

BRITISH DIPLOMATS IN THE KINGDOM OF SARDINIA *

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Abstract: in the contest of a dynamic vision of the international relationships, the text takes in examination the evolution of the complex diplomatic relationships between England and the Kingdom of Sardinia between Ancient Regime and Restoration.

The reconstruction embraces an ample weary of time; it describes the changes of the «apparatuses» diplomatic and he detains on some important knots. On all the nineteenth-century stories immediately precedents to the Unity of Italy, in which the figure of the English diplomat sir James Hudson emerges.

Keywords: diplomacy – James Hudson – United Kingdom – Kingdom of Sardinia – Savoy family

In the years astride the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Savoy family as possible Kings of England was a frequently debated question. Victor Amadeus II had married Anne Marie d'Orléans, daughter of Henrietta, dubbed Minette, sister of Charles II of England and sister-in-law of Louis XIV; their son, the future Charles Emmanuel III King of Sardinia was, therefore, a direct descendent of Charles I° of England.

Various well-known, complex political-religious vicissitudes induced the English upper class to prefer, rather than the direct descendants of the beheaded Charles I, those of his sister Elizabeth through whose descendants the English throne passed to the currently reigning House of Hanover.

Why start from such a distant point in history to consider the first half of the nineteenth century?

Because historical memory, now perhaps more fleeting, was much cultivated a few generations ago and the particular nature and intensity of past Anglo-Savoyard relations laid the bases (at least formally or, even, sentimentally) for new, friendly relations between the two States.

* These days the political situation seems to be very thorny, due to «Brexit»s decision: to some extent it may be interesting to give an insight into the British diplomatic role in Europe in the XIXth century, from the Piedmontese and Italian perspective.

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One of the most recurrent themes of nineteenth century exchanges between the Kingdom of England and Kingdom of Sardinia, such as to be almost a commonplace, was the «ancient friendship», the «old alliance», the «special relationship» between the two powers. We will try to establish to what extent this historiographical and historical-diplomatic *topos* can be considered founded.

First of all, one particularly important fact must be considered: from 1689, when the English throne passed to Mary, daughter of the deposed James II Stuart and wife of William of Orange, until the 1750s (albeit with alternating fortunes), the Duchy of Savoy, subsequently the Kingdom of Sicilia and finally the Kingdom of Sardinia, was not merely the only Italian State with which stable diplomatic relations were maintained, but the State of the Peninsula deemed by London to be most important for British interests¹.

Briefly, it can be said that English attention to Piedmont was a direct offshoot of the aggressive policy of the «Sun King», tenaciously opposed by London, rather than of the Foreign Office's relatively vague and inconstant aims to expand towards the Mediterranean area. The geographical position of the Savoy States, also concerned regarding the aggressive stance of its bordering super-power, was considered extremely important in deterring French ambitions.

Although traditional moves on the political-geographical chessboard suggested that Piedmont should be secretly maintained as a valuable ally, the above-mentioned particular dynastic position of the House of Savoy could be a source of problems. In Turin, in-depth historical-genealogical studies and legal-diplomatic memorials were dedicated to the very delicate question of the succession to the English throne, obviously stressing the good right of «Madama la Duchessa Reale» Anne d'Orléans, wife of Victor Amadeus II «as sole descendent of Charles the First, King of England», the only daughter of the late Princess Royal Henrietta, to be considered first in line of succession after William III and Anne. Obviously, the matter was further complicated by the fact that, although exiled, the legitimate Dynasty of the Stuarts continued its struggle to regain the throne. The Court of Turin adopted a generally cold attitude towards the Catholic Stuart Pretender, considered a rival to the succession, thus bringing it even closer to London.

Therefore, although «dynastic claims» tended to unite London and Turin through their reciprocal bloodlines, there was, however, a risk that the British ruling class would consider the ambitious, authoritarian and Catholic Princes of Savoy as potential subverters of a political equilibrium broadly respective of the power of English aristocracy.

The shrewd Savoy diplomats were also aware that ambitions to the succession should be «nurtured without ever arousing the envy or offending King William» or the «overbearing» oligarchs, behaving in such a way as to «increasingly instil in the soul of

¹ D. B. Horn, 1961; S. B. Baxter, 1966; C. Hill, 1976; D. B. Horn, 1967; P. Langford, 1976; J. P. Kenyon, 1977; G. Giarrizzo, 1980, 165-277; C. Storrs, 2000, 220 ss.; J. Black, 2001; E. Genta (Ternavasio), 2004; A. Pennini, 2015.

those Milords and other autocrats, maximum esteem, propensity and confidence» in the Savoys. The Tories, in particular, seemed to support the European role of the House of Savoy².

Although, in 1701, the *Act of Settlement* excluded the Savoy family from the line of succession, they never completely abandoned hope of succeeding, sooner or later, in enforcing their claims.

During the eighteenth century, the above-mentioned general political circumstances fostered an increase in friendly relations between the two countries, both threatened by the French monarchy and, therefore, both ready to resort to attentive, unprincipled diplomatic and military manoeuvres, to modify their alliances and to «continuous shifting and contradictions», for the supreme goal of safeguarding their complete independence³.

Turin and London were increasingly convinced that, after reconciling their reciprocal differences through the work of their diplomats, it would be possible to establish common bases on which to construct a solid relationship between the two countries. In the end, London's goals of keeping wars at a considerable distance from the Island and impeding any concentration of forces between the European Powers, of reinforcing the navy and saving on land armies and of vesting the Kingdom of England with the desired role of *tertius gaudens* in continental struggles, coincided perfectly with the intentions of the Savoys. They, in a tenacious struggle to defend themselves ever more effectively against France, aimed to reap the best occasions, assessing the situation case by case with extreme realism, raising the odds in international negotiations and, hopefully, securing territorial advantages in Italy at the expense of Austria⁴.

Although this is not the place to retrace the not always simple historic-diplomatic vicissitudes of the period, what could be defined as a benevolent if not effectively protective attitude towards Great Britain is evident in all the stages of eighteenth century aggrandisement of the House of Savoy and its States.

After the delicate parenthesis of the forced cession of Sicily by Victor Amadeus II when relations with London cooled to some extent, Anglo-Savoyard relationships, always championed by the political élites of the two countries, resumed vigorously in the reign of Charles Emmanuel III. Subsequently, the Savoy State was to be «the Italian Protégé» of England for many years, a fact also confirmed by the higher rank of the diplomats accredited to Turin such as, for example, the appointment of the Count of Essex as Ambassador to the Savoy capital in 1732⁵.

² J. Black, 2000.

³ The 1704 Treaty envisaged amongst others a considerable financial contribution by England in favour of Piedmont (J. Black, 1983, 50); F. Venturi, 1956, 227 ss.

