a measure. (After all, as Franz Joseph remarked in a conference of 19 December,[52] the military in Vienna and Berlin had always planned to take the offensive if war with Russia became inevitable.) Bismarck, however, insisted that the Alliance was strictly defensive, and refused to consider the possibility of taking the offensive in any circumstances. Undeterred, Kálnoky pressed the reluctant Széchenyi to pursue the matter. As he explained at some length (Document 18), it was not a question of changing the defensive character of the Alliance, or of waging a preventive war. The military simply needed to know in advance – for there would be no time to start planning in a crisis – whether it would be at all permissible to

[51] Ibid., Ministerratsprotokoll, 5 January 1888.

[52] Ibid., 19 December 1887.

take the offensive. The extremely unfavourable geographical conformation of Galicia rendered the Austro-Hungarian line of march hazardous in any case; but the allies would give up enormous advantages and severely compromise the whole issue of the war if they waited for the Russians to attack. The only guarantee of success lay in an immediate offensive and a simultaneous thrust from Germany. Russia's growing armaments were making war increasingly likely, and the question should be cleared up without delay. If Austria-Hungary knew definitely that she would have to give up the 'huge military advantages' of an offensive and let the Russians into the country, she would have to think hard about whether it would be at all possible to go to war with Russia.[53]

This last threat, intended as a hint that Austria-Hungary might abandon Germany for Russia, misfired completely. When Széchenyi put it to Herbert Bismarck, the latter expressed his approval – thinking that Kálnoky was considering abandoning Bulgaria.[54] The Germans stubbornly refused to discuss even the possibility of an offensive: according to Széchenyi, the old emperor was the chief obstacle; but Bismarck agreed with him entirely. True, in practical military terms nothing much had changed: the soldiers went on making plans regardless of the political situation. A memorandum by Moltke of February 1888 still talked of a common offensive in Poland; and although the Germans could not put up so many men as in 1882, the improvements in the Austro-Hungarian army since then ensured to the allied armies a superiority of some 178,000 over Russia. On the other hand, the political atmosphere within the Dual Alliance had undoubtedly worsened. Kálnoky's initiative had ended in a complete fiasco. Franz Joseph was resigned, but bitter, for he felt the Germans suspected him of trying to misuse the alliance. There had never been any question of a preventive war, or of the military's controlling policy, he complained. But the Monarchy ought to be told in what circumstances it could count on Germany – otherwise it would be impossible to make any serious military plans at all. Nor did he agree that the *casus foederis* only arose when Russian troops were actually on Austro-Hungarian soil: it was

[53] P.A. I/464, Liasse XIXd, Kálnoky to Széchenyi, No. 2, secret, 12 January 1888.

[54] Ibid., Széchenyi to Kálnoky, No. 7, secret, 21 January 1888.

time Berlin realized 'that "politically defensive" and "militarily offensive" are not contradictory terms'.[55]

In this situation, such gestures of solidarity as the publication of the terms of the Dual Alliance in February 1888 provided small consolation. Indeed, this was also a gesture designed to reassure Russia and to emphasize the purely defensive character of the Alliance for the better information of the chauvinist Hungarian press. And Kálnoky, for his part, soon proved himself Bismarck's equal in the strict interpreting of treaties. In the military discussions between the Triple Alliance Powers in Berlin in January he scrupulously reserved the Monarchy's treaty rights to observe neutrality in certain wars against France; and agreed to permit the passage of Italian troops through Austrian territory to the Rhine only if Austria-Hungary were herself already at war with France. Yet even so, the Monarchy's alliances and *ententes* were still worth something, as Kálnoky recognized in a memorandum of March 1888.[56] Germany and Austria-Hungary were doing fairly well in their policy of preserving peace by building up such an imposing assemblage of states that France and Russia would not dare risk starting a war. True, not everything was perfect: Germany's dubious attitude at Constantinople was still confusing the Turks and disheartening Britain and Italy; nor could Britain and Austria-Hungary ever accept Bismarck's view that Russia had a claim to permanent predominance in Bulgaria by virtue of the Treaty of Berlin. Yet even Bismarck had his uses: the personal hold he had established over Crispi by dint of judicious flattery was of great value, for in Kálnoky's view the Italian connexion was Austria-Hungary's chief means of holding on to Britain.

In one respect – the creation of a link between Italy and Roumania – the year 1888 even saw a strengthening of the interconnexions of the Austro-German alliance system. Of course, the Austrians had no use themselves for Italian help; and when this was mooted in the military talks at Berlin Kálnoky turned it down, suspecting in it a Trojan horse for irredentist claims. On the other hand, the idea that Italy might send a contingent to assist Roumania found more favour in Vienna. True, Kálnoky thought Italy so ramshackle that she would probably not be able

[55] W. Wagner, p. 162.

[56] P.A. I/469, memorandum by Kálnoky for the use of Archduke Rudolph during his visit to Berlin, 14 March 1888.

to spare a man from the French front in the event; the logistic difficulties were enormous; and Crispi was obviously only trying to strengthen Italy's foothold in the Balkans. Indeed, Archduke Albrecht thought it positively dangerous to foster any links between two irredentist states with claims on the Monarchy. Nevertheless, Kálnoky decided that closer co-operation between the two Latin races against the Slav flood could only help to weld the alliances together. From the spring of 1888 he worked hard at Rome and Bucharest and managed by August to secure the accession of Italy to the Austro-Roumanian alliance. This was pure gain from the Monarchy's point of view, in that, like Germany's accession in 1883 it bound an ally (albeit in this case a feeble one) to help Austria-Hungary out in the event (albeit an unlikely one by this time) of a Russian invasion of Roumania.

Yet although the alliances would clearly be militarily invaluable in the event of actual war, that was a contingency which Austro-Hungarian policy was very much concerned to avoid. Indeed the outbreak of war would in itself indicate a failure of the very important deterrent function of the alliances, at this period still operating with a fairly comfortable preponderance of strength against the 'restless' Powers, France and Russia. Moreover – and this was to assume greater importance in Austrian minds in the decade after 1888, when there were no major confrontations between the continental Powers – the Monarchy also looked to the alliances to serve its interests in the humdrum but hardly less essential diplomacy of peace, and to ensure good relations with its neighbours. In this respect, the alliances were proving sadly deficient. Strange behaviour on the part of the unstable governments in Belgrade and Bucharest was by now coming to be accepted in Vienna as a fact of life; but in the summer of 1888 even the Dual and Triple Alliances were severely plagued with mistrust. Indeed, Germany and Italy seemed almost to be conspiring together against the Monarchy. For example, when William II succeeded to the German throne in June, he not only chose demonstratively to honour St Petersburg with his first state visit, but followed this up with a visit to the king of Italy at Rome. If the papal protests he provoked were not embarrassing enough for his allies in Vienna, William spent much of his time discussing the internal affairs of Austria with Crispi, who

joined him in condemning the pro-Slav and clerical policies of the Taaffe government.

On the whole Kálnoky had come to the conclusion that the papal and irredentist questions were insoluble, and that Vienna and Rome would do best to resign themselves quietly to living with this unfortunate fact. For example, in the autumn of 1887 he refused to adopt an anti-papal policy at Italy's request, but justified himself with the remarkably frank argument that it would be like asking Crispi 'to state publicly in the Chamber that Italy finally and for ever renounced Trentino and Trieste'.[57] But he drew the line at Germany's supporting Italian claims to Austrian territory, even if only in minor frontier disputes; and in July 1888 he asked bitterly whether Germany would consider ceding Lorraine to France 'in the interests of general European peace'.[58] Irredentism was at this time threatening to become quite a serious problem in Austro-Italian relations. In January 1889 Kálnoky took the gravest umbrage at an Italian law enfranchising Italian-speakers outside the kingdom. In November it was only under pressure from Rome and Berlin – and with perhaps understandable bad grace – that Franz Joseph intervened to stop the trial for sedition of the editor of the Trieste *Independente*; and in July 1890 the closing down of *Pro Patria*, the leading national association for Italian Austrians, was interpreted in Italy as another wicked plot by Taaffe and the clericals to undermine the Triple Alliance. Italy still needed the Alliance of course, and it was under this banner that in the autumn of 1890 Crispi at last launched a great onslaught on the irredentists after closing down all the societies dedicated to Oberdank. Kálnoky was much gratified; but the ensuing Italian elections showed that the irredentists were still as numerous as ever.

The Dual Alliance too was at something of a discount in 1888. When William II, returning from Rome, at last appeared in Vienna in October, his visit was a disaster in every respect. He quarrelled with Crown Prince Rudolph, and infuriated the emperor with gestures that were nothing less than blatant intrusions into the domestic affairs of the Monarchy. For example, he presented Tisza with the Black Eagle – the highest German order – but

[57] A. Sandonà, *L' irredentismo nelle lotte politiche e nelle contese diplomatiche italo-austriache*, Vol. 3, p. 146.

