The Art of The Possible

Documents on Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914

Ralph R. Menning

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE:

DOCUMENTS ON GREAT POWER DIPLOMACY, 1814-1914

RALPH R. MENNING

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About the Author

Ralph R. Menning has taught history and international relations at Brown, the University of Montana, Heidelberg College, and the University of Toledo. He has lectured to Model United Nations conferences, Smithsonian study groups, professional and civic associations, and students at all levels. Their questions and enthusiasm motivated him to write this book.

A graduate of the UN International School, Yale, and Brown, Professor Menning has been a fellow of the Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz and has studied public international law at the Hague Academy. His articles and reviews have appeared in *Central European History,* the *Austrian History Yearbook,* and other journals. He has contributed to several reference works, including the American Historical Association's *Guide to Historical Literature,* and is about to complete a study of the First Moroccan and Bosnian crises, *The Concert Wrecked: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Global Confrontation, 1906–1909.* He lives in Toledo, Ohio.

List of Abbreviations

BD	George P. Gooch and Harold V. Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914,* 11 vols. (London, 1925–1938)*
Bourne	Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830–1902* (Oxford, 1970)
CTS	Clive Parry (ed.), *The Consolidated Treaty Series, 1648–1919,* 231 vols. (Dobbs Ferry, NY, 1969–1986)
D'Angeberg	Comte d'Angeberg [pseud. for Jakob Leonhard Chodzko] (ed.), *Le Congrès de Vienne et les traités de 1815,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1863)
DD	Karl Kautsky, Count Max Montgelas, and Walter Schücking (eds.), *Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch 1914* (Berlin, 1919; 1922)
DDF	*Documents diplomatiques français, 1871–1914,* 1st Series: *1871–1900,* 16 vols. (Paris, 1929–1959); 2nd Series: *1901–11,* 14 vols. (Paris, 1930–1955); 3rd Series: *1911–14,* 11 vols. (Paris, 1929–1936)*
FO	Foreign Office files, Public Record Office, London
GP	Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme (eds.), *Die Grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914,* 40 vols. in 54 (Berlin, 1922–1927)*
GW	Otto von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke,* ed. by H. von Petersdorff et al., 15 vols. (Berlin, 1924–1935)*

*References are to document rather than page numbers.

HP	Normal Rich and M. H. Fisher (eds.), *The Holstein Papers,* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1956–1963), and *Die geheimen Papiere Friedrich von Holsteins,* 4 vols. (Göttingen, 1956–1963)*
Hertslet	Edward Hertslet (ed.), *The Map of Europe by Treaty,* 4 vols. (London, 1877–1891; reprint: 1969)
Hertslet II	Edward Hertslet (ed.), *The Map of Africa by Treaty,* 3 vols. (3rd rev. ed., London, 1909; reprint, 1967)
Hertslet III	Godfrey E. P. Hertslet (ed.), *Treaties, etc., between Great Britain and China and between China and Foreign Powers,* 2 vols. (3rd ed., London, 1908)
Hurewitz	*The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record,* 2nd ed., vol. 1: *European Expansion, 1535–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), comp., trans., and ed. by J. C. Hurewitz, © J. C. Hurewitz.
Hurst	Michael Hurst (ed.), *Key Treaties for the Great Powers, 1814–1914,* 2 vols. (New York, 1972)
OeU	Ludwig Bittner and Hans Uebersberger (eds.), *Oesterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914,* 9 vols. (Vienna, 1930)*
PA	German Foreign Ministry Archives, Bonn
Parl. Deb.	*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*
PP	*Parliamentary Papers*
Pribram	Alfred Pribram (ed.), *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, 1879–1914,* 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1920)
QV	Reginald, Viscount Esher and George Earl Buckle (eds.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria,* 1st Series: *1837–61,* 3 vols. (London, 1907); 2nd Series: *1862–85,* 3 vols. (London, 1926–1928); 3rd Series: *1885–1901,* 3 vols. (London, 1930–1932)
Reichstag	[German parliament,] *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*
SP	*British and Foreign State Papers,* 170 vols. (London, 1841–1968)
Temperley and Penson	Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)* (Cambridge, 1938; reprint: New York, 1966)
ZI	Otto Hoetzsch et al. (trans. and eds.), *Die internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus. Dokumente aus den Archiven der zarischen und der provisorischen Regierung, 1878–1917,* 3rd Series [1911–1916], 10 vols. (Berlin, 1930–1942)*

Preface

As this book took shape, I could not check for long the impulse to badger friends and colleagues, even recent acquaintances, with requests for help of every kind. Had it not been for their patience and their willingness to set aside their own work to humor me, the book would not have been possible. I thank them all for their generosity.