⁴ D. B. Horn, 1967, 337. It should be noted that the appointment of official Ambassadors by the English Government always remained a rare event, so much so that in 1910 there were still only 8 British Ambassadors in the world (D. B. Horn, 1967, 28).

⁵ Turin State Archives, *Corti Straniere*, England, m.1, n. 17: «Memoria del conte e procuratore generale Rocca circa la successione del Regno d'Inghilterra...».

Basically, therefore, already in the eighteenth century, Piedmontese diplomacy worked actively and successfully towards bringing England on its side in order to gain territory towards the *Milanese* (historic target of the Savoys). The instructions given by the first great King of Sardinian to his envoy in London, Cavalier Ossorio, recommending that, during his diplomatic encounters with the Court of St James, he should stress that «in recent major events in Europe, Savoy has always adopted a position of great utility for the «aims of England» and warn of the risks of enlargement of Austria in Italy, «as the Court of Vienna has always demonstrated greater reserve and acrimony towards England»⁶ appear to some extent prophetic. Certainly, it was not always easy to reconcile the interests of the two countries, but eighteenth century documents reveal a strong desire to overcome temporary difficulties in order to construct a stable, friendly relationship.

A final consideration, useful in understanding this affinity: between the seventeenth and eighteenth century, there was no great difference between Piedmont and England as regards economic and military force. As stressed amongst others by Winston Churchill, compared with France of the Sun King, England remained clearly inferior, «small, weak, divided and practically unarmed ...with Scotland and Ireland heavy obstacles and burdens weighing on its shoulders and flank»⁷.

The «tiny island nation» and the small, combative Savoy State could find many points in common.

In the period addressed in particular by this study, the nineteenth century, it is evident that their positions were completely different. The United Kingdom had become a super-power and the Kingdom of Sardinia was having difficulty in preserving its independence, although it had neither forgotten nor abandoned its ancient ambitions.

The «classical» role of diplomacy in the past and still during the nineteenth century was undeniably different and of different scope from today.

The aim of this necessarily brief document is to investigate the function of diplomatic representatives and, in particular, to discuss the question of whether they were able to exert a major, if not essential, influence in maintaining good Anglo-Piedmontese relations assuming that, substantially, such relations, although not without shadows, were maintained in the period from the Restoration to the Unification of Italy.

First of all, it must be said that if, today, it is taken for granted that diplomatic action is not, and must not be, the outcome of an exclusive, reserved rapport between the Government and its envoy, in the nineteenth century, this relationship, although not exclusive, was still very intense.

Trying to avoid apriorisms, generalisations and commonplaces, we will, therefore, review certain particularly significant moments of the diplomatic activity of English agents

⁶ Turin State Archives, *Negoziazioni con l'Inghilterra*, m.I d'addizione: «Istruzioni di S.M. al Cav. Ossorio».

⁷ W.S. Churchill, 1973, 31 ss.

in Turin from which it is possible to draw various interesting indications regarding the question at point. More specifically, we will examine their behaviour in order to verify whether it is correct to assert that these diplomats, not always in tune with their Governments and not always unquestioning executors of their will, favoured the process of the Risorgimento, without indulging in «heroic» visions of their role but dedicating due attention to the peculiar aspects of the world of diplomacy, its rites and methods of viewing historical-political reality.

Also in the field of foreign policy, the nineteenth century was an era of transition that, while continuing in some cases to adopt so-called *boudoir* diplomacy, already anticipated certain contemporary aspects both as regards transformation of means of communication, essential in diplomatic activities (from horse-mounted dispatch-carriers to the telegraph, for example) and, above all, the new role exerted by public opinion.

Although aware that the context was rapidly changing, diplomatic representatives continued to practice their traditional «virtues». They still retained a sort of amateurish elegance associated with a traditional glibness of interpretation, albeit respecting customs, continuing to express those values shared inside what was still the «society of rulers and their ministers»⁸. As known, this «society» would soon be forced to come to grips with the new dimension of the «masses» stirred to action against the disquieting backdrop of the Restoration and to formal mass protestation with the plebiscites for the Unification of Italy in 1860⁹.

Sir Augustus John Foster (Minister in Turin from 1824 to 1840) stated that the new King, Charles Albert, dedicated himself unceasingly to the affairs of the kingdom. He considered him an «illuminated, liberal prince» and, with great acumen, indicated to his Government that the King, «a real Piedmontese», would have formed an alliance with whoever offered the greatest advantages¹⁰. Unknown to England, the Savoy sovereign had stipulated a secret agreement with Austria to deter any invasion by the Orleanist Kingdom of France, erroneously considered a dangerously revolutionary neighbour. Foster, evidently not fully apprised on this specific point, considered it impossible that Piedmont would hide such an important alliance from England, guarantor of its independence. In 1832, Lord Palmerston went so far as to reassure the Sardinian envoy, Nomis di Pollone¹¹, that England would «take to heart» the enlargement of the Sardinian States, thus furthering reinforcement of Anglo-Piedmontese bonds.

⁸ E. Genta Ternavasio, 2007, 23 ss.

⁹ E. Genta Ternavasio, 2004, 72 ss.

¹⁰ N. Rosselli, 1954, 491.

¹¹ Ivi, 521. According to F. von Gentz, 1806, 85-86, «what is usually termed a balance of power is that constitution existing among neighbouring States...by virtue of which no one among them can injure the independence or the essential rights of another...».

Without going into the more minute details of Charles Albert's foreign policy, I will concur with Narciso Nada¹² who denounced the vision of this policy (defence of conservative positions, in France with the Duchess of Berry, in Portugal with Don Miguel, in Spain with Don Carlos), as sentimental, ideological and not advantageous, actually as partial and even deviating. In fact, the King's behaviour was «dictated above all by very practical, realistic considerations».

Nevertheless, certain Sardinian stances offended the British Cabinet which, on several occasions and with the usual prudence of diplomatic language, expressed a certain irritation with Charles Albert and, in particular, with his Foreign Secretary, the conservative and ultra-catholic Clemente Solaro della Margarita¹³.

Basically, the general conduct of foreign affairs differed considerably between London and Turin. For the Savoys, «taking a stand on all major European questions was an ancient tradition»¹⁴, to impose Piedmont on all the greatest Powers in a sort of noble visionarism redeemed, however, by the sagacity of its diplomats.

However, an «axiom» of the Foreign Office's policy was that of never «accepting international obligations referring to cases not effectively verified or not, in any case, imminent»: a principle formally expressed amongst others by Lord Palmerston. Later, it was also stressed by Gladstone in a famous letter written in 1869 to Queen Victoria: «England must maintain in its hands the means for assessing the nature of its obligations with regard various situations that occur; it must never preclude and limit its freedom of choice with declarations made to other powers regarding their real or presumed interests ...it must not encourage the weak, giving them cause to rely on help against the powerful, but must rather try to discourage the powerful from attacking the weak with a firm but moderate language ...»¹⁵.