[58] Ibid., p. 151.

ostentatiously refrained from giving Taaffe any decoration at all. Franz Joseph and Kálnoky thought this behaviour monstrous. Nor were they impressed when Herbert Bismarck took the opportunity to preach the doctrine of spheres of influence in the Balkans. 'I know this is your father's idea,' Franz Joseph told him; 'but I could never accept it in the past; and I must also reject it today.'[59]

The strange behaviour of the Germans – particularly their attempts to ingratiate themselves at St Petersburg, alarmed Vienna. For Austro-Russian relations had not improved at all. 'How we are supposed to get out of this without a war is not clear to me,' Franz Joseph told Waldersee in June 1888.[60] It was just as well, therefore, that the Monarchy should look to its own defences. In the summer, the troop concentrations in Galicia were strengthened; and the Delegations voted 100m. Gulden without a murmur. In April 1889 an Army Bill, envisaging the eventual doubling in size of the Common Army was voted by both parliaments. True, this was not achieved without a struggle. There were people in Budapest who thought even the *Ausgleich* of 1867 a needless sacrifice of Hungary's liberty; and who regarded the creeping growth of the Common institutions as an even graver menace than the power of Russia. Thanks partly to the support of the German ambassador, Tisza eventually prevailed in parliament against what Kálnoky termed the 'radical rabble';[61] but he had to buy them off. To Beck's dismay the title of the Imperial General Staff was altered to 'Imperial and Royal' – a minor change but another ominous sign of things to come. For the struggle over the Army Bill in Hungary marked the beginning of an instability in Hungarian politics that was seriously to weaken the Monarchy as a Great Power in the next decade. And it was to be the last Army Bill the government could extract from Budapest until 1912. For the present, however, the new law offered proof enough that the Monarchy was firmly determined, as the German military attaché rather patronizingly put it 'to become a real Great Power' (*ebenbürtig zu werden*).[62]

Thus strengthened, the Monarchy was in fact about to embark

[59] W. Wagner, p. 166.

[60] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 324.

[61] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 6, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 4 June 1888.

[62] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 330.

on a period of relative security which lasted for about four years. The year 1889 saw a remarkable improvement in the international situation and the Monarchy, perhaps for the last time in its history, was able to maintain successfully a firm posture against Russia with a fair amount of support from its friends and allies. On the one hand, William II, whose effusive gestures had been rebuffed by the dour tsar, now fell into an anti-Russian mood. He also became increasingly unwilling to listen to Bismarck. On the other hand, with France paralysed by the aftermath of the Boulanger affair, and with the Balkans relatively calm, it was Russia's military efforts in Poland that now began to absorb the German military mind. By the summer of 1889 the Austrians felt they had good reason to hope that Germany would after all be prepared to pay as much attention to the eastern front as to the western. And with William I dead and Bismarck's influence in decline, Kálnoky thought it might be time to raise certain thorny questions at Berlin. Franz Joseph's forthcoming return visit to William II would provide a good opportunity. It might be possible, he speculated in July,[63] to persuade Germany to become at least neutral in the Bulgarian question – her continued support of Russia at Constantinople was still paralysing Austrian efforts to reconcile the sultan and Prince Ferdinand. And reverting to his ideas of 1887–8, he determined to make yet another effort to settle the question of the compatibility of a military offensive with a defensive alliance.

Franz Joseph's visit to Berlin in July 1889 was a tremendous success, surpassing even the Austrians' wildest hopes. True, Bismarck was not particularly forthcoming, refusing to lift the ban on pig imports from the Monarchy, and making tactless remarks about the growth of Slav influence in Austrian politics. But the Austrians could afford to ignore Bismarck, for the military conversations could not have gone better. Waldersee declared that Russia was definitely the chief enemy of Germany, who would evacuate Lorraine if necessary to finish the war in the east with all speed. Beck was so pleased at this that he at once abandoned a plan he had been working on for a defensive mobilization behind the Carpathians. More important still, the Germans now suddenly and enthusiastically adopted the Austrian view on the Alliance. The words of the war minister, Verdy du Vernois, to

[63] P.A. I/469, Kálnoky, memorandum, secret, July 1889.

Beck – 'Your mobilization will be for us the signal to come in with all we have got' (*mit Allem einzusetzen*)[64] – were perhaps nothing unusual from a military quarter. But now the Emperor William himself declared: 'whatever reason you may have for mobilizing, whether Bulgaria or anything else, the day of your mobilization will be the day of mobilization for my army, whatever the chancellors (*die Kanzler*) may say.'[65]

The Austrians could hardly have wished for a more explicit assurance. Their only doubt was to its real value, coming from one so volatile as William II and at a time of growing political instability in Berlin. (Within a matter of months, for example, Verdy had been removed from the war ministry.) These misgivings account for the mixed feelings with which the news of the fall of the Bismarcks, in March 1890, was received at Vienna. The military, of course, were jubilant: 'Thank God we are rid of the whole family,' Archduke Albrecht wrote to Beck.[66] Franz Joseph hoped that Austria-Hungary might now be able to speak with more weight in the Alliance; and he lost no time in reminding William II that the two German Powers must stand up to Russia, 'because then she always retreats'[67] – a dangerous lesson to have drawn from the recent Balkan crisis. Even he, however, in some ways preferred Bismarck's firmness to the emperor's wobbling; and Bismarck was certainly more sound on the socialist question. Kálnoky, too, might henceforth feel able to speak with more authority in the counsels of Europe. He had always been discouraged by the thought that the Bismarcks were really more Russian than Austrian in sympathy: now there was nobody with 'Russian feelings' in office at Berlin.[68] Yet even he had doubts about William II's stability, and hoped he might be kept fully occupied with domestic affairs.

For a time William II continued on an Austrophile course. At the Rohnstock manoeuvres in September 1890 the Austrian visitors received his strong backing – but again only verbal – in the Near East. He agreed that a solution of the Straits question along the lines desired by Russia (i.e. that Russia alone should gain a right of passage to and from the Mediterranean) was 'impossible'; and he endorsed the Austrian view that the question was one for

[64] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 337.
[65] Ibid., p. 338.
[66] Ibid., p. 342.
[67] W. Wagner, p. 175.
[68] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 12 April 1890.

Europe to handle. The Austrians for their part seem to have accepted William's story that, until Bismarck's fall, he had been entirely ignorant of the Reinsurance Treaty (which he revealed to them on this occasion, with a display of feigned indignation at Bismarck's perfidy).[69] In the new year William seemed to wobble again: his sudden and brutal dismissal of their old friend Waldersee was a great blow to the Austrians; and Archduke Albrecht had qualms about the new chief-of-staff, the taciturn Schlieffen: 'I fear he is a slippery eel.'[70] At Moltke's funeral in April, however, Schlieffen himself assured Beck that he was not thinking of departing from Waldersee's plans, and that Russia remained Germany's chief enemy. Altogether, therefore, although the whims of William II were hardly the best guarantee, the Dual Alliance seemed to have gained considerably in effectiveness and importance.

The Triple Alliance experienced no such revival. True, Kálnoky recognized that for Germany the alliance had acquired increased importance since the revival of France in the middle 'eighties. Bismarck's 'gross flattery'[71] of Crispi was paying dividends, and King Humbert's visit to Berlin in May 1889 was a spectacular demonstration of German-Italian solidarity. Austria-Hungary, however, was very much a third partner in this alliance. The papal question still ensured that there would be no Austro-Hungarian state visits to Rome. And after all, Italy could only be of positive value to the Monarchy by giving diplomatic support at Constantinople in accordance with the Mediterranean agreements. The Balkan clause in the Triple Alliance was only a nuisance from the Austro-Hungarian point of view. Indeed, in a memorandum of July 1889 Kálnoky admitted that all Vienna asked of the Italian ally was that she should refrain from harassing the Monarchy in a war with Russia. Indeed, whereas Germany, seeking effective military aid from Italy, wished to see an end to the internal chaos that prevailed in the kingdom, the Austrians decided that 'the more uncomfortable Italy's domestic position is . . . the more secure we can feel.'[72] Above all, Kálnoky was determined not to

[69] P.A. I/476, Liasse XXXIIIg, Szögyény to Goluchowski, very secret, 31 October 1896.

[70] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, p. 342.

[71] P.A. I/469, Kálnoky, memorandum, secret, July 1889.

[72] Ibid.

be drawn by Italy into a war with France. In the spring and summer of 1889, therefore, he rejected an Italian proposal (which enjoyed the support of Berlin) to reinforce the Triple Alliance by military and naval agreements. As regards the former, he thought neither Italy nor Austria-Hungary would have a man to spare from the French and Russian fronts respectively. A naval agreement he feared might increase the chances of the Monarchy's coming to blows with France. In any case the naval interests of Italy and Austria-Hungary lay in quite different parts of the Mediterranean; and the Austro-Hungarian fleet, though trim, was really only designed for coastal defence in the Adriatic.

Fortunately, the Balkan situation did not seem to call for any drastic remedies in these years. As Zwiedenek, head of the Eastern Department at the Ballhausplatz, observed in March 1889, Kálnoky's policy of supporting the independent development of the Balkan states against Russia's attempts to establish her tutelage was meeting with success. The completion of the railway network to Constantinople in 1888 had strengthened Austria-Hungary's connexions with the Balkan states and her influence was growing. Altogether, the 'advancing development of the Balkan states forms an important obstacle to Russia's power-drive towards the west, and that is decidedly a success for our recent policy'.[73] This success was hardly attributable to Austria-Hungary's Balkan alliances, which remained precarious. Indeed, as Serbia slipped into chaos, the Austrians gradually shifted the basis of their Balkan position from the Serbian and Roumanian alliances to a Bulgarian-Roumanian axis. As Kálnoky observed in February 1891,[74] Roumania and Bulgaria were destined to be the most important elements in the Balkan situation – provided they realized their interest in staying on the side of western civilization and the Central Powers. If they were agreed on maintaining the *status quo*, they could form a most effective territorial barrier to the spread of Russian influence in Serbia, and the internal disorders there need then give no cause for concern.

