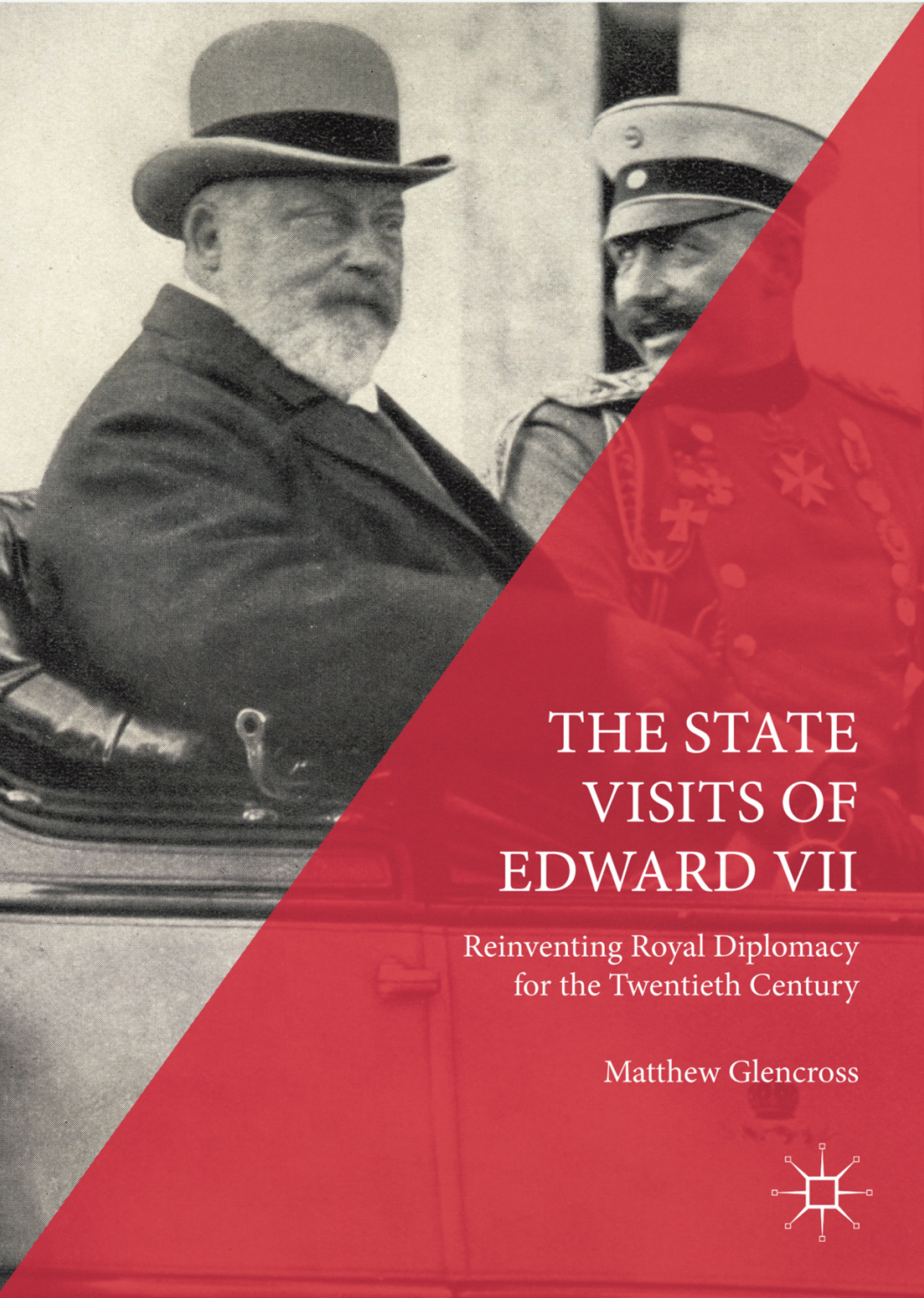


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# THE STATE VISITS OF EDWARD VII

Reinventing Royal Diplomacy  
for the Twentieth Century

Matthew Glencross



## The State Visits of Edward VII

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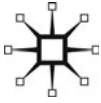
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# The State Visits of Edward VII

Reinventing Royal Diplomacy for the  
Twentieth Century

Matthew Glencross  
*Kings College London, UK*

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*To my beautiful Dolly  
Since 2006 you have been my love and inspiration*

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# Introduction

## Introduction

A ‘Prince of Pleasure’, selfish, cruel and, according to some interpretations of Kenneth Grahame’s *Wind in the Willows*, Mr Toad.<sup>1</sup> These are a selection of terms that have been applied to Edward VII. Yet contemporaries also named him a ‘Prince of Diplomacy’, because he showed himself to be a keen diplomat who, once he was on the throne, aimed to reinvent the monarchy as a key contributor to Britain’s foreign policy, through his use of symbolism, pomp and display, all of which are intrinsic elements in diplomacy. As Queen Victoria’s eldest son, Edward VII was born to inherit the throne. He was trained from infancy by tutors hand-selected by his father, the Prince Consort, for the task of readying him for the role he would one day inherit. Largely due to his prolonged period as Prince of Wales contrasted with his brief nine-year reign, he is often characterised primarily as the typical Victorian playboy he appeared to be in his youth and middle age: a reputation that has overshadowed his achievements as King.