A decidedly empiristic even opportunist conception, perfectly reflecting what we could call English «national» spirit and, as noted by many, shared basically both by the Tories and Whigs.

The same stance, expressed in exemplary mode by Gladstone, was maintained, if not always, in regulating Anglo-Sardinian relations.

Having discussed, very briefly, the different attitudes the two countries had towards foreign policy, it must be stressed that these were characterised by many points of convergence. For Charles Albert, desiring to reinforce his independence from France and Austria, friendship with England was essential; England had assumed the role of «the champion of the rights of small nations»¹⁶ wishing, and considering its duty, to guarantee

¹² N. Nada, 1980, 41-51, in particular 45; ID., 1964-72; the so-called «Order of Vienna» was definitely overcome by the Italian Risorgimento; see M. Jarrett, 2014, 84 ss, 146 ss.

¹³ E. Genta Ternavasio, 2004, 109 ss.

¹⁴ P. Casana, 2010, 81 ss.; E. Mongiano, 2010, 185 ss.; G. S. Pene Vidari, 2010, 171 ss.; I. Soffietti, 2010, 47 ss.

¹⁵ N. Rosselli, 1954, 527.

¹⁶ Ivi, 607 ss.; R. Romeo, 1977, 485 ss.; Giuseppe Nomis di Pollone (born 1798) was, similarly to his father Spirito, plenipotentiary Minister to London (V. Spreti, 1931, 845).

their independence also to ensure freedom and development of British trade. In 1859, Lord John Russell was to declare: «The balance of power in Europe means, in effect, the independence of its several states».

It is worth recalling (as suitably stressed by Rosselli¹⁷ who compares Solaro with Palmerston) that when the Whig Minister fell from power, the Kingdom of Sardinia regretted the exit of Palmerston from the Foreign Office, thus confirming that Minister La Margarita's *modus operandi*, no matter how debatable, was not so naive and unenlightened as often considered. It was this card, skilfully played, that promoted intensification of good relations when the Whigs returned to power.

Foster, for his part, never missed an opportunity to «influence the Foreign Office favourably with regard to Piedmont, to present the Sardinian Government as strong and popular, immune from any possible internal subversion»¹⁸.

This is an extremely important point that deserves particular attention: the solidity of the institutions of the Kingdom of Sardinia, the close link between the Dynasty and the people, an excellent antidote against revolutionary ferment, its substantial progressive moderatism, were to be equally valid winning cards played by Sardinian diplomats to convince the various English envoys who succeeded each other until Unification, especially in the period of the plebiscites and annexations¹⁹. For their part, English diplomats in Turin provided excellent support and, despite many difficulties, succeeded in convincing the Mother Country that abandonment of the Treaties of 1815 was not necessarily a synonym of revolution.

The opinion expressed on Foster by such an accurate scholar as Nello Rosselli²⁰ contributes arguments to this thesis: the English representative «favoured Piedmont: he did not seek to hide its wrongs ... tending rather to mitigate these». This sympathy earned him the role of the most popular foreign diplomat in Turin. No other country «professed to being, like Piedmont, the ancient and stable ally of England»²¹ and even Solaro, no Anglophile, admitted that «ancient memories bind us in a certain gratitude towards that Power»²².

The majority of the Piedmontese élite also expressed similar sentiments of friendship.

On 9 July 1836, Cesare San Martino d'Agliè, Minister in London for many years, wrote to Count Solaro:

«Quant à nos vrais amis, c'est-à-dire les amis lointains, il n'y a aucun doute que l'Angleterre doit être mise au premier rang. Les services qu'Elle a rendus à la Maison de Savoie dans des

¹⁷ C. Lovera Di Castiglione e I. Rinieri, 1831. The bibliography is very broad. For the sake of brevity, I would refer to E. Genta (Ternavasio), 1999, 323 ss.

¹⁸ N. Rosselli, 1954, 527.

¹⁹ H. Nicolson, 1967, 145 ss.

²⁰ Ivi, 142.

²¹ N. Rosselli, 1954, 607. R. Romeo, 485 ss.

²² Ivi, 541.

temps plus éloignés sont connus de tout le monde, et pour ce qui regarde une époque plus récente personne ne peut mieux en parler que moi qui ai été témoins depuis trente six ans de l'intérêt cordiale et constant que ce gouvernement n'a cessé de prendre à notre égard²³».

Agliè was so enthusiastic that Solaro, rather annoyed, wrote to the envoy in Paris, Paolo Francesco de Sales: «Je suis fâché que le Comte d'Agliè se soit jeté dans les bras de Lord Palmerston» and sustained his idea that England, all things considered, was not without a certain jealousy towards the Kingdom of Sardinia for commercial reasons.

On this point, confirming the independence of thought of Sardinian diplomats, Sales (who was to be replaced in 1836 by A. Brignole Sale) responded to Solaro with almost irreverent frankness:

«Comment voulez-vous, M.le Comte, que l'Angleterre puisse être jalouse de notre commerce?...Je vous engagerai fort à ne négliger aucun moyen pour rétablir nos relations avec l'Angleterre, comme elles l'étaient encore et y a peu de temps. C'est-là un service essentiel que vous devez rendre au Roi, et qu'il faut même rendre promptement et complètement...²⁴».

Therefore, all things considered, there were various causes of attrition that Foster, within the scope of his powers, endeavoured to smooth.

It seems that in 1837 Agliè, concerned about «the coldness, or even worse» of Anglo-Sardinian relations, made the mistake of revealing Palmerston's words to the King, that is to say that as long as Solaro remained Minister, London would not have restored warm relations. This blunder caused the English Minister to retreat, formally declaring: «The English Government is not in the habit of attempting to interfere in the decisions of foreign rulers or States in selecting their public officials. That of sustaining the independence of existing states is a fundamental principle of English policy».

However, these were «passing clouds», wrote to Solaro count Pollone, who replaced Agliè in London (severely and unjustly recalled to Turin), disturbances that only for a moment had «overshadowed the excellent harmony between two such old, intimate friends as England and Sardinia»²⁵.

The thorny Spanish question having been resolved, Solaro instructed Pollone to stress to Palmerston that «relationships between the Court of Sardinia and the Cabinet of St. James are as they have always been for centuries»²⁶.

The situation at the end of the troubled third decade of the century was such that Pollone was able to write to Turin in 1840:

²³ E. Genta (Ternavasio), 2010, 153.

²⁴ N. Rosselli, 1954, 552. Rosselli studied Anglo-Savoyard relations «without altering these with ideological aureolas»: thus, W. Maturi, 1954, XV.