The strange and desperate behaviour of King Milan was now quite beyond the control of Vienna. His feud with the queen raged unabated; and in 1888, without consulting the Austrians at

[73] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Zwiedenek to Aehrenthal, 28 March 1889.

[74] P.A. I/471, Liasse XXXa, Kálnoky to Goluchowski, secret, 9 February 1891.

all, he embarked on a short-lived experiment with a Radical ministry, and then arbitrarily altered the constitution. By November he had had enough of Serbia, and suddenly informed Vienna that he had decided to abdicate. This was serious news; for Kálnoky was determined that the dynasty must at all costs be maintained. If it disappeared, leaving the way clear for a government openly hostile to the Monarchy, the latter would have to intervene in Serbia by force. All the same, the general Balkan situation was reassuring – particularly in view of the growing independence of Bulgaria – and when Franz Joseph and William II failed to move Milan to a sense of his monarchical duties, the Austrians decided that they would be satisfied if the regency that would rule for Milan's thirteen-year-old son, Alexander, were well-disposed towards Austria-Hungary and strong enough to prevent Serbia from falling into complete anarchy. This they managed to secure. The abdication went off calmly enough in March 1889 (although Kálnoky complained of the indignant ravings of some Hungarian newspapers). Ristić himself was one of the regents, and the influence of the queen-mother added a slightly Russian flavour to the government; but the Austrians soon established tolerable relations with it. Ristić had his work cut out to produce any kind of order out of the economic and political chaos bequeathed to him by Milan, and had no desire to burden Serbia with a quarrel with her powerful northern neighbour. He had agreed, as part of the abdication arrangements to accept the prolongation of the Austro-Serbian treaty to 1895; and the Austrians in turn were content to forget about the domestic chaos of the ramshackle Serbian state.

One worrying aspect of the Serbian constitutional crisis had been the possibility of repercussions in Roumania, where King Carol was under attack from the Russophile Conservative party. In the event, however, the abdication of Milan, and especially the gloating of the Russian press, had a salutary effect in reviving Roumanian fears of Russia. And when the Conservatives came to power briefly in the spring of 1889, Kálnoky's fears that they might look to St Petersburg proved unfounded. The chief difficulty was that the king was too frightened to initiate the Conservative government – or even the short-lived Liberal government of General Mano that followed it – into the Austro-Roumanian alliance, which now existed only by grace of the king, and had no

foothold at all in the government. Throughout 1891 Kálnoky desperately urged Carol to make the alliance known to the leaders of both political parties, and to make the general drift of his policy clear to his people. He also pressed the king hard to renew the alliance. For the Monarchy, of course, its chief value lay not so much in the prospect of any military aid, as in binding Germany to defend Roumania. The present moment was a good one, he urged on Bucharest in the spring; for even Britain and Italy were collaborating with Austria-Hungary. Besides, if Germany once escaped, the allies might never get her back. Moreover, if Roumania aligned herself with Russia, this would bring down the anti-Russian government of Stamboulov in Bulgaria; and with Bulgaria in Russian hands, Roumania herself would not long survive.[75] The return to power of the Conservatives in 1892 caused further delays before the king could screw up his courage to initiate the government into the alliance. It was not renewed until July. (Germany and Italy acceded in November.) In one respect there was some improvement, for Kálnoky had had enough of battling with the timid king, and the alliance was this time renewed for four years, after which it would renew itself automatically for a further three unless actually denounced.

In the following year it was strengthened by an Austro-Roumanian commercial treaty, which at last put an end to the long tariff war. The Monarchy gradually recovered its commercial position in Roumania after this, although Germany, who had meanwhile established her position there, always remained a strong rival. On the irredentist front there was no improvement. On the contrary, a '*Liga Culturale*', founded in 1891, was organizing hatred of Hungary; and was helped in its task by a sensational trial of Roumanian nationalists in Transylvania in 1894. Kálnoky did his best to keep the temperature low, refusing to countenance Roumanian complaints about Magyarization, and equally ignoring Hungarian demands to bring Bucharest to book for tolerating irredentist activities within the kingdom. He only succeeded in displeasing both parties.

Austria-Hungary's chief Balkan success in these years was achieved in Bulgaria, a state with which she had no alliance at all. It was still 'of the greatest importance', Zwiedenek declared in

[75] P.A. I/471, Liasse XXXa, Kálnoky to Goluchowski, private and secret, 6 March, 12 April 1891.

August 1889, to thwart Russian attempts to hinder Bulgaria's autonomous development; for a Bulgaria independent of Russia was 'the best guarantee against the success of Panslav and Great-Serbian designs'.[76] Not that the Monarchy was completely successful in advancing Bulgaria's interests: Russia, with German backing, had managed to convince the sultan that Ferdinand was an enemy, who even coveted Turkish territory. In 1890, however, the diplomatic situation changed. Although the Mediterranean *Entente* Powers were still not strong enough to bring the sultan to grant Ferdinand formal recognition, they at last secured German support on minor Bulgarian questions; and in July together persuaded the sultan to give Ferdinand some satisfaction by appointing more Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia, to fortify the Bulgarian inhabitants against Greek propaganda. Of course, the association of the Mediterranean *Entente* with Ferdinand's cause played into Russia's hands at Constantinople to some extent, for the Turks were haunted by rumours of an international conspiracy based on Bulgaria to drive them out of Europe altogether. But in fact, Kálnoky was as content as anybody to see the territorial *status quo* in the Balkans maintained; and Russia's frantic opposition to anything that smacked of Bulgarian expansion into Macedonia suited him quite well.

Similarly, Russia's persistent, and futile, efforts to embarrass the Bulgarian government internally – her fomenting of plots, her refusal in February 1892 to extradite the assassins of Ferdinand's representative at Constantinople – were only grist to the Austro-Hungarian mill. In 1891 Franz Joseph graciously received the Bulgarian ruler in Vienna; and Kálnoky blandly explained to the complaining Russians that 'little Ferdinand'[77] had been since his childhood a personal friend of the emperor. By the end of 1892 Stamboulov felt strong enough to abolish the stipulation in the constitution imposing the Orthodox religion on all rulers of Bulgaria after the first; and in January 1893 Ferdinand married the Catholic Marie Louise of Parma, who had Habsburg blood in her veins. By this time the Russians were ready to wash their hands of Bulgaria. On the other hand, Kálnoky's assumption

[76] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Zwiedenek to Aehrenthal, 15 August 1889.

[77] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 15 July 1891.

that, saving some catastrophe such as the assassination of Stamboulov, Russia would never be able to recover her influence in Bulgaria, was perhaps unduly sanguine. True, Austria-Hungary retained her commercial predominance, but her ruthless exploitation of what the Bulgarians regarded as an unequal treaty was resented at Sofia. Politically she had certainly succeeded in saving Bulgaria from Russian domination; but she had been unable to secure what her protégé Ferdinand most craved – international recognition. That, only a change of heart in St Petersburg could secure. This fact was the Achilles' heel of the Austro-Hungarian position in Bulgaria.

That was a problem for the future. In 1891 the Monarchy still enjoyed the security of its alliances and *ententes*. In the spring the Triple Alliance was renewed without too much trouble. True, Kálnoky had been alarmed when Crispi suggested amalgamating the three treaties of 1887, as he still had no intention of giving Italy anything more than diplomatic support in the western Mediterranean; and for the same reason he refused to consider bringing Spain into the Alliance. But he rightly calculated that Crispi would not be able to devise a formula to accommodate the diverse geographical interests of Austria-Hungary and Italy in the Mediterranean; and when Crispi's successor, Rudiní, in a weak position at home, and gaining no laurels from an abortive attempt to improve commercial relations with France, declared himself ready to renew the Alliance practically unchanged, Kálnoky seized the opportunity. On 6 May the Alliance was renewed and the three treaties were inserted into one document (Document 19). But they still remained separate, and the Monarchy had thereby assumed only the most tenuous moral connexion (being technically a signatory) with the Italo-German clauses concerning North Africa. It was to avoid assuming any further real commitments against France that in the summer Kálnoky again turned down an Italian suggestion for naval and military talks. It was to Britain that Italy should look for support in the Mediterranean, he said. He was therefore delighted when in June the British parliamentary under-secretary, Fergusson, acknowledged in the Commons that Britain had a common interest with Italy in maintaining the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. And he was even more encouraged by the resultant chorus of approval in the British press, regarding this open support from British public opinion as

being worth far more than the secret declarations of a prime minister.[78]

In fact, the summer of 1891 saw something of a festival of the Triple Alliance and the Mediterranean *Entente*. Following on Fergusson's declaration came a flamboyant speech by Rudiní (29 June) proclaiming the renewal of the Triple Alliance and boasting of Italy's ties with Britain. Kálnoky thought this unduly sensational; but Franz Joseph himself had already caused a stir by going to Fiume to welcome a British squadron visiting the Adriatic; and King Humbert followed his example at Venice on 3 July. On the next day – two days after the conclusion of the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty – William II left for a ten-day visit to England. Nor was the western Mediterranean forgotten. The same month saw the settlement of an Anglo-Portuguese east African dispute, which Kálnoky, exercising his good offices at Salisbury's request, had been trying to smooth over. True, he had refused to enter into the merits of the question; and there was little he felt he could do about the Portuguese government, which he considered deplorably lenient towards the noisy republican opposition. In fact, his good offices had consisted largely of urging the British to let Portugal down lightly. For if she were humiliated and the monarchy fell, the monarchies of Spain and Italy would soon follow, and the international revolutionary parties (*Umsturzparteien*)[79] would be correspondingly heartened to proceed against the great Germanic and Slav monarchies. In April Italy and Spain had extended the agreement of 1887 to include diplomatic co-operation to maintain the *status quo* against France in Morocco; and to this Kálnoky, ever keen to reinforce the influence of the Triple Alliance at Madrid, made haste to accede.