## Reviving active royal diplomacy

This book focuses on what the author feels to be one of the most significant, but under-studied, aspects of his achievements when on the throne, but it is not a biography of Edward VII. It is a detailed study of the revival during his reign of state visits overseas – royal

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (first published 1908, reprinted London: Vintage, 2012).

diplomacy – made by the British monarch. From the time of Albert's death, Queen Victoria ceased to travel abroad in full state as Queen of the United Kingdom, meaning that by the end of the nineteenth century Britain was the only important European nation whose sovereign did not partake fully in the ceremonial networks of the state visit. She still, if reluctantly, received monarchs visiting Britain in state: she did not return the compliment, leaving it instead to her elected executive or their appointed diplomats to undertake any formal overseas duties. Edward was conscious of the one-sided nature of royal diplomacy as practised by his mother post-1861, and when he ascended the throne he enthusiastically set about rectifying this. He soon gained a reputation as one of the most travelled sovereigns in Europe. His reign may have been brief, but by its end, royal tours overseas were no longer informal holidays; instead, they were re-established as state visits, and so as a significant element in the monarch's royal duty (as they continue to be). It is a measure of how core such overseas state visits have been since their re-establishment by Edward VII that when the current monarch, Elizabeth II, announced her intention to scale back on such commitments in favour of their performance by her heir and heir apparent (Princes Charles and William), it sparked popular and media speculation that she was intending to abdicate.<sup>2</sup>

It would be absurd to claim that Edward invented the British overseas state visit; however, as this book will demonstrate, it can be claimed that he did invent the British version of the modern overseas state visit. The formal overseas tours undertaken by the Queen and other members of the present British royal family owe a considerable debt to the state visits made by Edward VII. In many ways, they set the blueprint for both the reasons and the rituals of such expressions of British diplomacy. What this book focuses on is the evolution of the modern state visit under Edward VII, through an examination of his state visits overseas – with only one exception; the complimentary return visits made to Britain are not studied here. However, it should be added here that the book does not discuss every formal, let alone informal, visit that Edward made abroad. The focus is on the high-profile state visits, with all their accompanying pomp and splendour and diplomatic significance. With the exception of the visits made to Germany in the first year of his reign, it does not explore those occasions when, making a brief interruption

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, 'Prince Charles and Queen in Royal Jobshare', *Daily Mail*, 8 May 2013; 'Abdication Rumors', *The Australian*, 23 December 2014.

to his informal travels for health and pleasure, Edward VII made formal visits in Austria, Portugal and Germany. On such occasions, while the King might be received by his royal counterpart and engage in some formal ceremonial as part of the encounter, they were not counted by either Edward himself, or the sovereigns he visited, as state visits. There was, and is, something distinctive about a state visit.

## Sources and the existing literature

Inevitably, the key sources for this work have focused on the royal court, including comments from the King himself and from his courtiers (both their own words and when speaking on Edward's behalf). As these reveal, much of the impetus for state visits derived from royal initiatives. However, one thing that Edward was very conscious of was that he was a constitutional monarch. Steeped in Bagehot and Dicey from his earliest days, he conceptualised his royal role within the constraints and limits laid out in these core constitutional commentaries.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, another heavily used set of sources include the official government records and the papers and memoirs of various politicians and diplomats.

Unlike George III, who complained of being a 'king in chains' and kicked against these limits and constraints, Edward VII accepted them and looked for ways to work with his elected government within the boundaries of constitutionalism. As the chapters of this book will underline, when his fellow European monarchs, especially his nephew, the Kaiser, actively encouraged Edward to behave unconstitutionally by discussing issues of policy monarch-to-monarch, Edward refused to do so. This does not mean that his relationship with his government, particularly individual politicians, was always smooth, but it cannot be claimed that the difficulties were rooted in Edward taking policy initiatives without advice from his elected ministers. Such initiatives as he did take lay in what Edward considered undoubtedly, and constitutionally, the sovereign's sphere: namely, the management of the appropriate ceremonials and rituals that characterised a state visit. Many of the difficulties arose from the reality that, by 1901, the

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Bagehot (2001) *The English Constitution* (originally published 1857, reprinted Brighton: Sussex Academic press); A.V. Dicey (2012) *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (first published 1885, reprinted New York: Elibron Classics).

elected government and the diplomatic service in Britain were used to conducting diplomacy with no active involvement from the monarch. The symbol of royal endorsement was sufficient, in their minds, to enable effective management of Britain's foreign policy and the diplomacy that sustained it.