²⁵ N. Rosselli, 1954, 631.

²⁶ F. Lemmi, 1928, 257.

«We are in the most enviable position with regard England ...Here, we enjoy an excellent reputation in all respects: the morality of our nation, its civil progress is acclaimed. The order that reigns everywhere in our country, our revenues, our finances, the appearance and behaviour of our army ...Our alliance is highly appreciated and, of the Powers of second order, we are, without fear of contradiction, that which, in the eyes of the English, is considered the most important at the current time»²⁷.

Having reached pensionable age, Foster was recalled in September of the same year and was succeeded by Ralph Abercromby.

If Foster could claim very solid relations in the environments of the British *upper crust*, as his mother was the daughter of the 4th Count of Bristol and, in second marriage, wife of the 5th Duke of Devonshire, the new resident Minister in Turin could claim equally high standing: he was son-in-law of Lord Minto and brother-in-law of Lord Russell, real authorities in defining the guidelines of English foreign policy.

The return of the Tories in 1841, not particularly appreciated by Pollone who had hoped that the Melbourne-Palmerston ministry would remain in power, did not impair relations with Piedmont with which mainly commercial questions were discussed.

Political and religious strife in Switzerland in 1845 cast another «cloud» on the relationship between the two countries but direct relations between Charles Albert and Abercromby were reinforced to such an extent that, in 1847, Anglo-Sardinian friendship could be considered fully consolidated. Abercromby, an astute diplomat, took great pains to learn more about the socio-economic reality of his host country and always kept the Foreign Office fully informed of the status of Piedmont.

In an official report to Palmerston in 1847, he formulated the hypothesis (which subsequently proved unfounded) of the possibility, in the not so distant future, of a «struggle of classes» in the Kingdom of Sardinia, certainly not implying with this term a revolution of the Fourth State but rather a conflict between the conservative nobility and progressist bourgeoisie²⁸.

Lord Minto's mission to Italy, defined by Azeglio²⁹ as «quelque chose de tellement au dehors des habitudes du Gouvernement anglais, et je pourrais ajouter des usages internationaux», played a major role in furthering closer relations. Minto was cordially received by Charles Albert and it is interesting to note that, three days after his audience, the King requested Solaro's resignation.

Leaving aside, due to the necessary brevity of this text, other particular aspects, it must be said that England, when asked by Piedmont to use its good offices in the negotiations with Austria after the defeat of Novara, opposed a thinly veiled rebuke of Palmerston³⁰, recalling that his country had strongly dissuaded the Kingdom of Sardinia

²⁷ Ivi, 200.

²⁸ N. Rosselli, 1954, 741-742.

²⁹ R. Romeo, 1977, 82.

³⁰ N. Bianchi, 1884, 257.

from entering a war. For his part, Minto wrote to Azeglio on 30 May 1849, guaranteeing him «tout l'appui possible à votre gouvernement d'ordre...Je ne suis pas sur que l'Angleterre soit tout à fait exempte de reproche pour avoir quitté l'attitude imposante qui aurait pu la mettre à meme d'écarter les plus funestes conséquences de ces fautes»³¹. In the end, the envoy to Paris, Count Gallina, obtained merely «moral support» and, therefore, the new Prime Minister Massimo d'Azeglio, with great perspicacity, considered the slackening of Anglo-Sardinian bonds to be very serious, persuading him to actively seek a rapprochement with Great Britain.

Massimo's nephew, Emanuele, Minister in London, sought repeatedly to convince the English Cabinet, in analysing the Italian question, to abandon or at least retrench the usual British practice of *wait and see*. The work of Minister Azeglio aimed to dislodge that «languid and immovable» attitude³² that had, for some years, characterised the Foreign Office's behaviour towards the impatient Kingdom of Sardinia. It was, in fact, the policy adopted by Azeglio, accused at times of being a fanciful dilettante and even a *pelandrun* (=lazy) – as Massimo himself repeated with his usual self-mocking tones- that succeeded in constructing a solid launching-pad for Cavour to develop his fruitful relations with London³³.

When Abercromby was recalled to London, Azeglio, who had entertained confidential relations with him, did everything possible to ensure that the envoy would be replaced as English Minister to Turin by a diplomat who would continue the policy of friendship with the Kingdom of Sardinia, not hesitating to write to his nephew, Minister to London³⁴: «Faites tout ce qui pourra dépendre de vous pour que le choix de Lord Palmerston tombe sur un homme avec qui nous puissions continuer et cimenter les relations si bienveillantes que nous avons entretenues jusqu'à présent avec le gouvernement anglais».

The new envoy, James Hudson, arrived in Turin from Genoa on 12 February 1852, had an audience with the King on February 15 and met Azeglio the day after. Azeglio was immediately enthusiastic and declared to his nephew Emanuele: «I am enchanted with Hudson with whom I share many similarities of character, to the point that he, too, was an artist»³⁵. All things considered, the Piedmontese diplomats considered Hudson an easier proposition than Abercromby³⁶.

However, various difficult situations were soon to put the friendly spirit of the British Minister resident in Turin to the test. With regard to the question of Menton and

³¹ Palmerston, sometimes, gave «lessons in international law and international savoir-vivre to the impatient (even if justly impatient) Subalpine State»; see F. Curato, 1956, XXXI.

³² N. Bianchi, 1884, 11.

³³ N. Bianchi, 1870, VII, 125.

³⁴ N. Bianchi, 1869, VI, 338.

³⁵ M. d'Azeglio, 2010, 82.

³⁶ Ivi, 95. Alessandro Jocteau, one of Azeglio collaborators, stressed on one occasion that «with Abercromby there would have been a certain embarrassment but not with Hudson» (29 July 1852), ivi, 404.

Roquebrune³⁷, belonging to the Prince of Monaco but of which he was despoiled, the Kingdom of Sardinia was objectively in a situation of great difficulty that Azeglio tried to solve by appointing Giacinto Collegno to negotiate even the purchase of the entire Principality, amongst others vassal of the Head of the House of Savoy: a design that obviously failed and on which the English looked unfavourably. We will not investigate here the complex terms of the question – between feudal law and international law – but merely note that, faced with the English attitude of safeguarding existing order on the basis of traditional public law that cannot be modified except through the instrument of the treaty, Azeglio intervened with a certain vehemence, organizing a well-founded memorial stressing, in his usual diplomatic tones, the incoherence of the British Government that had demonstrated a completely different aperture in Spain, France and Belgium³⁸.

Hudson, anticipating what was to become his usual profile in subsequent years and after adopting an initially critical attitude towards the Piedmontese Minister, decided to support him with discretion (Sir James was at the start of his mission and a certain caution was essential).