For their suggestions and advice, I am particularly indebted to Robert Berkhofer, III, Owen Bradley, James Chastain, Phil Harner, Holger Herwig, Ned Newman, Nancy Perry, Merle Rife, and Ann Pottinger Saab. I have benefited greatly from the expertise of my former colleagues at the University of Montana, especially Paul Gordon Lauren and Richard Drake, and from that of Glenn Ames, Sally Hadden, William Hoover, and Robert Freeman Smith at the University of Toledo. Michael Jakobson freely gave his time to translate several passages from and into Russian. Without assistance from Anna Miller, the French prose of Wilhelm von Humboldt would be a mystery still. My wife, Carol Bresnahan Menning, translated the bulk of the documents from French and Italian sources.

In Bonn, Dr. Maria Keipert and the staff of the German foreign ministry archives offered kind hospitality and once again gave me invaluable help. I wish to thank Leopold Kammerhofer of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv for patiently dealing with an avalanche of questions. Nancy Rubenstein and her coworkers in the interlibrary loan office of Beeghley Library processed a mountain of requests, many of them as outlandish as they were exasperating. My friends and former students Michael Groomes, Kim Pace, Linville Taggart, and Christine Utick bore with good cheer the drudgery of a thousand tasks, and I am obliged to Sabine Pagel and Katja Wüstenbecker for scouring the university libraries at Heidelberg and Marburg for a range of rare items.

Paul Schroeder took time from a busy schedule to read a draft of the first eight chapters; his extensive commentaries gave me a sense of perspective and saved me from many a blunder. Linda Frey, Marsha Frey, and Norman Rich slogged through the entire manuscript, persevered even when I imposed on them what I thought were new and improved versions, and were still kind enough to offer constant encouragement and moral support. But this book would have never come into being had it not been for my wife, who brought to her many and various roles—as translator, researcher, editor extraordinaire, sounding board—the discerning eye of someone who has been through it all before. I am not sure that I can devise an adequate form of repayment, but dedicating this book to her might just be a small step in the right direction.

I would also like to express my thanks for the many useful comments and suggestions provided by the following reviewers: Darwin Bostick, Old Dominion University; George Giacomini, Santa Clara University; Robert Herzstein, University of South Carolina; John Hill, Immaculata College; H. Peter Krosby, SUNY, Albany; Herbert Rothfeder, East Carolina University; Thomas Sakmyster, University of Cincinnati; William Scott, Duke University; Daniel Silverman, Penn State University; and Marla Stone, Occidental College.

A summer grant from the University of Montana first gave me the time to think about the basic scheme of this book. My editors at McGraw-Hill—David Follmer, Pam Gordon, Nancy Blaine, and Leslye Jackson—have been models of patience and understanding, and more than once gave me the confidence to proceed. Finally, Lauren Byrne of Editorial Services of New England, Inc., piloted this project through the production stage with sound judgment and a steady hand. I am grateful to them all.

Ralph R. Menning

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Thanks are also due the American Historical Association for permission to quote from Robert A. Kann, "Emperor William II and Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Their Correspondence," in *American Historical Review* 57 (1951/52) and from Paul Knaplund (ed.), "Letters from the Berlin Embassy," from the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1942,* vol. 2. Selections from the correspondence of Wilhelm II in the Brandenburgisches-Hohenzollern'sches Hausarchiv are courtesy of the Geheimes Staatsarchiv of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Excerpts from *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 26 (1939) and Alberto M. Ghisalberti (ed.), *Lettere di Felice Orsini* appear with permission from the Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento Italiano; extracts from Sergio Camerani and Gaetano Arfé (eds.), *Carteggi di Bettino Ricàsoli* are reprinted with kind permission from the Istituto storico Italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea. I am grateful to the Japan Foundation for allowing use of excerpts from *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–95,* ed. by Gordon Mark Berger; the Kommission für bayerische Landesgeschichte bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften for Anton Chroust (ed.), *Gesandtschaftsberichte aus München;* the Royal Historical Society for vol. 25 of *Camden Fourth Series,* "The Diary of Edward Goschen, 1900–1914," ed. C.H.D. Howard; the Südost-Institut at the University of Munich for Karl Nehring (ed.), *Flugblätter und Flugschriften der ungarischen Revolution von 1848/49;* the Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, for Phyllis Lewsen (ed.), *Selections*

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Göttingen, for use of the excerpts from Karl-Kietrich Erdmann (ed.), *Kurt Riezler. Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente,* © 1972, and to S.F. Vanni for Howard Marraro (ed.), *Diplomatic Relations between the United States and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies,* © 1952.