It is fair to say, when assessing the accuracy of the usual judgements on Edward VII by politicians and courtiers which are used by scholars to assess the King and his reign, that those most used are largely retrospective. Consequently, what has been particularly important for this volume is an emphasis on sources reflecting more immediate contemporary reactions. These suggest, for instance, that Edward's ministers and diplomats were at least disconcerted and at worst actively unhappy when, early in the reign, it became plain that the King planned to revive active royal diplomacy. This meant that, initially at least, his state visits were perceived by his government as additional to British foreign policy and not an intrinsic part of it, and, in practice, politicians and diplomats really did not know how to make effective use of royal diplomacy and its impacts. By the end of his reign, this had changed, and state visits overseas had become central to the majority of modern British diplomacy in a way and at a level that was hitherto unprecedented in the British experience. While, as the next chapter explores, Victoria and Albert had been perceived by her government as diplomatic assets, there was no expectation that she could, or would, achieve what Edward was to do on the diplomatic scene. This relative lack of expectation had made it easier both for Victoria to withdraw except as a symbol, and for her elected governments to assume the leading role in her name in interstate diplomacy.

This book investigates Edward's own perspectives on royal diplomacy as well as those of his government, through sources which enable particular attention to be paid to the involvement of the Foreign Secretary as a factor in the management of royal diplomacy. These reveal, for instance, that the current situation (where the monarch is always accompanied by the Foreign Secretary or a senior elected politician) evolved only gradually. While such a situation is now a key characteristic of a royal journey overseas being a state visit (as opposed to a royal visit with some formal engagements included), this was not the case initially during the reign of Edward VII. But it is the use of contemporary sources which emphasises this dimension, rather than the retrospective assessments in which it had already become the norm that such high-profile formal occasions required the presence of the Foreign Secretary or a high-level representative in his stead.

Consequently, an examination of the contemporary media – both newspapers and periodicals – has also proved to be an important resource for this book.<sup>4</sup> It is from these sources that a better estimation has been gleaned of how the media commentators of the day, and his subjects, understood what Edward was doing and the importance of the choices the King made of whom to include in his entourage, as these are invariably listed in the press. It also explains the largely overlooked contemporary labelling of him as a peacemaker or, as *The Times* once phrased it, ‘The Most Powerful and Influential Diplomat of His Day’.<sup>5</sup> The contribution made by his state visits was explored in such sources in great detail, underlining the extent to which Edward’s active royal diplomacy was also a very public form of diplomacy, rather than being (as in the past of royal state visits and the Edwardian present of political diplomacy) conducted behind closed doors and substantially in secret. The British press reportage was overall not hagiographic, but it was generally supportive and enthusiastic about what Edward did. As the editorials underline, the press showed a critical but positive appreciation of the reality that Edward was not *making* policy, but promoting the policy of his government by providing the right context for it to be appreciated outside the kingdom. Edward’s government was discussed as evolving policy and negotiating treaties with the national interest at heart. Edward’s role, through his state visits, was to create the cordial and positive atmosphere in which his elected government could best achieve results in that national interest. This was how contemporaries understood diplomatic events such as the Entente Cordiale or the exchange of diplomatic notes with Spain.

While *The Times* has generally been the most used newspaper, a range of other titles have been consulted, and where they have differed from *The Times*, this has been noted. Equally, a range of popular and widely read magazines, aimed at a respectable working-class as well as a middle- and upper-class audience, has been surveyed. Amongst the most useful have been the *Windsor Magazine*, with its respectable, middle-of-the-road, middle-class readership, and the more radical and left-leaning *Pearson’s Magazine*, as well as the *Strand Magazine*. Nor have the British media alone been consulted. One of the great resources of the Royal

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Dr Judith Rowbotham for her help in introducing me to the use of British media sources, and explaining the different target audiences and readership strategies, as well as the point and purpose of editorials, correspondence and other styles of reportage.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Germany’, German Correspondent, *The Times*, 10 January 1909.

Archives has been the preservation of a range of newspaper clippings from the presses of countries visited, and this has been amplified by comments in the British press itself on how the foreign press reacted to Edward's presence on a formal state visit. Interestingly, these non-British sources generally share the British enthusiasm for Edward as a practitioner of royal diplomacy, and they could be held to be a more knowledgeable and sophisticated audience in terms of how they estimated such visits. As Paulmann has shown, by the start of the twentieth century, the phenomenon of the royal state visit was a well-established feature of the European diplomatic landscape, and one which the media was accustomed to reporting on lavishly.<sup>6</sup>

It was during the age of the post-1918 memoirs reflecting on Edwardian diplomacy that the King's reputation as a diplomat became tarnished – as a way, all too often, of enhancing the gloss of those figures seeking to diminish him. Edward Grey, reminiscing over his time as Foreign Secretary, focused on the inconvenience that royal tours caused him.<sup>7</sup> Asquith's memoirs were also generally negative in their assessment.<sup>8</sup> But Grey, for example, did not only downplay the role of the King – his colleagues received similarly derogatory treatment at his hands. The disadvantage faced by Edward, as well as other British monarchs, is that (with the exception of Edward VIII) they were unable to write their own memoirs to outline precisely for posterity what their role had been. It is informative to turn to a collection of Grey's political speeches to the Commons.<sup>9</sup> These give a very different view of what Grey thought of royal tours at the time (at least publicly).