Later, the English proposal was essential for the intervention of Piedmont in the Crimean war: Hudson energetically supported the alliance so much so that, according to Bianchi³⁹, he was a prime mover in involving the Kingdom of Sardinia.

Lord Clarendon wrote to him in 1855 asking him to report that the Anglo-Sardinian agreement was popular in England and that Piedmont was much admired: «Any measure that tends to bind the two countries even closer is welcomed here (in London) with a sentiment bordering on enthusiasm»⁴⁰. After the Congress of Paris where Piedmont was supported by Great Britain and when the Italian cause was solemnly declared of European interest, Cavour went to London where, however, he realised that the idea of obtaining real military aid from England in a war of nationality was unrealistic⁴¹.

Various points, as will be seen below, must be considered when evaluating Hudson's work in Turin:

- he had an innate natural ability to arouse local sympathies, also of politicians of different parties although preferring those of Cavour's party (unlike many English people, Hudson was always bitterly critical of Mazzini).

- His open support of the programme of the Liberal leaders of Piedmont led him to illustrate this in the best way possible to the Foreign Office which, he knew, still cultivated sympathies for Austria that he tried patiently to undermine. He was well informed of the traditional *modus agendi* of English politics, «not bound by any previous

³⁷ See A. Lupano, 2013, 313 ss.

³⁸ N. Bianchi, 1870, VII 107.

³⁹ F. Curato, 1956, LXXXI.

⁴⁰ N. Bianchi, 1870, VII 185.

⁴¹ N. Bianchi, 1870, VII, 281.

commitments in order to choose and operate on the basis of facts that have occurred or will occur»⁴².

- Compatibly with his role and possibilities, Hudson fought energetically and repeatedly against the cold, if not hostile attitude, of many British political environments especially amongst the conservatives.

- The image that Hudson wished and succeeded in conveying to the diffident, prudent British political leaders was that of a Kingdom of Sardinia with firmly-consolidated institutional and constitutional orders, well governed by a secular monarchy, a loyal friend, a prosperous country on the road towards further major political, economic and social reforms, neither revolutionary nor instigator but, diplomatically, absolutely correct and respectable.

At this point, reference could be made to many examples of his way of «selling» this image: in January 1854, he wrote to Lord Clarendon commenting on the recent political elections in Piedmont as follows:

«As far as the Republicans elected by Liguria are concerned, a clear distinction must be made between a Genoese Republican and a democrat with Mazzinian ideas. The Genoese Republican deputy is a man of solid Italian municipalist spirit, convinced that all other interests are subordinate to those of Genoa. He votes against the Government for a sense of duty but this does not mean that, because he declares he is a Republican, he necessarily sustains Mazzini's ideas⁴³».

This interpretation, anything but unfounded, was intended in particular to convey the image of a conservative, traditionalist Kingdom of Sardinia, in the best «English» meaning of the term, also as regards those deputies who, at a superficial reading, could be considered «red» and subversive.

- Hudson's favourable influence also proved to be important from another point of view: the British diplomatic legation in Turin became a meeting point for Italian liberals (as confirmed by the *Diario* of Giuseppe Massari who noted the infinite lunches offered by Sir James).

- Other diplomatic environments in Turin harboured more often than not unfavourable feelings towards the Piedmontese Government, leaving open a dangerous gap for the conservative opposition which also spread to various aristocratic salons.

«Only Sir James Hudson, a serious, serene figure of an English gentleman is with the King and with Italy, while, even at the French Legation, except for the principal, the staff are against the Italian sympathies of their Sire»: this opinion, expressed by the very well informed Baroness Olimpia Savio⁴⁴ clearly reveals that Hudson's position with regard to

⁴² N. Bianchi, 1870, VII 95.

⁴³ F. Curato (ed.), 1956, II, 5.

⁴⁴ R. Ricci, 1911, II, 37.

his opponent colleagues was not easy. However, he always maintained extremely correct relations with these, further confirming his professional seriousness and reliability.

We will now consider, albeit briefly, Sir James's activities in the critical years 1858-1860 which saw the rapid enlargement of the Kingdom of Sardinia, well on the way to becoming the Kingdom of Italy.

These were decisive years in which British diplomatic action, although not always taking a friendly view of Italian ambitions, was even more forceful although lacking in constant linearity, without interruptions. It was this alternation of ups and downs that kept Cavour on tenterhooks. 1858 was a decisive year that marked the conclusion of the (secret) treaty with the France of Napoleon III⁴⁵ that Cavour was induced to conclude as unable to rely merely on English moral support. In August, Massari noted in his *Diario*⁴⁶:

«England's attitude is decidedly hostile...Count Cavour deplored the short-sightedness of the English Government in considering the Italian question. He quite rightly reflected that, continuing along these lines, England would lose any influence in Italy ...However, during the Crimean War and the 1856 Congress, English diplomats and statesmen continued to praise Piedmont and express sympathy for the Italian cause»

However, despite the coldness of the Cabinet, in Turin Hudson was considered «a man who views everything through the prism of Piedmontese politics»⁴⁷: a true friend in fact.

At this point, a very delicate question must be considered: Hudson's *credibility* as regards his own Government.

In the diplomatic environment, a representative who lives for a long period in a foreign country often tends (obviously, if affinities exist) to favour that country to such an extent as to ignore or minimise its defects, even committing what is a capital sin for diplomats, *betrayal*. «They may even identify themselves to such an extent with the principle according to which the function of an Ambassador is to forge "good relations" with a foreign Government that they confuse the goal with the means and see 'good relations' not as part of their functions but as the sole purpose of their activity ...the temptation to tell their own Government what it would like to hear, rather than what it should know»⁴⁸.

Was Sir James guilty of this sin? Was Hudson perhaps guilty of betrayal, in the meaning described above, or at least of excessive partisanship towards Piedmontese policy?

Considering Lord Russel's insinuations in 1860, discussed below, it can be said that Foreign Office environments certainly nourished a certain suspicion. Hudson's sympathies

⁴⁵ P. Casana, 2010, 84.

⁴⁶ G. Massari, 1931, 1.

⁴⁷ Ivi, 15.

⁴⁸ H. Nicolson, 1967, 132.

were well known in the restricted club of diplomats in Turin and, a shrewd diplomat, he was fully aware that he should not overstep the mark beyond which his figure would be neither credible nor reliable. His heart, it can be said, beat for Italy but this must not imply any risk or damage to his country; similarly, international public law must not be subverted in a chaotic manner but patiently «adjusted» to new political emergencies. It was feared that, in view of his overly friendly attitude, he would be retained in London where he had been summoned. At last, he returned to Turin where he was long awaited on 26 November 1858: «Every day, morning and evening, the carriage was sent to search for him at station of the Susa railway line but so far he has not arrived», Massari noted with some apprehension in the Autumn⁴⁹. On December 21, Cavour wrote to Emanuele d'Azeglio that Hudson had been sent back to Turin «malgré les griefs qu'on avait contre lui, parce qu'on a pensé que c'était l'homme le plus en état de pénétrer nos desseins et de lire au fond de nos pensées. Aussi, je compte être avec lui plus amical que jamais»⁵⁰.