Ralph R. Menning

Introduction: The Art of the Possible

The purpose of any collection of primary sources is to convey a sense of immediacy: to impart to the reader a "you-were-there" atmosphere by allowing him or her to look over the shoulder, so to speak, of the leading characters as they take pen in hand. The reader of the present work can follow statesmen and politicians as they take a stand, force an issue, flimflam a reluctant monarch, beat a retreat, disguise their underlying motives from parliamentary scrutiny, or scramble for cover. Embedded in their style are their motives, sympathies and antipathies, perspective, good judgment (or lack thereof). But language and style do more than simply mirror personality: Castlereagh's prolixity, Palmerston's bombast, Bismarck's pithiness, the diatribes of Napoleon III or Wilhelm II derive their real significance from what they suggest about these figures' realism, their focus and assumptions, the quality of their leadership.

In diplomacy, language and style are the building blocks of compromise or confrontation, the ingredients on which the outcome of many a negotiation or maneuver may hinge, the essence of a perpetual game of defining and redefining the bounds of the possible. Of course, geography, fiscal or other constraints, technological advances, and mobilization schedules impose limits on what the most accomplished practitioner of the art of the possible can achieve. But the power of words should not be underestimated: a verbal conjuring trick may outwit an ally or an adversary, while a misstep may well turn one into the other.

This book was motivated in part by my belief that the politics of the nineteenth century is of more than antiquarian interest for the student of modern international relations. A recital of arguments might begin with the suggestion that the past should be studied for its own sake. Second, familiarity with the nineteenth century (by which diplomatic historians generally mean the years between Napoleon's defeat in 1814 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914) is a prerequisite for understanding the twentieth. The demons of this century—total war, mechanized butchery on an unprecedented scale, national (and class) hatreds so intense that previous outbursts pale in comparison—were set free by the First World War, a conflagration unleashed by politicians and diplomats who paradoxically shared a premonition that a war among the Great Powers would end the international and social order as they knew it. If we measure the importance of events by the consequences that they generate, then the inability (or refusal?) of the Great Powers in 1914 to settle their differences peaceably continues to take pride of place as one of the most spectacular failures ever. Long after the guns fell silent, the legacy of the July crisis of 1914 continued to poison international relations: the determination of the victorious Allies to hold Germany responsible for having caused the First World War,

the German attempt to refute this charge, and the ensuing battle for the hearts and minds of the public permeated the political climate of the 1920s and 1930s. Understanding the interwar years means having to understand the widespread revulsion, particularly in Britain, against the sins of July 1914 and against the brinkmanship which characterized the many crises of the pre-World War I decade. Those in Britain who made the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 and those who denounced the Franco-Soviet pact of the same year merely thought they had learned from the lessons of history that unchecked arms races and peacetime alliances were catalysts of war.

But there are even more compelling reasons for investigating nineteenth-century international politics. The nineteenth century, with its two long periods of peace among the Great Powers (1815–1853 and 1871–1914), contrasts sharply with the era of the world wars of the twentieth. Yet it speaks to a range of issues that have surfaced in the post-cold war world. This is not to propose that history repeats itself. On the contrary, the suggestion that there are links between the nineteenth century and the present calls for a reminder that comparisons over time are fraught with danger. But the nineteenth-century record enriches our understanding of subjects as diverse as the functioning of a multipolar, as opposed to a bipolar, state system; the aging and fraying of alliances; the decay of multinational states; the assault of ideologies, promising deliverance and utopia, on the status quo; the setting of priorities and the making of choices in an environment of political and economic constraints. Anyone interested in today's headlines on the origins of ethnic conflict in the Caucasus or the Balkans, on the illogic of Africa's borders, on the relationship of Russia to China or to the Muslim world, or on the compatibility of a united Germany with the European equilibrium will find that these issues simply cannot be understood without an appreciation of their nineteenth-century roots.

It is only fair for an author to share with his readers his biases at the outset, and here I would like to mention several which have influenced me in the compilation of this volume. Writers on international affairs often use the term "national interest" as if it were an objective or independent agent. But definitions of the "national interest" evolve over time, are transformed in reaction to new circumstances, or vary with the individuals charged with the making of policy. One of the goals of this book is to show how, for the principal Great Powers over the course of the nineteenth century, the definition of the "national interest" changed and what (or who) was responsible for these changes. This approach, in its turn, demands a good hard look at the fashion, still wide-spread in many college texts, of reducing the history of other countries to a dozen or so well-worn images which are continually evoked to the exclusion of everything else. I am reluctant to accept that outcomes are preordained because of a genetic disposition for "British," "French," or "German" statesmen to act in certain ways: the shorthand "British" to describe the policies of both Palmerston and Salisbury, or "German" to explain the views of Humboldt, Bismarck, and Bülow, does little to advance our understanding but does obscure crucial differences in temperament, approach, and outlook.