Probably the most effectively damning of the assessments of Edward VII as king and royal diplomat comes from the 'in'famous biography of Edward VII by Sidney Lee. Lee interviewed politicians who had worked with the late King and, based on their testimony, came to the conclusion that Edward VII was a man with a high opinion of himself, but that he and his state visits had had little actual worth. This is probably the most regularly cited book on Edward VII by historians of British diplomacy,

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<sup>6</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>7</sup> Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1928) *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916*, 2 vols (London: Hodder and Stoughton).

<sup>8</sup> H.H. Asquith (1928) *Memories and Reflections*, 2 vols (London: Cassell).

<sup>9</sup> Edward Grey (1931) *Speeches of Foreign Affairs 1904–1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin).



who usually use Lee's conclusions as a justification of their own conclusions on the peripherality of state visits to the evolution of British diplomacy at the time. But what such assessments do is focus on the evolution of policy per se, and, as I have already commented, this was not something with which Edward directly involved himself. His sense of constitutional propriety left that arena to his ministers: what he arraigned to himself was the contextualising symbolism of active royal diplomacy.

In contemporary estimations, and in terms of the legacy left by Edward VII for his successors, what made these state visits both significant and effective was the King's actual, and not just symbolic, presence as a representative of the British state. Crucially, he could signal his pleasure over the diplomatic achievements of his government through his presence and his words. Tellingly, while his politicians increasingly accepted that his state visits were an asset, many of them did not fully understand why they were successful, as can be seen in their lack of understanding of the negative signals given out on the state visit to Spain. This helps to explain their subsequent lack of appreciation of Edward's contribution, and of the significance of his active symbolism of the British nation through his state visits.

### **Symbolism, ceremonial and the characteristics of the state visit**

When making state visits, it could also be argued that Edward himself was only partially conscious of his role as a symbol of British diplomacy, as much of it was visceral to a man trained from infancy to be a king. The understanding of the nature of the symbolic profile of the British monarchy owes much to the work of David Cannadine – who, in turn, has been influenced by work in the field of semiotics in particular. This is not a work of semiotics, and as such, does not engage directly with the rich literature in that field, but the debt owed here deserves to be acknowledged.

Through texts such as *Ornamentalism*, Cannadine has outlined the importance of royal symbols to the British and to their imperial subjects. He also discusses the impact of public ceremony and rituals, where supposedly deeply rooted royal traditions were one of the key factors that kept the empire together.<sup>14</sup> In *The Invention of Tradition*, Cannadine has shown how ceremony and public display played a positive part in public life, and so in the establishing of a modern British identity,

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<sup>14</sup> David Cannadine (2001) *Ornamentalism* (London: Penguin), p. 102.

from the late Victorian period onwards.<sup>11</sup> Justifying the extension of Cannadine's assessment of the power of the symbolism associated with the British crown is the work of Johannes Paulmann, which makes a major contribution to the new approach to diplomatic history through his own understanding of the significance of ceremonial and ritual. In his seminar work, *Pomp und Politik*, Paulmann provides a masterly exposition of the ways in which the nineteenth-century European states interacted diplomatically via their royal courts, and through the invocation of detailed ceremonies and rituals which underpinned policy negotiations by demonstrating the respective power and status of the participating states. As such, he shows that royal diplomacy was a key part in the development of European foreign policy, and that the state visit had a peculiar and particular modern role within this.

What both Cannadine and Paulmann demonstrate is the significance of carefully planned and formulaic rituals in the public performance of modern monarchy and its appreciation by increasingly mass audiences, both directly and via the media. At all times, royal courts practised more or less elaborate daily rituals, and diplomats representing them at their embassies abroad mirrored these to an extent as part of that representative function. The rituals were always highly political, certainly in terms of cultural negotiations relating to status, power and authority. In the post-Napoleonic world, many of the older rituals and ceremonial observances associated with royalty and its political powers had lost some of their immediate power, but – even in the newly shaped or new states that emerged in the following decades – the symbolism of royalty retained a real force, and it was this which made the state visit a powerful diplomatic tool, as Paulmann has shown.<sup>12</sup> For dynastic or family and personal reasons (including for enjoyment), throughout the nineteenth century European royals regularly travelled outside the boundaries of their own states. On such tours, a reduced amount of ceremonial was likely to be observed, though informal family and pleasure visits were often interspersed with formal visits to a royal figure or place. Formal visits of this nature were increasingly likely to be surrounded with an amount of ceremonial, and publicity, as with the visit that Edward VII made to Hamburg

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<sup>11</sup> David Cannadine (1983) 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c. 1820–1977' in E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

(discussed in Chapter 6). But a state visit was something far more elaborate and significant than the gesture of a formal royal visit, which is one reason why they were generally planned over such a relatively long period of time and with such minute scrutiny of the details by all sides.