But Hudson was «disgruntled». It was said that Lord Malmesbury had offered him another post or an extremely generous pension that he had refused in order to return to Turin⁵¹. However, apart from this, another delicate question facing Sir James was the London Cabinet's poor esteem of the Marquis Emanuele d'Azeglio, official representative of the Kingdom of Sardinia at the Court of St James. Hudson immediately took up the question with Cavour who objected: «It's not easy to dislodge Azeglio: he is Massimo's nephew, his removal would make a bad impression internally»; at this point, Hudson did not insist, also realising that, otherwise, he would have created further problems for Cavour⁵².

It is known that diplomatic relations are constructed in many ways, not only in *boudoirs* or *inter pocula* but also through official visits and concurrent distribution of decorations and awards to foreign dignitaries. Planning the visit of the Prince of Wales to Italy, Cavour made no secret of the fact that he considered it absolutely essential for him. «If he does not pass through Turin – he wrote – this would be evident proof of aversion towards us»⁵³. When the visit was confirmed, Hudson expressed the hope that Cavour would write «a witty letter to be presented to the Queen»; Cavour therefore drew up a «beautiful» missive in French⁵⁴ declaring amongst others that «l'Angleterre est la plus ancienne et plus fidèle alliée du Piémont», thus repeating that stereotype that, as can be seen, in the world of diplomacy so closely tied to tradition, never failed to have a certain effect.

The fact that the situation continued to be fluid and that the attitude of the British Minister caused Cavour many sleepless nights is also demonstrated by a significant letter

⁴⁹ G. Massari, 1931, 101.

⁵⁰ C. d'Azeglio, 1646, II.

⁵¹ G. Massari, 1931, 104.

⁵² Ivi, 122.

⁵³ Ivi, 100. See Cavour's letter to Hudson on 5 January 1859 (C. Cavour, 2000, XVI, I, 27).

⁵⁴ G. Massari, 1931, 122.

sent by Cavour to Costantino Nigra on 9 January 1859 that, in addition to the well-known shrewdness of judgement of the Sardinian Prime Minister, also reveals his disillusion regarding the possible «friendship» between statesmen:

«A' propos d'Anglais, vous apprendrez avec plaisir que Hudson depuis quelques jours a changé complètement de langage. Il a cessé de faire le panégyrique de l'Archiduc et il se déclare tout à fait en faveur de la guerre avec l'Autriche. Est-ce qu'il aurait reçu de nouvelles instructions? Ou bien a-t-il adopté ce moyen pour mieux découvrir le terrain? L'attitude prise par la presse anglaise me ferait pencher pour la première hypothèse⁵⁵».

However, shortly afterwards, confirming the instability of the moment, after King Victor Emanuel's speech from the throne, the Foreign Office sent Hudson a dispatch informing him of the displeasure of the British Government in having perceived in the speech a first step towards inevitably unleashing a war. Lord Malmesbury – wrote Emanuele d'Azeglio – had been «offusqué des paroles que le Roi Victor Emanuel avait prononcées, et par lesquelles il reconnaissait qu'un *cri de douleur* lui parvenait du reste de l'Italie»⁵⁶. As reported by Massari, Cavour replied directly to Malmesbury with a letter «full of salt and pepper», sustaining that the speech, far from being an *imprudent act*, had calmed and not excited the souls of the Peninsula.

Cavour, annoyed, confided to Massari⁵⁷: «I will let myself be rebuked but if I wished to be caustic, I could say to Sir James that I hope that England's threats are as effective as its promises».

Therefore, Cavour's dissatisfaction with London's policy is a recurring leitmotif: friend of Piedmont but overly prudent; not so hostile to Austria and extremely jealous of France. Hudson was to warn Massari⁵⁸: «Take care; Napoleon III will involve you and then abandon you».

Clearly, the «Italophile» Hudson was forced to do his job and each sally against imperial France was perfectly consonant with the logics of the Foreign Office. However, we know from a long series of letters and testimonials that personal relations between Sir James and Camillo Cavour were, generally speaking, far from formal and, in keeping with their reciprocal positions, reached a level of true confidential friendliness based on esteem of shared values and mutual intelligence.

Cavour was convinced that «with the English, more than others, there is more to gain saying things frankly and as they are»⁵⁹: in an only apparently joking tone, he repeated several times to Sir James that war would be made on Austria «even if this could cause to make war on England ...I am resigned to seeing Genoa bombarded by the English ...».

⁵⁵ C. Cavour, 2000, XVI, I, 50.

⁵⁶ Ivi, 75.

⁵⁷ G. Massari, 1931, 161.

⁵⁸ Ivi, 164f.

⁵⁹ Ivi, 196.

This was essentially a boutade pronounced perhaps during «tea at the perfidious Albion»⁶⁰ served by the hospitable gentleman at the British Legation in Turin. On some occasions, Cavour overstepped the mark, adopting a not always prudent and conventionally diplomatic language. During one of the many lunches organized by the courteous Hudson, also attended by General Fox and Massari, Cavour spoke so vehemently as to considerably shock his English fellow guests. Referring to a rapprochement between Piedmont and Austria, desired by England, he expressed himself as follows:

«Dès cette époque je fus forcé d'acquiescer la conviction qu'il ne fallait plus compter sur l'appui de l'Angleterre...au point où sont les choses une alliance étrangère est une nécessité. Aurais-je pu m'attacher à l'alliance anglaise? Du moment que l'Angleterre penche du côté de l'Autriche, le choix n'était plus possible: il s'agit d'une nécessité, voilà pourquoi je me suis appuyé sur l'alliance française..le dilemme d'aujourd'hui: ou M. de Cavour ou Mazzini...l'Angleterre ne veut pas de M. de Cavour, elle aura Mazzini!⁶¹».

In March 1859, Lord Malmesbury reserved «his most violent invectives for Piedmont». The note he had transmitted in February to Hudson had been written in a style that Cavour had defined as «hargneux et parfois insolent»⁶².

In 1859, shortly before the outbreak of the Second War of Independence, relations with London became extremely strained. Malmesbury's attitude became openly critical of Cavour's policy, considered to be imprudently belligerent at a time when, as effectively expressed to Massari by Sackville-West, a young chargé d'affaires in Turin in the absence of Hudson⁶³ who also sympathised with Piedmontese aspirations, England is «moving heaven and earth to preserve peace».