Not unnaturally France and Russia, where the press had been predicting the approaching end of the Triple Alliance, were greatly disconcerted by its spectacular renewal, and the prospect of Britain's joining it. Within a month they had made a secret military agreement. But their public counter-demonstration of solidarity (the visit of a French squadron to Cronstadt at the end of July) was not nearly enough to shake Kálnoky's confidence;

[78] P.A. I/461, Liasse XXIV/2, Kálnoky to Bruck, No. 1, secret, 22 June 1891.
[79] P.A. VIII/172, Kálnoky to Deym, private, 21 March 1891.

and he calculated that when the smoke from the Cronstadt 'firework' had cleared, things would remain much the same.[80] After all, Russia had no reason to tie her hands *vis-à-vis* a France which could always be had for the asking; and the approaching famine in Russia should at least give food for thought to any warmongers in St Petersburg. Indeed, Kálnoky advised a council of ministers at this time that it would be safe to reduce armaments expenditure to help balance the budget.[81] And he was at some pains to calm the nervous anxiety that any gesture of Franco-Russian collaboration always aroused in Berlin. He rejected a German suggestion that the sultan be initiated into the Mediterranean agreements: the Turks would only leak the agreements to France and Russia, who would then be spurred to even greater efforts at Constantinople. And they had influence enough there already. Russia's new Black Sea fleet impressed the Turks; and despite Anglo-Austrian diplomatic opposition, she was making pretty free with the rule of the Straits, sending armed ships in and out more or less at will. (It was now the British who were anxious to maintain the closure of the Straits.) Kálnoky was quite content with the Mediterranean agreements as they stood – 'certain fundamental and general theoretical promises' – and he did not wish to enquire too closely into their binding character.[82] (This might move the British to reduce it to a minimum.) Although Rosebery, who succeeded Salisbury in March 1892, refused to read the agreements or put them to the Cabinet, the Austrians were still sanguine enough about their general diplomatic position to be satisfied with his rather less definite statement that 'Anglo-Austrian relations must rest exclusively on reciprocal confidence'.[83]

Kálnoky's confidence was further increased when it at last proved possible in these years to bring the commercial policies of the allied Powers into line with their diplomatic commitments. This was, of course, only attainable once Bismarck with his narrow diplomatic view of the alliances was out of the way; and when Germany, Austria-Hungary's most important and most powerful trading partner, and still virtually the arbiter of her commercial policy, had a change of heart. Caprivi's policy was designed partly to win the masses from socialism at home – by

[80] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 28 July 1891.
[81] Ibid., Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 19 October 1891.
[82] Margaret M. Jefferson, p. 87.
[83] Ibid., p. 88.

importing cheap foreign food to lower the cost of living; and partly to reinforce the alliances by economic ties, with the ultimate objective of a central European customs union under German leadership. In a sense it was also a counterblast directed at France and Russia, who since 1887 had been engaged in tariff wars with Italy and Germany respectively. Caprivi lost no time in ending the commercial estrangement of Austria-Hungary, and between August 1890 and May 1891 negotiated a commercial treaty which from 1892 gave Austro-Hungarian agrarian exports increased access to the German market in return for a lowering of Austro-Hungarian tariffs on German industrial exports. The Monarchy then concluded treaties with Italy, Switzerland, Serbia, and Belgium (1892); Roumania (1894); and Japan (1896); and in 1897 forced Bulgaria to renew the 'unequal treaty' yet again. This plethora of treaties did not really mean a return to an era of free trade – many duties still remained high. But it was an improvement on the protectionist chaos of the autonomous tariff policy of the 1880s, and marked the start of a commercial armistice which lasted for the next ten years. Of course, for Austria-Hungary, political considerations were an important motive. The Roumanian and Italian treaties were notable examples of sacrificing economic interests in order to strengthen the alliances. In the first case, Hungarian agriculture was subjected to severe competition, and in the second, the Austrian wine industry. (Imports of Italian wine soared from 20,000 to 150,000 quintals per annum.) Nor was that all, France, unable to secure the Italian tariff for her own wines, retaliated with higher tariffs on Austro-Hungarian exports.

For the political advantages of the treaties, therefore, the Monarchy had to pay a certain economic price. Although trade – particularly with Germany – increased, there was no spectacular boom in Austria-Hungary in the 1890s. Indeed, Austrian industry, already struggling to be competitive under the burden of what the founder of the Social Democratic party described in 1891 as 'the best industrial worker legislation in the world'[84] (a burden from which the rival Hungarian industry was almost entirely free), now had to face German competition as well. Hungarian agriculture, too, suffered from increased Serbian and Roumanian competition – especially from the latter when Hungary at last completed the navigation works on the Danube (1888–96). On

[84] H. Benedikt, p. 131.

the other hand, the completion of the railway network to Constantinople in 1888 furthered the Monarchy's Balkan trade, which managed to maintain its proportionate share – still only about 6 per cent – of the Monarchy's increased total trade. The building of the Arlberg railway in 1896 gave a boost to Hungarian corn exports to Switzerland and, until the dispute with Paris over the wine tariff, to France. Some industries enjoyed great prosperity – the Bohemian beet sugar industry, for example, was by the 1890s producing one fifth of the world supply, and attained a particularly strong hold over the Roumanian market. Even years of crisis and tension, such as 1887 and 1888, were not without consolations for the iron and armaments industries. Besides, as general prosperity increased, government finance could be stabilized. The year 1888 saw the last of the long series of budget deficits; and after 1892 the government undertook a much-needed currency reform and started buying up the remaining privately owned railways. In the 1890s Austrian government stock gradually became one of the most stable – though indeed hardly the most lucrative – commodities on the European exchange.

The Monarchy was thus in a relatively strong position in the years 1888–92; and it is hardly surprising that these years saw no attempt to catch a rather questionable bird in the bush in the form of a *rapprochement* with Russia. True, there might have been a chance of success. Russia was becoming noticeably less menacing: the tsar and Giers certainly desired peace; and Russia's economic weakness (especially the great famine of 1891–2) left her with little enough to spare to buy influence or undertake adventures in the Balkans. Even Russian public opinion, tiring of perpetual humiliations in Bulgaria, was beginning to concern itself with Russia's narrower national interests: Panrussianism was replacing Panslavism. Better still, many of these Russian interests lay in Asia, whither the Trans-Siberian railway, started in 1891, began to divert Russian attention.

Kálnoky was cautious. Russia's apparent retreat might not be permanent, he observed in June 1888. For developments might arise – for example, a military dictatorship in France, the fall of the dynasties in Serbia and Roumania, or even of Stamboulov's regime in Bulgaria – which might tempt Russia to try her luck in war, especially if she could revolutionize the Serbs against the Monarchy. Hence, Austria-Hungary must look to her armaments.

Kálnoky's former private secretary, Aehrenthal, isolated and alarmed in the remote outpost of Bucharest, urged him to seek a *rapprochement* with Russia, and to beware of German intrigues to foment ill will between Vienna and St Petersburg. But Aehrenthal's views were not those of the Ballhausplatz, and he was sternly informed that there was simply no basis for a *rapprochement* with Russia, the ultimate aims of that Power in Bulgaria being completely opposed to those of Austria-Hungary. This was also the emperor's view. When, in September 1890 a Russian diplomat was reported as saying that Russia would await an Austrian approach benevolently but 'with proud reserve', he commented, 'then they can wait a long time'.[85] The official visit of the tsarevich to Vienna in October, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand's return visit to St Petersburg in February 1891 perhaps improved personal relations between the two courts. But when the Russian press professed to discern signs that Austro-Hungarian policy was becoming more conciliatory towards Russia the emperor was emphatic: 'I know absolutely nothing about a change in our policy.'[86] The general brandishing of diplomatic instruments in the summer of 1891 actually deepened the Austro-Russian estrangement; but Kálnoky trusted to the impending famine – 'may God continue to help!'[87] – to keep Russia in order.

God did not help for much longer. The year 1893 was a bad one for Austria-Hungary, and was marked by a severe deterioration in the political situation in both halves of the Monarchy. In Hungary, where calm had never been really re-established since the crisis over the Army Bill, the government was facing increasing opposition from magnates, clericals and a motley collection of radical elements, over such contentious issues as a civil marriage law. And this was personally embarrassing for Kálnoky himself, a notable clerical and already in some ill favour at Budapest on account of his allegedly pro-Roumanian attitude. In Austria, the Taaffe government made a disastrous attempt to abolish the curial voting system, which protected the bourgeois national parties who would find themselves swamped by Christian Social and Social Democrat votes under any system of general suffrage. But Taaffe's conservative and clerical supporters took

[85] W. Wagner, p. 186.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 15 July 1891.

fright. Kálnoky too was firmly opposed to anything that would strengthen Social Democracy; and his intervention – in the form of a complaint to Franz Joseph – was very probably a major factor in bringing Taaffe down. Nevertheless, Kálnoky was sorry to see Taaffe go – his government had represented 'an unusual stability': 'they were capable experts with whom one could work well. If Taaffe had only kept to his old system and muddled on, he would still be prime minister today.'[88] As it was, Taaffe was followed by a succession of weak governments which for the rest of the 'nineties strove in vain to compose the increasingly violent quarrels of German, Czech, and south Slav. This internal weakening of the Monarchy was accompanied by serious deterioration of its international position after the end of 1892. The previous four years had been nothing more than an Indian summer.