In terms of the public visibility of a state visit by the end of the nineteenth century, certain practical expectations were in place.<sup>13</sup> A visiting royal would arrive either (traditionally) by sea or in an elaborate overland cortege – or, more usually by the end of the century, by train. Whatever the means of transport, the vehicle carrying the visiting royal to a state visit would be elaborately decorated with both royal and national symbols (crowns, crests and flags) and would expect to be met at a meeting point (increasingly a railway station), which had also been elaborately decorated. For Britain, Victoria Station was the favoured station for royal visitors to use to arrive and depart; its broad concourse was particularly well suited to accommodating crowds of spectators as well as the host dignitaries. Visiting male monarchs or consorts would appear in uniform; usually – as a compliment to their host – they would have donned the uniform of the regiment in their host country's army of which they had previously been appointed an honorary colonel (arrivals by sea usually saw male royals in admiral's uniform), as well as wearing the decorations and honours which accompanied their rank. Female royals would wear extravagant and high-fashion gowns and accessories throughout, with magnificent jewels and orders for evening events. The visiting royals would be met either by their host sovereign or by high-ranking delegates, also elaborately and formally dressed in uniforms and wearing decorations. In the latter case, the visiting royals would be escorted through the streets to the palace or other residence where their royal hosts – ceremonially attired – would officially receive them. There, they would hand over official gifts, as from one nation or state to another, all intended to symbolise not merely a spirit of concord but also the resources of each nation, and the things of which they were most proud.<sup>14</sup> In all of this, the public display element was core to the management of the event or series of events and, increasingly, was widely

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<sup>13</sup> Such details are still largely used to this day; witness the work of Erik Goldstein in producing a resumé of these for use in the current Foreign Office. See Erik Goldstein (1997) *The Politics of the State Visit*, Diplomatic Studies Programme Discussion Papers no. 26 (Leicester: Centre for the Study of Diplomacy).

<sup>14</sup> Many of the objects received from the nineteenth century onwards are visible in Cumberland Lodge, on the Windsor Royal Estate, including portraits, epergnes and other ornamental items.

reported in the media. Subsequent to arrival, the visiting royal would hand out awards and decorations to chosen recipients in the host's court and diplomatic service (all carefully arranged beforehand). In addition (though this was not automatic), both visitor and host sovereigns could award further honorary roles and titles to each other. All of this would be reported in considerable detail in the newspapers of the day.<sup>15</sup>

Each state visit was also the occasion for lavish entertainments, where the splendour of the venue was intended both to pay tribute to the importance of the visiting sovereign and to show off the resources, culture and taste of the host country. It became commonplace for a state visit to include at least one visit to a theatre or opera house, to witness a splendidly staged performance by leading entertainers. Cheering crowds were supposed to greet the visiting royals, and the anthems of both states would be played before a performance began. Subsequently, the visiting royals would be introduced to those leading performers – a more modern phenomenon, paying tribute to the need for sovereigns in the modern era to pay attention to issues of public popularity. There would also usually be some form of military review, where the military resources of the host nation would be displayed – in their finest uniforms – performing elaborate manoeuvres as testament to their skills and, implicitly, to the power of the host nation to defend itself. Usually, these would prioritise the army – but the small size of Britain and the accessibility of the coast meant that it was common for Britain to take its royal visitors to a locale like Plymouth to show off the Royal Navy at manoeuvres, with its shipping all decked out with flags and sailors in dazzling uniforms performing dangerously impressive feats on the rigging.

At least one state banquet would be staged by the host country (depending on the length of the visit), often accompanied by a ball; often a second banquet or formal dinner or reception would precede a visit to the theatre or opera. On the final night of a state visit, the visiting royals would host a reciprocal reception or banquet (and sometimes ball) using the resources of their embassy or ambassador's residence (whichever was the more splendid). When opportunity allowed, this reciprocal entertainment could also take advantage of the presence of a royal yacht (as with the current Queen's use of HMS *Britannia* until it was decommissioned). On departure, a formal leave-taking between the hosts would be staged, and with equal ceremonial, the visiting royals

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<sup>15</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

would depart – again dressed in appropriate uniforms. It was at this stage that there would be an exchange of more personal gifts between the royals – by Edward’s day these would be objects like guns, walking-sticks, gifts for the children, books and so on. Throughout, the royal visitors on both sides would be conscious of public scrutiny of every aspect of their conduct and appearance and how this would be commented on in the media of their own and the host country. Because each state visit was so formulaic, the minute details of a visit’s programme have not been commented on in detail, unless there was some departure from the norm or a particular aspect had an unusual longer-term impact which needs to be noted.<sup>16</sup>