This certainly marked one of the most convulsive moments of Cavour's entire career. Faced with a precise English request for disarmament, the Russian proposal of a Conference of the Great Powers on the Italian question having emerged in March and at which Cavour refused to participate in a subordinate position, he decided to prepare a *memorandum* and gain time. Hudson, the staunch supporter, was recalled to England to receive instructions from Malmesbury who considered him «more Italian than the Italian themselves»⁶⁴; Cavour, seeking support, sent Massimo d'Azeglio to London to meet Palmerston, Russell, Gladstone, Shaftesbury and Malmesbury. When Cavour was about to submit to disarmament, Austria, no longer content with what had been agreed between

⁶⁰ Ivi, 203.

⁶¹ Ivi, 210.

⁶² R. Romeo, 1984, 495. C. Cavour, 2000, XVI, I, 178: Emanuele d'Azeglio is instructed to make only remonstrances but to make these!

⁶³ V. Sackville-West, 1958, XV: reference is made to Lionel, subsequently 2nd Lord Sackville (1827+1908).

⁶⁴ R. Romeo, 1984, 515. See Cavour's letter of 23 January 1859 to Emanuele d'Azeglio: «L'alliance intime contractée avec la France doit nous aliéner l'Angleterre...». (C. Cavour, 2000, XVI, I, 95).

the Chancelleries, with a real *coup de theatre*, sent an *ultimatum* to the Kingdom of Sardinia demanding compliance within few days.

Austria's imprudent manoeuvre (much discussed by historians, some of whom insist on its complete untimeliness while others stress the particular internal reasons that forced the Austrian Empire to «show its muscles» in order to preserve its credibility) deeply irritated England which, with a radical change of position, protested «in the strongest manner», decidedly supporting Cavour's policy.

«The *sommation* of Austria – wrote Massimo d'Azeglio to Cavour – at a moment in which, with our conduct, we were becoming the favourites of England, is one of those strokes of luck that occur once in a hundred years»⁶⁵.

Hudson reported to Massari that «on arriving in London, he had found everyone very indignant with Piedmont». Once again, Sir James did everything possible to mitigate these hostile sentiments, speaking favourably of Piedmont with the Queen and reminding her of its role in the war against Russia. However, on a visit to Yorkshire, he was recalled after a few days by telegraph to London where he found a completely different atmosphere and «great exasperation against the Austrians»⁶⁶.

To use a very English metaphor, Austria had been given sufficient rope to hang itself...

At this point, Malmesbury, temporarily converted, recommended only one thing to Hudson who was returning to Turin: «Stick to Cavour, stick to Cavour!»⁶⁷, convinced that, at this juncture, it was more useful for England «to stick» – to support and control him – to His Sardinian Majesty's Prime Minister.

By now, Hudson also entertained excellent relations with Azeglio⁶⁸ and also with King Victor Emanuel, furthered by the good offices of his aide-de-camp, General Paolo Solaroli; these contacts contributed to highlighting Hudson's very special role as a real participant in Risorgimental design.

Relations improved even further with the new Whig Minister. Emanuele d'Azeglio wrote to Cavour on 4 July 1859⁶⁹: «The language of the English Government can be summed up as follows: we have Italian interests at heart and will take them into greater account provided that the Italians provide us with the means, with sagacious and temperate measures, to meet their desires».

Hudson's role in the decisive year 1860 can be highlighted more effectively examining the correspondence with Lord Russell, British Foreign Secretary from the

⁶⁵ R. Romeo, 1984, 538. In the Autumn of 1859, Azeglio had written an interesting essay to sustain the right of self-determination of Central Italy (See A. Cernigliaro, 2009; G. S. Pene Vidari, 2010, 105 ss.).

⁶⁶ G. Massari, 1931, 310.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ «The intimacy that reigns today between Massimo d'Azeglio and Hudson is very strange: until a short while ago, they did not like each other. M. attributed his loss of the Ministry in 1852 to H. and H. mockingly called him the Duke of Vicenza» (Ivi, 336).

⁶⁹ N. Bianchi, 1872, VIII, 129 ss.

previous Summer, in particular their respective positions on the thorny problem of the cession of Nice and Savoy to France by the Kingdom of Sardinia.

The extremely critical attitude of the British Cabinet was based on the conviction that Cavour was subservient to Napoleon III, had dealt deceitfully with his friend England and, after loudly asserting that «he cannot bear foreigners in Italy...he himself has given up Italian towns to French dominion»⁷⁰.

Sir James, promptly denying rumours that Cavour was seeking to ingratiate himself even further with France, ceding Genoa or Sardinia, defended him on the point of the cession of Nice and Savoy, championing the (debatable) theses of the Sardinian Minister that these lands were not part of Italy; strangely enough, he also informed Russell of the personal drama that Cavour was experiencing at that time: he – wrote Hudson – «had lost flesh and color and spoke in a thick voice...He told...that after his death the cession of Savoy and Nice would be found graven on his heart»⁷¹.

Russell retorted: «I believe Cavour is still the best Minister for Italy, tho' he has sadly shaken my confidence in him». The London cabinet went so far as to ask the Sardinian Government for a formal commitment not to attack Austria or the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and not to cede other territories to France. The English *Note* indicated the *balance of power* as a still valid permanent criterion of European assessment.

The skirmish continued with Cavour's assurance that he would comply with English demands with an official speech to the Chamber (as effectively occurred on 26 May); but Russell continued to be wary, obsessed by a probable cession of Genoa and, I would say, a general suspicion of wide-scale Italian machiavellism.

With the exemplary aplomb of a good diplomatic, Hudson replied calmly on 31 May to his Minister⁷², taking care not to adduce arguments reflecting his well-known friendly sentiment for the Piedmontese: «It is a question of faith, to a certain extent, for my part I believe him and my belief is based not upon Cavour but upon Cavour's necessities and upon the opinions of his supporters. You set out from a point of departure which I cannot accept. You speak of Cavour as though he were a Dictator». In a constitutional country such as Piedmont, the Parliament was essential.

The Subalpine Parliament could not accept other cessions; in any case, the cessions concerned territories that could be considered not or not very Italian, as Nice was Francophile for commercial reasons while Savoy was «as reactionary as Ireland or the Vatican». The Italians had no intention of changing an Austrian master for a French one: believing otherwise meant not understanding either the Piedmontese or the Italians and this, explained Hudson to Russell with almost irreverence frankness, «I cannot do, and I do not conceive how you arrive at it either».

⁷⁰ G. Giarrizzo, 1962, 86.

⁷¹ Ivi, 90.

⁷² Ivi, 125.

Another new, unexpected and extremely thorny problem arose with the expedition of Garibaldi and the Thousand.