It was in the military field that the Austrians felt the first tremors of the instability prevailing in Berlin. They had never found either Caprivi or Schlieffen particularly communicative – the Waldersee era was well and truly over. The chancellor kept an almost Bismarckian control over the military; and Schlieffen, who had little faith in the military capacity of Austria-Hungary, did not wish German planning to depend too closely on that Power. In August 1892 he began to shift the centre of gravity of German planning towards the western front. He had decided, as Russia steadily built up her armaments, that it would be impossible to defeat her in a quick war. Therefore, the only hope of salvation lay in a lightning strike against France. Consequently the war in the east would become for Germany – at least in the opening stages – very much a side-show; and the Austrians would have to cope as best they could. This bombshell burst in Vienna at the end of 1892. But Beck kept his nerve, and decided not to change his plans, but to make the best of the situation. After all, the Germans were still planning to launch some kind of offensive into northern Poland; and this would still be useful, even if now only as a diversion. The Galician railways had been extended by 50 per cent in the past few years; and Beck still hoped by the 21st day of mobilization to have two armies ready near Lemberg for an offensive towards the east.[89]

[88] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to his brother, 7 November 1893.

[89] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, pp. 343ff.; G. Ritter, p. 530.

Kálnoky did his best to help, reminding a conference of ministers on 2 February 1893[90] that although the political situation might be calmer and all governments pacific, the military situation was becoming very threatening. For the Western Powers, who needed time to mobilize their civilian conscript armies, lived daily under the menace of Russia's huge professional army standing ready to strike at any moment. Moreover, with Germany so heavily involved on the Rhine, Austria-Hungary would now have to do more in the east. Beck's figures showed that, despite the Army Bill, the Monarchy was not in fact keeping pace with the other Powers. More should be done; and not only for the Common Army: the Austrian *Landwehr* was in a dreadful state; and the Hungarian Honvéds existed only on paper. In these circumstances, there was nothing to spare for the navy, which would have to continue to confine itself to coastal defence. But even these modest demands were ill received by the cheese-paring Austrian and – particularly – Hungarian governments.

In the summer of 1893 came another surprise from Berlin. Schlieffen now declared that the river Narev was an impassable obstacle to any German thrust eastwards in north Poland; and that the Germans would therefore march south to meet the Austro-Hungarian army. The Austrians did not like this idea. Co-operation with the Germans in south or west Poland might well reduce the chances of an effective break-through towards the east (the Austrians were still hoping to carry out their part of the original Austro-German pincer movement). And it was not as if the Germans would agree to put their forces – depleted though they would now be – under Austro-Hungarian command. Worst of all, the German plan would draw the whole weight of Russia's forces southwards on to Austria-Hungary. But Beck accepted even this; and he and Kálnoky took comfort from the fine performance of the Common Army at the Güns manoeuvres in September. In the spring of 1895, however, Schlieffen changed his plans for a third time. Deciding that East Prussia could not just be left undefended, he discovered that the river Narev was not impassable after all. In May 1895 he informed the bewildered Beck that the Germans would not now move south, but would make a small eastward thrust into north Poland; and he suggested that the Austrians take on virtually the whole Russian army by

[90] P.A. XL/296, Ministerratsprotokoll, 2 February 1893.

means of a three-pronged offensive which would extend their left flank as far as Prussian Silesia. Beck was aghast, and insisted that such a hazardous dividing of the Monarchy's forces just did not bear contemplation. He pleaded with Schlieffen to stand at least by the plan of 1893; but he made no impression.[91]

These highly unsatisfactory developments were accompanied by a sudden deterioration in the diplomatic situation, which caused a crisis of confidence in both the Triple Alliance and the Mediterranean *Entente*. In October 1893 Franco-Russian solidarity was startlingly demonstrated to the world in a spectacular visit by the Russian fleet to Toulon; and this was followed by the news that Russia intended to establish a permanent squadron in the Mediterranean under Admiral Avellan. The sultan was tremendously impressed; and by November Calice was reporting that France and Russia had once more gained the upper hand at Constantinople. To make matters worse Germany, dismayed by the growing solidarity of France and Russia and anxious not to provoke them, had for some time been more lukewarm in support of the Mediterranean *Entente* at Constantinople. Kálnoky now began to fear that Russia might be tempted to establish her supremacy there once and for all, either by forcing the Straits, or by means of a bilateral agreement with the sultan to give her control. In Kálnoky's view the whole balance of power in the Mediterranean was now at stake. For Britain, confronted with such an imposing display of French and Russian power, might abandon the Mediterranean. This would be all the more disastrous for Austria-Hungary, in that the Italians had been in a state of 'collapse' ever since the Toulon visit.[92] A huge economic crisis in Italy (caused largely by her inordinately swollen armaments budget and exacerbated by French economic pressure) had combined with a rising in Sicily in December to cause Kálnoky grave concern. For he knew France and Russia to be busy also at Lisbon and Madrid. He decided that there was a serious danger that Italy might despair and submit to the threats and blandishments of France – who could after all help her a good deal towards an economic recovery. With Britain and Italy gone, and Germany lukewarm, Austria-Hungary would be virtually isolated in the Near East.

[91] E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, pp. 347–50, 377–9; G. Ritter, pp. 531–4.

[92] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, private and secret, 10 December 1893.

In January 1894, therefore, Kálnoky instructed Deym[93] in London to find out whether Britain would stand firm against Russia in the Mediterranean (Document 20). Of recent years, he explained, Russia had shifted her pressure from Bulgaria to the Straits; and now it was Britain who was in the first line. Referring to his letter of 25 October 1887, he repeated that although Austria-Hungary would still prefer to join Britain and Italy in resisting Russia, yet if Britain were to allow Russia to have the Straits, Austria-Hungary would be forced to retreat and secure her own immediate interests in the Balkan peninsula. Rosebery was not unforthcoming and said that if Constantinople were at stake, Britain would certainly not shrink from war with Russia. However, she could not cope alone with both Russia and France, and he therefore asked for an assurance that the Triple Alliance would keep France neutral. For this, Kálnoky had to appeal to Berlin – which he did with some apprehension. His misgivings were justified. The Germans were not only anxious to humour Russia, but almost obsessed with the fear that Britain, once the war started against France and Russia, would retreat to her island, leaving the Triple Alliance in the lurch. They therefore refused to give the required assurance: Britain must first show her seriousness of purpose by striking the first blow. They talked of allowing Russia to have Constantinople, and advised Kálnoky to secure compensation in the Balkans by means of a deal with St Petersburg. This, of course, Kálnoky was only prepared to consider as a last ditch contingency if Britain actually defaulted, and he angrily rejected the German advice. As he told Szögyény on 21 March,[94] he was bound in loyalty to Rosebery not to settle the Straits question without Britain: it was a European question. And the Monarchy was not interested in compensation or material gains: it was a question of preventing a general displacement of the European balance of power. It was only in this context after all that issues such as the Straits – and Alsace-Lorraine, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well – acquired any importance.

Worse was to come. In June the Germans tried to humour France too, and joined her in forcing the British to abandon a Congo treaty they had just concluded with King Leopold. This moved Rosebery to utter a chilling warning to Deym: 'If Germany

[93] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Deym, No. 1, secret, 25 January 1894.
[94] Ibid., Kálnoky to Szögyény, very confidential, 21 March 1894.

continues to show herself so hostile to the Cabinet of St. James, I shall feel obliged to take back the assurances which I have given on the subject of Constantinople.'[95] In the event, he did not take them back; and all in all Kálnoky's soundings had evoked at least a promise of armed resistance to Russia, and of diplomatic support if France and Russia attempted to raise the Straits question with the sultan. After all, as Rosebery told Deym on 12 July, Britain could hardly make any concessions to Russia at the Straits without hurting her own interests. Kálnoky's policy remained the same: diplomatic co-operation with Britain. And at Constantinople Anglo-Austrian co-operation was in fact becoming more effective since the appointment of the energetic Currie to the British embassy there. In the Armenian question, which Britain was trying to settle in harness with suspicious France and Russia (the two other Powers most interested by tradition and geography in the unfortunate Christians of that part of Asia), Currie always kept Calice well informed, and in turn found him sympathetic and helpful. The crisis of 1893–4 had shown that the *entente* with Britain, despite its limitations, could still serve Austro-Hungarian interests well enough. It had also shown, that as far as Austro-Hungarian interests in the Near East were concerned, the alliances with Germany and Italy were, at the most favourable estimate, useless.