### **Britain’s particular brand of royal diplomacy**

This book is profoundly influenced by this understanding of modern European diplomacy, but in its focus on British royal diplomacy, its starting point is that the British monarchy was different from its European counterparts. It is important, therefore, that we do not assess the British monarchy purely alongside its European counterparts, because this obscures its very different nature. Paulmann correctly concludes that ceremony and pomp were central to monarchical power in the nineteenth century and beyond, and in his emphasis on how important it is that we understand its contribution to the political history of these countries. As Blain and O’Donnell have commented, ‘ceremonial power in the generic sense of symbolic power is related to real power’.<sup>17</sup> However, while the Tsar and the Kaiser made considerable, and conscious, use of pomp as an asset to their ruling strategies (with the latter even being considered a genius in this respect), their employment of pomp and circumstance was not the only way in which they could exercise their monarchical power. For Edward, ceremonial power was far more indirectly related to any real royal power. With the exception of the British constitutional monarchy, then, it needs to be understood that all of the other European monarchies had a greater level of resource to direct political clout (whether or not they chose to use it), and so had the potential at least to interfere actively with developments in diplomatic and foreign policy outside the public ceremonials.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Blain and Hugh O’Donnell (2003) *Media, Monarchy and Power* (Portland, OR: Intellect Books), p. 64.

The British monarchy had developed along a different path, even before Victoria's retreat from public life. By the time Victoria came to the throne, British sovereigns already had far less direct political influence than their European counterparts, and the process by which their direct power was lessening was a long-standing evolutionary one. Unlike his royal relatives, Wilhelm II or Nicholas II, therefore, Edward both could not and would not directly interfere with policy. As he was aware, to do so would have caused a constitutional crisis. For him and for his successors, state visits provided the only way in which the British royal family could contribute to the development of their country's foreign policy and, in some ways, have an influence over the nuances of British diplomacy. This aspect is lost in a broader diplomatic survey and explication of European royal diplomacy; hence the need for a volume looking specifically at Britain and its revival of active overseas royal diplomacy at the start of the twentieth century.

# 1

## The Modern Revival of Royal Diplomacy

### Introduction

It is important to note that state visits overseas were not a modern phenomenon: diplomacy evolved out of visits between royals or their representatives. The modern concept of the summit meeting was, in the historical past, encapsulated in the royal visits exchanged between sovereigns. As the concept of the state emerged, royal visits became merged into something that was more than a personal power-play, and the terminology of the state visit began to emerge. From the start, such royal exchanges were integral to a ruler's role in safeguarding the lands over which they claimed suzerainty, through the making and sustaining of alliances of offence and defence. Consequently, at times of turmoil such as the Middle Ages, there are many examples of rulers undertaking personal journeys in order to conduct diplomacy face-to-face, as when Richard I of England visited the French King to secure his goodwill so that Richard could securely leave Europe for his Crusade to the Holy Land.<sup>1</sup> Public display of royal might and power was not automatically a core element in these visits, though undoubtedly ritual and ceremonial within the royal courts, by both hosts and visitors, would have been an important aspect of the power negotiations. It was during the early modern period, the supposed golden age of European kingship that succeeded the age of Christendom, that a more public dimension to

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Pierre Chaplais (1981) *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon); Ildar Garipzanov (2008) *The Symbolic Language of Royal Authority in Carolingian World* (Leiden: Brill); C. Tyerman (2006) *God's War. A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin).

royal displays became significant. The secular European states that had emerged looked to the creation of a sense of personal loyalty to the monarch amongst the mass of their subjects, especially in post-feudal societies such as that which had developed in England. It is not coincidence that the Tudor monarchs, seizing power at the end of the Wars of the Roses, were particularly conscious of the need to display their royal power, in terms of dazzling displays of wealth presented through rituals of pomp and ceremony, for a wide audience amongst their subjects.<sup>2</sup> Henry VIII apparently 'enjoyed touring England and presenting himself to his subjects',<sup>3</sup> because he understood the impact that seeing him in person, appropriately dressed and accompanied with due fanfare, could have on the loyalty of his subjects. It impressed viewers with the extent of his power and resources, and this anticipation of being 'impressive' was behind his decision to undertake a display of English royal power in a foreign setting, in order to improve the standing overseas of both his own royal house and his country. Henry consequently sought to cement the treaty with France in 1514 with a grand gesture that would affirm English royal power: Francis responded in kind in order to try to signal the superiority of French power. The meeting became known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold because of the amount of gold thread used by each side to deck out its encampment. The extravagance of the display put on by both the English and the French King was widely reported throughout Europe, as each party sought to outshine the other in the splendour of its costumes and accessories.<sup>4</sup>

It set a new standard for royal visits, where grand public display by either rulers or their representatives was understood as representing the political power of a country. Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I, also understood the importance of imagery and pomp in diplomacy and politics, as did her successor, James I of England and VI of Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

But the turmoil of the wars of religion within Europe substantially halted royal visits to other states, unless as part of a familial relationship.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the English had received foreign royals in full state before this point, most notably the Holy Roman Emperor's visit to Henry V in 1416, as illustrated by John Young (2008) *Twentieth Century Diplomacy, a Case Study of British Practice, 1963–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Ashley (1998) *British Monarchs, The Complete Genealogy, Gazetteer and Biographical Encyclopaedia of the Kings and Queens of Britain* (London: Robinson), p. 630.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 631–2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 641.