Also on this occasion, Hudson clearly favours complete English support of Piedmont: if London does not support Turin, Paris will. Once again, the tone of his message to Russell was extremely sincere, almost brutal: «Possibly you have already come to a decision but if you have not, believe me, that you have not much time to lose, else France will shut you out and give you much trouble»⁷³.

No Sardinian Ambassador to London could have expressed Italian interests more forcefully than the British Minister to Turin!

Hudson regularly reported Russell's fears and objections to Cavour so much so that it can be said that he provided Cavour with the best rebuttals!

In a letter dated 23 July 1860⁷⁴, Russell, half serious and half facetious (but more serious than facetious) admonished his envoy as follows:

«You should be very careful to keep the interests of Great Britain always in sight and not be led too far by your Italian sympathies».

However, as a good diplomat and with British *humour*, he concluded: «But Evviva l'Italia nevertheless!».

Hudson, finding it difficult to swallow the thinly rebuke regarding his possible partisanship, even betrayal, such as to make him imprudently forget the real interests of the Mother Country, took up this point on several occasions, not without a certain resentment and arguing in favour of annexation as less prejudicial to British than the anarchy of Sicily and Naples, and the discontent of North Italy.

On 31 July Hudson reacts and explodes and, without mincing his words, expresses not only his state of mind but also his political-diplomatic line, justifying this with various arguments:

- Italian Unity is perfectly consonant with English interests that do not want a non-independent country.

- Considering the point already reached (Garibaldi was by now well advanced), the only solution is annexation to Piedmont, otherwise the Mazzinians and anarchy will take advantage of the situation.

- Liberal England cannot ignore that the Bourbon Two Sicilies have delayed promulgation of a Constitution after deceiving their subjects on ten occasions and with the intention of doing so an eleventh time.

- France will not receive further territorial advantages from Piedmont that will in any case achieve Unity, thereby constructing a strong independent State.

In conclusion, «If your hint to me about “British interests” had not been accompanied by the declaration of “Viva l'Italia”, I should have conceived that I had been guilty of some crime, or –worse still – some blunder with regard to them. But I can declare,

⁷³ Ivi, 126.

⁷⁴ Ivi, 149.

conscientiously, that I have studied to the best of my ability this Italian question under the light of “British interests”, and am led irresistibly to the conclusion that the Unity of Italy is not unfavourable to those interests...It is not then my “sympathies” with Italy, but my sympathy for British interests which lead me in the face of existing difficulties to advocate, as the least prejudicial of these various issues, the Unity of Italy»⁷⁵.

Russell did not respond directly to this outburst, probably to let matters calm down, merely reaffirming his fear of possible (we are in August) conflicts in Umbria and in Veneto with a risk of deterioration of the situation, also professing to be *a sincere friend* of Hudson.

Lord Russell was to fully express his Whiggist spirit on the issue of the plebiscites : «Universal suffrage is no favorite of mine and I should be afraid that a few sweating madonnas and canting friars might pervert that mode of voting into a machinery for restoring Francis the 2nd of pious memory»⁷⁶.

On 19 October 1860, Sir James replied: «I have told Cavour your dislike of universal suffrage: He said he disliked it as much as you do, but it is his only weapon against France which is doing all she can to trip up Italy’s heels»; however, he also added, Cavour is not afraid of weeping madonnas or friars or San Gennaro; he merely seeks English moral support and everything will end in the best way possible⁷⁷. Hudson expressed the conviction that the new Italy would acknowledge its debt to Great Britain.

With a final diplomatic move, Cavour asked London to send «a British representative» to Naples on the occasion of Victor Emanuel’s entry to the city. Hudson was favourable, considering that «it will make Italy ours in point of moral influence».

After clearing up various other issues, generally with the aim of overcoming English doubts regarding the new European public law inaugurated by the tumultuous Italian question with the plebiscites and annexations⁷⁸, and with the London Cabinet convinced that the «Italian Revolution» had been conducted with «singular temper and forbearance», so that the venerated forms of constitutional monarchy had been associated «with the name of a prince who represents an ancient and glorious

⁷⁵ Ivi, 157.

⁷⁶ Ivi, 190.

⁷⁷ Ivi, 208.

⁷⁸ A long dispatch (No.195) of Lord Russell to Hudson on 27 October 1860 sums up the British position on the Italian events, the invasion of the Papal States and of the Two Sicilies, as follows (see Ivi, 218 ss.): «That eminent jurist Vattel, when discussing the lawfulness of the assistance given by the United Provinces to the Prince of Orange when he invaded England, and overturned the throne of James the Second, says: «...When a people from good reasons take up arms against an oppressor, it is but an act of justice and generosity to assist brave men in the defence of their liberties...»; therefore, Her Majesty’s Government «cannot pretend to blame the King of Sardinia for assisting them. What wonder then that in 1860 the Neapolitan mistrustful and resentful should throw off the Bourbons as in 1688 England had thrown off the Stuarts?». As it is known, the fulcrum of Cavour’s policy vis-à-vis the great European Powers insisted constantly on the role of guaranteeing order (despite everything!), that the Kingdom of Sardinia intended to continue to maintain (E. Genta (Ternavasio), 2012, 193 ss.

dynasty»⁷⁹, all Sir James had to do was communicate to Cavour Her Majesty's Government's dispatch with which England not only concurred with the diplomatic criticisms of Austria, Russia, Prussia and France but, on the contrary, «rejoiced at the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties and consolidating the work of their independence».

When Cavour read the text, – Hudson reports⁸⁰ – he shouted, rubbed his hands, jumped up, sat down again; then he began to think and when he looked up, tears were standing in his eyes. Behind your dispatch, Hudson wrote to Russell, he saw the Italy of his dreams, the Italy of his hopes, the Italy of his policy.

Light and shade, therefore, in the acclaimed Anglo-Piedmontese friendship as is inevitable in any situation rich in nuances. The typically English prudent, empiricist, «experimental» casuistic attitude, averse to apriorisms and generalisations, had on several occasions, as we have seen, disappointed and annoyed the Piedmontese Government which had hoped to obtain much more. This attitude, viewed in the context of the European political scenario of the Mid-nineteenth century that, as mentioned, was in the throes of an in-depth metamorphosis as regards legal aspects, can be considered as neither obtuse nor hostile, permitting formulation of a generally positive judgement.

While it is true that diplomatic action is not and cannot be the offshoot of a merely personal relationship between the Government and its envoy, whereby it is not correct to emphasize the latter's work, I consider that, on the basis of existing documentation, it can be asserted that the fragile and rapid construction of the Unification of Italy found in the capability of discernment of British Ministers resident in Turin, and in particular in Sir James Hudson, effective personal support that was undeniably favourable and produced concrete results that, on some occasions, proved to be decisive.

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⁷⁹ G. Giarrizzo, 1962, 219.

⁸⁰ Ivi, 224.

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