Since the end of 1893 Kálnoky had been seriously worried about Germany's Near Eastern policy. Her single-minded pursuit of commercial concessions in Turkey had brought her no political influence there at all; and now she seemed to be going back to Bismarck's policy of leaving the defence of Constantinople and the Straits to others. On 29 December he lamented[96] the general aimlessness (*Zerfahrenheit*) that prevailed in the Wilhelmstrasse: Caprivi had no understanding of foreign affairs, and Marschall no experience; and as a result 'the *Neue Kurs* has no policy at all', especially not in the Eastern Question. Yet at the same time people in Berlin would become nervous – out of timidity or jealousy – when Austria-Hungary tried to take the lead and suggest a clear policy for the Triple Alliance. In February 1894 the

[95] H. W. V. Temperley and Lillian M. Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy 1792–1902*, London, 1938, p. 492.
[96] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, private and secret, 29 December 1893.

failure of his approach to Berlin produced another round of complaints, and he described Germany's attitude as 'the worst feature' of the whole situation.[97] With the *Neue Kurs*, Vienna had managed to interest Germany in the Eastern question; but now, he feared, she had gone back to Bismarck's policy. Of course, he understood Germany's great fear of a war with France and Russia; but if Russia were allowed to establish herself in the Mediterranean, that could only make matters even worse. Reports that Schlieffen, and William II himself, had said that Germany would not object if Russia seized Constantinople filled him with dismay; and he bitterly observed that this was in flagrant contradiction to the promises the Germans had made at the Rohnstock manoeuvres in 1890.[98]

Indeed, Kálnoky lamented, German policy was now even more disastrous than it had been under Bismarck.[99] Although Bismarck had given Austria-Hungary no support in Bulgaria, he had at least helped her to win British support; and he had had too much sense actually to promote the preponderance of Russia in the Mediterranean. Now, the Germans seemed to be trying to frustrate Austria-Hungary's efforts at London. This was dangerous: whereas Austria-Hungary had been compelled by her own vital interests to stand guard in the Balkans, whatever Germany did, Britain was by no means compelled to stay in the Mediterranean (and there were enough radicals in Britain urging a *rapprochement* with Russia and peace at any price). Moreover, if Britain abandoned the Mediterranean, it would not be long before Italy would be forced to come into line with France. The emperor's interview with William II at Abbazia in March, therefore, when Franz Joseph emphasized the threat to the balance of power without any success whatever, was completely unsatisfactory. William II's vague and effusive professions of loyalty as a 'true ally' only exasperated Kálnoky: 'such general phrases do not really have any place in a serious discussion of great political questions.'[100] Italy was equally useless. Crispi, who had returned to power in December 1893 was becoming increasingly absorbed in a search for prestige in east Africa, and was seeking German support. He

[97] Ibid., Kálnoky to Deym, No. 3, secret, 19 February 1894.
[98] P.A. I/468, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 3, secret, 27 February 1894.
[99] Ibid.
[100] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 1, 20 April 1894.

even joined the Germans against Britain in the disastrous campaign against the Congo treaty.

Relations between Vienna and Berlin were also plagued with suspicion on the point of relations with Russia generally. Although the Germans might seek temporary relief from the Mediterranean dilemma by recommending Austria-Hungary to reach agreement with Russia, they had no desire to see those two Powers on such good terms that Germany would be their mere appendage, or even left out in the cold. Indeed, in December 1893 the German ambassador made so bold as to warn the Austrians not to make any agreements with Russia without informing Germany, drawing from Kálnoky the crushing retort – albeit delivered 'in a joking tone' – that Austria-Hungary certainly had no intention of signing any Reinsurance treaty behind the back of her ally.[101] Kálnoky, for his part, was fully alive to the danger of a Russo-German *rapprochement* that might injure Austro-Hungarian interests – a danger that seemed to become more real when Germany and Russia at last reached agreement on a commercial treaty in the unhappy winter of 1893–4. His alarm can be seen in his handling of the commercial negotiations which had been progressing, or, rather, failing to progress, between Russia and Austro-Hungary.

At the end of 1893, these had still not got beyond the stage of the rejection by the Austrian and Hungarian governments – especially by the latter – of Russia's demands for a reduction in the rye duty, and for Russia's admission to the favourable Serbian tariff, or failing that, at least a general freezing of tariffs. True, Austrian industry stood to gain something from a commercial treaty; but Hungary clung desperately to the heavy rye duty – it was only since its imposition in 1887 that her trade deficit had disappeared. At last, in March 1894, Kálnoky intervened in the negotiations and summoned a special conference of the Austrian and Hungarian ministers to impress on them the need for agreement with Russia. Not only would it be generally desirable in the interests of peace, he argued,[102] to establish reasonable commercial relations with Russia for a decade or so; the developing Russo-German *rapprochement* meant that there was actual danger in delay. For Germany now had no quarrel with Russia; whereas

[101] Ibid., Kálnoky to Szögyény, private and secret, 29 December 1893.
[102] P.A. XL/296, Ministerratsprotokoll, 4 March 1894.

the conflicting interests of Russia and Austria-Hungary could lend serious dimensions to any incident that might crop up – say in Bulgaria. 'Without expressing any lack of confidence in Germany's loyalty as an ally,' he wryly observed, 'a state of cordiality between Germany and Russia on the one hand, and a state of bitterness resulting from a tariff war between Russia and ourselves on the other would put us in a very unfavourable, if not dangerous position.' A failure to conclude a treaty would therefore be very bad for 'the most vital interests of Austria-Hungary'. He reminded the obstinate Hungarians that the Monarchy was now facing Russia's final terms, and could not afford to prevaricate; for a tariff war would be a far greater disaster than a reduction of the rye duty. He insisted on a more flexible attitude; and thanks partly to the personal intervention of Alexander III,[103] for once in a benign frame of mind, the treaty was finally concluded by 9 March. Kálnoky could congratulate himself on having staved off the danger of isolation in the face of threatening Russo-German alignment; and he calculated that, good commercial relations having been established for ten years, tension would be reduced and a generally more friendly atmosphere created. But, as he observed on 21 March, he did not expect this to lead to any real change in Russia's policy. In other words, a *détente*, not an *entente*, had occurred.

Even a *détente* was welcome enough, in view of the open desertion of the Monarchy by Germany, and the limited nature of Britain's support. In fact, relations with Russia continued to improve throughout 1894. In the first place, the Mediterranean crisis faded away during the summer, and Russia continued to display an almost ostentatious restraint in the Balkans. Dynastic relations had begun to improve as early as the end of 1892, when the tsarevich paid a successful visit to Vienna – which even the *Pester Lloyd*, to Kálnoky's pleasant surprise,[104] reported with unusual decorum. The betrothal of the tsarevich to a grand-daughter of Queen Victoria in the summer of 1894 was taken in Vienna as a sign that Russia still valued her ties with Britain and Germany as much as those with France.[105] More important, one of the greatest

[103] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.
[104] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 14 November 1892.
[105] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 1, 8 June 1894.

obstacles to any *rapprochement* with Russia, Hungarian public opinion, was undergoing a change in the early 1890s.[106] Not only were the Magyars becoming increasingly and passionately preoccupied with domestic politics, but the generation that remembered 1849 was passing away (Andrássy had died in 1890). True, Hungarian opinion was still very much on the defensive; but Russia seemed to have stopped inciting the Balkan states against the Monarchy – and even Andrássy had held that the Slavs could only be a serious threat if Russia supported them. By the summer of 1894, therefore, there was generally more willingness in Vienna and Budapest to consider at least an accommodation with Russia.

It was at this time that Russia made a positive step towards a *rapprochement*. At the beginning of 1894 a major crisis had occurred in Serbia, where, faced with a total collapse of the economy, the regents had suspended the constitution. Kálnoky had been careful to abstain from all intervention or advice, lest the Monarchy be blamed for disasters which appeared to him inevitable. Giers nevertheless seems to have feared that Vienna might be tempted to intervene; and on 5 May he appealed to Kálnoky to co-operate with Russia in localizing the deepening chaos in Serbia. Austria-Hungary and Russia, he proposed, should agree on a policy of non-intervention; and should not let the Serbian crisis trouble their 'relations de confiance et d'amitié'.[107] In return, Russia would abstain from interfering in Bulgaria. This suited Kálnoky well enough – after all, he was being asked to say nothing that he had not said before. He assured Giers,[108] therefore, that he would certainly not depart from the principle of non-intervention (with the usual rider, 'sans y être forcés dans l' interêt de notre securité'); and he too expressed the hope that Austro-Russian relations would continue to improve. The Austrians were in fact much gratified, and decided that Russia had at last accepted their own principles of non-intervention and the maintenance of the *status quo*. Summing up a year later, Aehrenthal stated that it was at this point that Russia and Austria-Hungary had 'found their way back to an agreement in principle

[106] I. Dioszegi, 'Einige Bemerkungen zur Frage der Österreichisch-ungarischen Aussenpolitik' in F. Klein (ed.), pp. 240ff.
[107] P.A. I/469, Aehrenthal memorandum, 1895.
[108] Ibid.

to treat the maintenance of peace, a vital interest, as more important than their own rivalries or the teething-troubles (*Kinderkrankheiten*) of the Balkan peoples'.[109] It should nevertheless be noted that all that had been achieved so far was a statement of intent: no formal agreement had been made; and the bare principle of non-intervention was strictly negative. There had been no return to Reichstadt, or even to the Three Emperors' Alliance, which had envisaged certain changes in the *status quo*. Nevertheless, the Austro-Russian *entente* which is usually associated with the name of Goluchowski could already be discerned on the horizon – at least as a possibility – in Kálnoky's last year of office.