Instead, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, diplomacy was largely carried out by state representatives – ambassadors and special envoys – and, consequently, the high levels of pomp and ceremony that had characterised the royal visits of the sixteenth century diminished, though the importance of monarchical display within their own courts and for wider home consumption remained. It was not until after the Napoleonic era, with the resettlement of Europe under the Congress of Vienna from 1815 on, that royal state visits overseas resumed as a regular feature of inter-state diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> The Congress of Vienna had seen a reaffirming of monarchical power as the *raison d'être* of legitimate states, and this encouraged a more direct interchange between rulers, outside the familial links that existed between so many of the European royal houses. Once again, the direct demonstration of royal power became understood and accepted as a tool of diplomacy that went beyond the arranging of royal marriages that could, as part of a spousal dowry, ensure the support of one nation-state for another.

Royal marriages had always been a tool in the diplomatic armoury. The resultant links between royal houses had always been perceived as having the potential to reinforce the influence of a state by providing an informal but enduring form of alliance. During the troubled years of the European wars of religion and the wars of succession during the eighteenth century, the choice of side during conflicts was often shaped by the consequences of marital choices, as with the marriage of James I and VI's daughter Elizabeth to Frederick of the Palatinate. Such overseas royal visits as did take place in this period were usually in the guise of family interchanges, often in search of potential brides or for other family events including funerals, rather than as exercises in royal diplomacy of the nature of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Consequently, such visits were rarely described as being state occasions.

## Preparing for the Resumption of Active Royal Diplomacy

The background to the resumption of royal diplomacy in the shape of overseas state visits by sovereigns relates to the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period. The challenge of both of these to monarchical power had had the effect of bringing together European

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<sup>6</sup> C. Bartlett (1996) *Peace, War and the European Powers, 1814–1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), Chapter 1; F. Bridge & Rodger Bullen (2005) *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814–1914* (Harlow: Pearson Education), Chapter 2.

royal families, across the old divisions provided by religion and competing claimants to different thrones, by demonstrating that royals had more in common than they had differences.<sup>7</sup> There was a new consciousness of the concept of a legitimate right to rule deriving from hereditary royalty, the beginnings of what Edward VII was later to describe as the Trade Union of Kings. It provided an atmosphere which encouraged the resumption of royal visits overseas as a modern phenomenon intended to remind audiences in their own nation-states, as well those being visited, of the power and authority of sovereigns to accompany the more traditional royal diplomacy of suitable marriages between royal houses.<sup>8</sup>

What distinguished a state visit by a sovereign to another country from the informal familial exchanges of the previous centuries? The answer lies not merely in the elaborate ceremonials described in the Introduction, but also in how states were conceptualised by the nineteenth century within Europe. At this point, the state visit was, practically speaking, substantially confined to Europe or to the colonial possessions of European powers. In Western thinking, as a result of the Enlightenment debates over the nature of rule as well as events like the American and French Revolutions, the modern state was a relatively new concept. In practice, it had come to mean a totality that was beginning to include the idea of a country as representing a nation or, as Benedict Anderson puts it, an 'imagined community' where people expected their government to represent the shared culture and consequent values of that country's inhabitants, and not merely to support the interests of a ruling dynasty.<sup>9</sup> The modern state was a reinterpretation of the older forms of monarchical state. There was an increasing expectation, thanks to the rising power of the concept of shared national identities as playing a part in legitimising a state's existence, that a state would possess political powers which would act to limit as well as to support monarchical initiatives in domestic and foreign policy.

In the era when absolute monarchies dominated, all power was conceptualised as deriving from the ruler, via the royal court, where the heads of the main institutions of state (military as well as political) would all hold senior court positions, which made them directly answerable to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books).

the sovereign for their actions. In theory, and to a considerable extent in practice, up to the modern era, the ultimate and real authority in a state's government rested with the ruler, who alone had the power to make a final pronouncement on policy and its implementation. This is why diplomacy was essentially, in its origins, derived from and representative of royal power, because only a ruler or a directly appointed representative had the power to represent a state's interests abroad. However, despite the attempts of the Congress of Vienna to turn the clock back, the realities of early nineteenth-century Europe were that most modern rulers had to take into account the will of their subjects when evolving policy, domestic and foreign. The attempt of Charles X of France to emulate his absolutist predecessors and rely on his own authority (which he saw as divinely instituted) had resulted in his deposition in favour of his cousin, Louis-Philippe I, the so-called Citizen King, who was prepared to work with his subjects, hearing their voices through a variety of political structures.<sup>10</sup> This was the context in which Paulmann has explored the revival of state visits by rulers within nineteenth-century Europe: one in which the significance of ceremonial and symbolism was an important aspect of how monarchs affirmed their place in the political structures of their states.<sup>11</sup>