History would be easier to understand if all spectacular events had spectacular causes. Alas, great events are often set into motion by trivial occurrences, and the student of international relations is frequently surprised to discover the picayune surroundings that attended the birth of policies later extolled by historians as "guiding principles" or "diplomatic systems." The Three Emperors' League or the Reinsurance Treaty is often invoked, but who—apart from the professional historian—remembers the specific circumstances to which these instruments responded? The milestone remains—frozen in time, yanked out of its context—but the road leading up to it lies concealed in a dense fog of forgetfulness. Part of the purpose of this book is to recall some of these details and to draw attention to their importance. In trying to strike a balance between the particular and the general, I have been sparing in my use of the word

"system" (though I occasionally use "systemic" to suggest a bird's-eye perspective); the only true "system"with which this book deals, and which was consciously conceived as such, was the one established by the alliances and peace treaties of 1814–1815.

Moreover, I hope that these readings will assist students as they "do" history, as they test the theories of historians against the written record, as they develop their own hypotheses. It has been said in jest that a tragedy is a beautiful theory killed by an ugly fact, and perhaps the ultimate test of the usefulness of the documents here is whether they corroborate, counter, or even damage well-established generalizations: how do they speak to the idea that the Great Powers between 1820 and 1848 divided into two camps, the "liberal west" and the "autocratic east"; to the notion that the unification of Germany was the result of profound and irresistible forces; to the assertion that nineteenth–century Russian foreign policy was a relentless drive to warm-water ports; to the orthodoxy that Germany planned or willed the First World War?

The published documents dealing with the international relations of the Great Powers in the nineteenth century, never mind the archival holdings, run in the hundreds of thousands of items, and it would be folly to pretend that these vast records can be condensed to a single, definitive volume. Most documents here have been chosen because there is widespread agreement that they are essential to an understanding of nineteenth-century Great Power politics (and, indeed, modern international relations); others, because they offer capsule descriptions or "snapshots" of larger vistas. Some were selected on the basis of more eccentric criteria—to demonstrate dissent from within the ranks, to supply a corrective to present-day reductionism and prejudices, or to show that a result celebrated as inevitable by posterity was very much in doubt until the last moment. In a few cases, I have not been able to resist the temptation to include documents because of their literary charm.

Throughout, I have given preference to sources that are immediate to the events under consideration. Such documents—correspondence, diaries, memoranda, speeches, instructions, the treaties themselves—are the ones that either set matters in motion or constitute spontaneous reactions. I have largely shunned autobiographies, for there is no reason to believe that the memories of statesmen are less defective than our own, and the few exceptions that I have made tend to prove this point. But some passages in this book have been deliberately chosen because they contain references to events treated earlier; these seem particularly apt as they reflect an effort on the part of the principals of this story to interpret the events at hand in light of the "lessons of history."

The vast majority of documents in this book are drawn from published collections, though many appear in English translation for the first time. Some documents come from my own work in the archives. By and large, procuring many of the documents reproduced here has been something of an education: given the frequency with which they are cited by scholars, I thought them far more accessible than they actually are. As this volume progressed, the challenge (and frustration) of locating some of these supposedly well-known sources itself became a justification for the book. It strikes me as ironic, and not a little incongruous, that on one hand we demand that our students become more cosmopolitan, that they increase their knowledge of international relations, or that they make informed judgments on the diplomacy of imperialism or the origins of the First World War, while on the other hand the sources—particularly those in languages other than English—remain hidden away in a handful of research libraries.

Each of the chapters is introduced by a note placing that chapter in a larger context. Within chapters, each document or cluster of documents is preceded by a headnote. The purpose of these headnotes is to explain the background events, to raise questions or interpretive

difficulties specific to each document, to refer the reader to the scholarly debates which it may have generated, and to provide a point of departure for discussion or independent research. In some instances, the notes seek to alert the reader to documents that have acquired importance or notoriety because of what they do not explicitly say, because of the issues which they skirt, because of their omissions. The notes stop short of summarizing the document, of giving away too much of its substance, so as not to interfere with the reader's process of discovery.

The bibliographical essay at the end of this book focuses on primary sources; each of the chapter notes concludes with a short list of further readings in the secondary literature. For reasons of space, these suggestions are brief: they are limited to recent titles or earlier works with extensive bibliographies. Readers interested in fuller coverage should consult Section 47 ("International Relations, 1815–1920") of the American Historical Association's *Guide to Historical Literature* (Oxford, 1995) or the bibliographies in Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814–1914* (McGraw-Hill, 1992); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford, 1994); and A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford, 1954).

For the sake of readability, I have modified capitalization and spelling and have added or deleted commas in some documents. Such interventions have not, I hope, altered the meaning of these texts.

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