The *détente* had nevertheless not developed so far that the Austrians could feel completely secure. Indeed, even the death, in November, of their old opponent Alexander III was not an unmixed blessing: the new tsar was an unknown quantity, and for Kálnoky, 'what is incalculable is always most unwelcome to a foreign minister'.[110] The military, with a duty of course to prepare for the worst, were always inclined to look on the dark side, as Beck's memorandum of 18 December 1894[111] bears witness: Italy had recently grown weaker; Bulgaria, freed from Russian bullying, was now less reliable; and there was uncertainty in St Petersburg. Although the forces of the Central Powers were superior in quality to those of Russia, the latter had a superiority of numbers. In war, therefore, it would be a question of somehow dividing Russia's forces without dividing those of the Monarchy. Other Powers, such as Britain, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Sweden, might be of some assistance here. (It is notable that none of the Monarchy's allies figured in Beck's calculations.) Russia must at all costs be prevented from taking Constantinople and the Straits – the realization of the dream of Catherine II would have a tremendous and disastrous effect among the Balkan states. For the same reason, it was imperative that Austria-Hungary should not suffer an early humiliation in Bosnia. Serbia was too weak and disordered to make much trouble there, and in any case, Bulgaria might keep her in check. Against Montenegro, the Albanians might be enlisted; but the Monarchy could cope with that state

[109] Ibid.

[110] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 31 August 1894.

[111] P.A. I/466, Beck, memorandum on the general military situation, 18 December 1894.

provided the Adriatic fleet could maintain supplies of troops to the coastal provinces (there was no adequate railway communication with the interior of the Monarchy). The German Baltic fleet might create a diversion, and Sweden and Turkey might be roused to turn the Russian flank; but Britain would have to help Turkey out in the Black Sea. For Roumania could not be relied on – according to Beck's information, the Russians even expected Roumanian support. As for German and Italian rear cover, Beck was resigned to the prospect that this 'will become less and less effective'. Indeed, the whole memorandum is a remarkable comment on the insignificant role of the Monarchy's allies, Germany, Italy, Roumania, and Serbia, in Austro-Hungarian military plans. Of course, Beck was trying to convince the Austrian and Hungarian governments that the only sure guarantee was the Monarchy's own strength, and that there was a need for a new Army Bill. But in view of the increasingly difficult parliamentary situation in both halves of the Monarchy there was virtually no hope of this.

The civilian authorities took an equally sceptical view of the value of the alliances in the autumn of 1894. On 30 November[112] Kálnoky emphasized to the German ambassador that although a new era had dawned in which peaceful rivalry would be the keynote of international relations, it would be no less important for success to keep alliances and friendships in good repair. Germany's policy, therefore, was disturbing: there seemed to be no guiding hand in Berlin; and junior officials could not make high policy, no matter how clever they might be. Caprivi had fallen at the end of October: 'the latest surprise from Berlin is regrettable', the emperor had commented, wondering what was coming next.[113] Worse, thanks to Germany's display of hostility to Britain in colonial questions, the Monarchy's relations with the latter Power were in jeopardy; and this, given Italy's dependence on Britain, weakened the whole Triple Alliance. Kálnoky had therefore decided to speak plainly to Eulenburg:[114] Germany should not underestimate the danger of estranging Britain – some people in the Liberal party there wanted peace at any price, and would even

[112] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 1, 30 November 1894.

[113] W. Wagner, p. 188.

[114] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, Nos 1 and 2, 30 November 1894.

come to terms with France and Russia to get it. He went on to complain of the spiteful tone of the German press towards Britain – making fun of her abortive efforts to mediate in the Sino-Japanese War, for example – and pointed out with some acuity that the worst aspect of all this was the disastrous and long-lasting effect it must have on British public opinion. Kálnoky's arguments may of course have been devised for German ears; but he was nevertheless more percipient than those who, like Szögyény in Berlin and Aehrenthal in Bucharest,[115] shared the German view that Britain's differences with France and Russia were too vast ever to admit of a settlement. There were already signs of an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* in the liquidation of the Pamirs affair; and as Kálnoky shrewdly observed, it was highly dangerous for Germany to think that she could isolate Britain 'and force her to recognize Germany as a colonial equal'.[116]

The winter passed off without incident, and Kálnoky gradually came to take a calmer view. But this was due less to any renewal of confidence in the alliances than to an improvement in the general situation and the continuance of the *détente* with Russia. In April 1895 the appointment of Lobanov, the long-standing Russian ambassador at Vienna, to succeed Giers at the foreign office, was a blessing the Austrians had hardly dared to hope for.[117] On 17 April Kálnoky went so far as to tell a conference of ministers[118] that the foreign situation was now so satisfactory that he would even recommend a reduction in the armaments budget. Tension had been reduced by several factors, he explained: the determination of all monarchs to avoid war and the shocks it would bring to the social order; the inexperience of the new tsar (which he now decided – turning the worrying signs of the previous autumn to suit a different argument – would cause Russia to shrink from adventures); and the preoccupation of the other European Powers with Asian and African questions. (He even suggested that Austria-Hungary might increase its navy, in view of the growing importance of colonial questions; and that some

[115] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 4, Szögyény to Aehrenthal, 8 December 1894.

[116] P.A. VIII/174, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 4, 30 November 1894.

[117] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 3, Liechtenstein to Aehrenthal, 14 February 1895.

[118] P.A. XL/297, Ministerratsprotokoll, 17 April 1895.

bigger ships might be sent to show the flag in the Far East. But it seems that this was just speculative musing: at any rate it did not lead to much. It was difficult enough to get money for the army, let alone for the navy in a country most of the inhabitants of which had never seen the sea.) True, Russia was steadily increasing her armaments; but the Monarchy should try to counteract this by improving the quality rather than the quantity of its forces.

He took an equally assured view of the foreign political scene. The Balkan situation, he told the conference of ministers,[119] had much improved. Serbia was completely rotten, but she was isolated and hardly able to harm the Monarchy (the *détente* with Russia helped here). Roumania too was a harmless neighbour, even if, owing to irredentism, an uncomfortable one. But after all, he explained (probably for the benefit of his Hungarian listeners) no Roumanian government could do much about a nationalist current like that: the Monarchy should be thankful that the Bucharest government was at least outwardly correct. After all, the *Liga Culturale* was now short of funds and a prey to corruption and faction. So he still thought it best to go on smoothing over any incidents that might crop up. Nor did the domestic troubles of Turkey present any major problems: the Great Powers were determined not to be misled by Christian propaganda into interfering in Macedonia; and the Monarchy could be well content to leave the Armenian question to the three Powers most concerned. True, the Italian ally was in exceedingly poor shape – commercially and financially ruined, and politically shattered – but this need not disturb Austro-Italian relations. And the Monarchy enjoyed excellent relations with Germany, Britain, Russia, and even – despite the continuing dispute about the wine tariff – with France.

The state of the alliances was in fact a good deal less happy than Kálnoky was prepared to admit openly. In the first place, the informal agreement of 1887 between the Triple Alliance Powers and Spain, renewed in 1891, was on the verge of collapse; and this was having a generally bad effect on the Mediterranean *Entente*. Since the end of 1894 Italy had been trying to bully the Spaniards, on pain of non-renewal, into openly declaring their position by publishing the agreement. In this she was supported by Germany, who was seeking to bring Spain to heel in a commercial dispute.

[119] Ibid.

Kálnoky disapproved entirely.[120] Spain was not like Roumania, he pointed out. The Triple Alliance could be of no material assistance to her; and hence she simply could not come out openly against her powerful French neighbour. Whereas the Triple Alliance should be trying to make friends in Spain, and to strengthen the hand of the monarchists and the Habsburg queen regent, all this bullying could only play into the hands of the French ambassador at Madrid. He urged Rome and Berlin to be satisfied with the secret agreement as it stood: it was quite enough to have secured Spain's diplomatic support in north African questions, and to have bolstered up the Spanish monarchy. No wonder, he complained on 23 March 1895, that Britain was becoming reserved when she saw Germany and Italy treating Spain in this way. He was exasperated to see that the allies – between whom he said there was nothing to choose – had only succeeded in bringing a less conciliatory government to power in Madrid. But his warnings made scant impression in either Rome or Berlin; and this was a problem he bequeathed to his successor.

The atmosphere within the Triple Alliance was altogether deplorable. In the spring of 1895 Italy, embarrassed in east Africa, where France and Russia were supporting the Emperor Menelik against her, tried to extend the Alliance to bind her allies to more positive support of her designs in Tripoli. This the Central Powers turned down flat. The Alliance was an insurance company, Berlin declared, not a joint stock venture.[121] Indeed, for Kálnoky, above all anxious lest Italy's ambitions drag the Monarchy into war with France, it was hardly even that. He was intensely irritated[122] by a whining list of complaints from the Italian foreign minister Blanc, according to which all the Powers of Europe were abetting France against Italy; and when the Germans tried to put in a word for Italy he finally lost patience. In an indignant private letter to Szögyény in Berlin,[123] he now rejected even the German argument that the Alliance was valuable to the Monarchy as a guarantee against the irredentist threat. True, the rear cover Italy

[120] P.A. I/463, Liasse XXVI, Kálnoky to Bruck, secret, 11 January 1895; to Szögyény, No. 57, secret, 23 March 1895; to Dubsky, No. 62, secret, 26 March 1895.

[121] A. F. Pribram, *Secret Treaties*, Vol. 2, p. 104, n. 228.

[122] P.A. I/470, Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 55, secret, 23 March 1895.

[123] Ibid., Kálnoky to Szögyény, No. 70, private and very confidential, 4 April 1895.

offered was of some use; and the Alliance had a certain moral value. But Italy could present no serious threat to the Monarchy. She was far too weak, and would herself be lost without the Alliance. One had only to look at her – her internal collapse and her total lack of able statesmen. Indeed, he concluded, Italy's defection would not be all that much of a disaster for the Monarchy.

Nor had the Roumanian alliance much to offer. The Germans had decided that it would never be of much practical value in war unless it were supplemented in advance by a military convention. People in the Ballhausplatz were inclined to agree, but had to admit in December 1894 that feeling in Roumania was now running so high against Hungary that there was for the present not the slightest hope of persuading Bucharest to strengthen the alliance in this way. The Austro-Hungarian legation there was by the spring of 1895 seriously alarmed at the ill-feeling aroused by the Magyarization of Transylvania: unless Vienna intervened to restrain the Hungarian nationalists – who, with their separatist demands directed against the very heart of the constitutional structure of the Monarchy, were a far greater menace than a few Roumanian irredentists – 'there will be a serious row here sooner or later'.[124] Hungarian nationalists, however, insisted that irredentism spreading from Roumania was the cause, not the symptom of the disease, and that the remedy lay in Kálnoky's taking a stern line with the government of Bucharest. Already in 1893 this attitude had driven Goluchowski to resign his post in despair; and it was to be a contributory factor in Kálnoky's sudden fall from power.

Roumanian irredentism had been the subject of a guerilla campaign against Kálnoky in the Hungarian press since 1894. But already for some years he had been increasingly disheartened by the deepening domestic confusion in the Monarchy. It was the old problem, and the one which had at first made him shrink from taking office in 1881, namely, that it was intolerable for a foreign minister to see his policies obstructed by domestic problems over which the constitution of 1867 denied him any control. Since the early 'nineties he had been dismayed by the growth of more intransigent varieties of Hungarian and Czech nationalism. The

[124] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 5, Welsersheimb to Aehrenthal, 28 February 1895.

meetings of the Delegations tended to drag on endlessly while these parties ranted and raged about matters which, in Kálnoky's view, were not the fault of the Common Ministers at all.[125] (It should however be noted that he was himself a staunch defender of the Dualism which was in a sense the root cause of the nationalist fury – in so far as it ratified the supremacy of the Magyars in Hungary and of the cosmopolitan aristocracy and (socially at least) the Germans, in Austria.) In 1895, however, Kálnoky came under attack from even the relatively moderate governing faction in Hungary, when a quarrel blew up between Budapest and the contumacious papal nuncio, Agliardi, who had launched a campaign against the Hungarian government's civil marriage bill. A few tactless remarks soon served to bring Kálnoky, a notorious clerical, into deep disgrace at Budapest; and when the prime minister, Banffy attacked him openly he suddenly resigned (15 May).

As he wrote later, it would have been possible for him to defend himself in the Delegations; but, a strict conservative to the last, he felt that the sight of the minister for foreign affairs standing up and contradicting the Hungarian prime minister in open debate would have been nothing less than a scandal. He thought it especially unfortunate that there was no strong government in Austria to keep the Hungarian politicians in order: 'the gang needs watching.'[126] And perhaps in a sense, as Lobanov in St Petersburg feared, he had fallen victim to a Hungarian bid for greater influence over foreign policy – not that the Magyars, increasingly preoccupied with domestic wrangles, made much of an effort to exercise such influence after his departure. Certainly, he had fallen victim to the growing intensity of national feeling in Hungary – even the government had to play to the gallery. And after all, as was to be demonstrated again eleven years later, Hungary's position under the dual constitution was so strong that no foreign minister could long survive once Budapest was really determined to get rid of him.

Kálnoky, for his part, was glad to be out of the fray; and he retired to live as a country squire on his estate at Prodlitz in Bohemia. 'There is such a *fin de siècle* air about politics, I can hardly bear to watch,' he wrote to his friend Aehrenthal in May

[125] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to his brother, 21 May 1893.
[126] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 11 June 1895.

1896.[127] And although Franz Joseph appointed him to the house of peers in 1897, he thought this a bore, and said he would attend as little as possible.[128] Still, after years of hard work at the Ballhausplatz (unlike Andrássy, he wrote most of his own dispatches, in a painstaking, cramped hand) he found it difficult to adjust to life at Prodlitz, and his last years were spent in melancholy loneliness. The great ones he had served for so long soon forgot about him – his sister was extremely bitter about this, and asked Aehrenthal to put on record 'the shameful way in which he was treated after his retirement . . . The thanks of the House of Austria should go down as a fearful warning for future generations.'[129] On 11 February 1898, although suffering from a chill, he went out to saw wood – almost his only pastime; but this brought on some sharp pains in the heart. Two days later he was dead.[130]

The House of Austria certainly owed something of a debt to Kálnoky even if, as usual in the case of servants it had once discarded, it did not pay it. He had steered the Monarchy through fourteen anxious years and seemed in the end to have dispelled the most dangerous of the threats to it – encirclement from the south by a ring of Russian satellites. And this result was due, at least in part, to his own determination, hard work and patient diplomacy. On assuming office he had been prepared to work through the alliance system he had inherited, in which – in matters of day-to-day diplomacy at least, and failing the catastrophe of a general war – the Dual Alliance was subordinated to the Three Emperors' Alliance. When, at the time of the Skobelev affair, the latter seemed to be failing, he had strengthened the Monarchy's position by securing rear cover from Italy, through the Triple Alliance, and from Roumania; and had reinforced the Dual Alliance with a military understanding. But he still preferred to seek a diplomatic solution to the problem of encirclement by working within the Three Emperors' Alliance – as was proved at Skiernewice and in the Bulgarian crises of 1885 and 1886. By 1887 this policy had failed. The Three Emperors' Alliance lay in ruins;

[127] Aehrenthal MSS., Karton 2, Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 3 May 1896.
[128] Ibid., Kálnoky to Aehrenthal, 27 May 1897.
[129] Ibid., Karton 4, Christina Thun to Aehrenthal, 28 December 1898.
[130] Ibid., Karton 2, Duchess of Sabran-Pontevécs to Aehrenthal, February 1898.

and the glaring inadequacy in diplomacy of the other alliances, designed for use in war, seemed to leave the Monarchy in a position of some danger. This was hardly Kálnoky's fault. The Dual Alliance could never be of much service in defending the Monarchy's Near Eastern interests by diplomacy so long as Bismarck held to his narrow interpretation of it and preached the facile and unrealistic doctrine of spheres of influence in the Balkans. And the decline of the Monarchy's Balkan alliances was perhaps inevitable, given the underlying economic and political conflict between Magyar chauvinism and Serbian and Roumanian irredentism. In the event, Kálnoky was resourceful enough to devise other means of safeguarding the Monarchy's position. The Mediterranean *Entente* of 1887 served Austria-Hungary well, and with the menace of a Russian-controlled Bulgaria apparently dispelled, she could face the future with more assurance after 1888 – all the more so as it at last proved possible to reinvigorate the Dual Alliance and to reinforce it with economic and military agreements. But the year 1893 showed that the Monarchy was not Atlas, but Sisyphus. Germany slipped away again, and a worsening international situation was complemented by the start of a long period of political instability inside the Monarchy. Again, Kálnoky was resilient enough to meet the situation. He struck the right note of informal co-operation in cultivating Britain (although he found his partners in the Triple Alliance an obstacle rather than a help in this); and at the same time he made an important contribution, by his handling of commercial and Balkan questions, to establishing a *modus vivendi* with Russia. For more than ten years after his fall the continental Powers were not confronted with any great crisis threatening an actual outbreak of war such as might have resuscitated the Monarchy's alliances; and the latter continued their decline. However, Kálnoky had bequeathed to his successor two other diplomatic instruments, rudimentary as yet, it is true, and ultimately incompatible, but either of which might be developed into an effective means of safeguarding the Monarchy's interests – the *entente* with Britain and the *détente* with Russia. It remained to be seen, to which of the two his successor would turn.

Chapter 6

The Austro-Russian *Entente*, 1895–1908[1]

> A situation in which we were solely concerned to avoid clashing anywhere, and adopted the role of a passive spectator, while Russia systematically pursued her policy of advance unhindered would be quite unacceptable, as it would put us in a worse position than that that existed before 1897.
>
> *Goluchowski to Aehrenthal*, 29 December 1901[2]

The end of the Mediterranean Entente, *1895–7*

As Kálnoky's successor, Franz Joseph chose Agenor Count Goluchowski the younger, a rich Polish aristocrat and son of the author of the shortlived conservative-federalist constitution of October 1860. After serving for some seven years as a popular Austro-Hungarian minister at Bucharest, but finding his admonitions about the handling of Roumania ignored at Budapest, Goluchowski had retired from the diplomatic service in 1893 to live the life of a great provincial nobleman on his Galician estates. He was always sensitive where his vanity was concerned. No pushing career diplomat he: indeed, he was if anything nonchalant to a fault, as his methods of work, or rather, lack of them, at the Ballhausplatz were to show. Nevertheless, some of his colleagues[3] found his *bonhomie*, tact, sincerity, and charm a pleasing contrast to the 'frosty aristocratic manner' of his predecessor, and to the 'dry bureaucratic tone' of his successor. His geniality

[1] The following works are of particular relevance to this chapter: W. M. Carlgren, *Iswolsky und Aehrenthal vor der bosnischen Annexionskrise*, Uppsala, 1955; D. Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, Salonica, 1969; H. Hantsch, *Leopold Graf Berchtold* (2 vols), Graz, 1963; and the works by H. Benedikt, G. Drage, F. Klein, C. A. Macartney, and F. R. Bridge cited in Chapter 1, note 1; W. Wagner, Chapter 2, note 1; E. v. Glaise-Horstenau, Chapter 3, note 1; and Margaret M. Jefferson, Chapter 5, note 1.

[2] P.A. I/475, Liasse XXXII/h. [3] P. Hohenbalken (ed.), *Lützow*, p. 76.