The British state had, however, developed differently from its European counterparts up to the beginnings of the nineteenth century. Consequently, while there are echoes and parallels to be drawn between the contexts in which British monarchs and their continental counterparts found themselves, the comparative approach to understanding the role and impact of ritual and symbolism as practised by British sovereigns cannot be pushed too far. As Cannadine, amongst others, has shown, during the nineteenth century the pressures of modernity did indeed mean that the 'invention of traditions', including royal traditions, was an important grounding exercise for the nation. Yet the potential for looming threats to the continuance of monarchy was not as consciously felt by British sovereigns, despite the reality of a republican movement. For one thing, despite the personal unpopularity of figures like George IV, rulers were no longer so closely and personally associated with political policies.<sup>12</sup> The rise of constitutional monarchy in Britain, which had

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<sup>10</sup> Vincent Beach (1971) *Charles X of France: His Life and Times* (Boulder CO: Pruett Publishing Company); William Fortescue (2005) *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (London: Routledge).

<sup>11</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

<sup>12</sup> For an example of the kind of monarchy practised by George IV, see E.A. Smith (2000) *George IV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

come as a consequence of a series of episodes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had seen the establishment of the office of Prime Minister at the head of an executive which also comprised elected representatives.

From the time of the Civil Wars of the 1640s, the later deposition of James II and the accompanying events of the Glorious Revolution with the Bill of Rights 1689, and the arrival of a German-speaking royal dynasty in 1714, monarchs had gradually (and at times reluctantly) accepted increasing constraints on their ability to develop and implement an independent political policy. Instead, a series of compromises between monarch and parliament had promoted the emergence of political institutions which carried on government in the name of the monarch – while practically limiting the ability of a ruler to exercise sovereign rule. This meant that the British monarchs were more accustomed to the realities that faced monarchical power across Europe: that (with the exception of Russia), throughout the post-1815 period, it had, in practice, to be exercised in a way that made rulers very conscious of the expectations of their subjects. This included how these rulers demonstrated their power, and how they used their royal status to enhance the power and status of their own state on the European and global stage. Increasingly, a royal court was no longer the centre of governance; instead, it was one pillar amongst many in modern governance, and, with the development of the modern print media, was also subject to public scrutiny and criticism via increasingly effective tools of mass communication. The older understanding of the concept of the king (or queen) in state was thus now differently understood.

When Napoleon had sought to legitimise his own assumption of sovereign power in France, he had felt it important to assume not only a royal title but also the trappings that went with it, as underlined in his coronation portrait by David.<sup>12</sup> Given this, it is not surprising that one thing which the Congress of Vienna felt it essential to re-establish was the concept that it was hereditary rulers that legitimised the existence of an independent state. This is underlined by the creation of the new unitary states of Belgium and Greece in 1830. These states were not permitted to become republics, but had to accept that, in return for

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<sup>12</sup> For the portrait, see Todd Porterfield (2007) *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres and David* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press), and for Napoleon as Emperor, see Robert Asprey (2000) *The Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Little, Brown), Chapter 44.

the necessary support from other European powers, they would become monarchies, even though these new monarchies would have to accept sharing power with the mechanisms of a constitutional state.<sup>14</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, however, the evolving institutions of state still owed theoretical allegiance to the ruler as head of state. This meant that there was still a logical credibility behind the idea that such hereditary rulers were, and should act publicly as, the visible representatives of the state, both domestically and outside their own borders.

## State Visits in the Nineteenth Century

According to Paulmann, a total of 223 formal encounters between monarchs took place in Europe between 1815 and 1914. In this light, the first revival of modern royal diplomacy could be said to be the interventions of Tsar Alexander I at Vienna during the Congress, especially his negotiations with Frederick William of Prussia and Prince Klemens Metternich, which resulted in the Holy Alliance of 1815. Alexander personally drafted, and allowed few amendments to, that treaty. Unusually, on 26 September 1815 it was signed in Paris personally by the three sovereigns, instead of by their representatives. From Paulmann's perspective, the impacts of this short-lived alliance were to reverberate throughout Europe in terms of how royal diplomacy was to be practised thereafter.<sup>15</sup> The revival of courtly practices and symbols became a regular resource for European rulers as they played out their rivalries on the international stage, jostling for status as global powers as they built their overseas empires, including acquiring possessions that had little practical economic use but had enormous value as prestige symbols.<sup>16</sup> But this also involved a reinvention of the public meanings of those rituals for an increasingly mass popular consumption, taking advantage of developing mass media in order to do so.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds) (2011) *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), vol 2: 1815–1866, pp. 129–31.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Chapman (1998) *The Congress of Vienna: Origins Processes and Results* (London: Routledge); Andrei Tsygankov (2014) *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Chapter 5.

<sup>16</sup> Paulmann *Pomp und Politik*; David Reynolds (2000) *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Harlow: 2000).

It was Britain's expanding imperial presence which ensured that, increasingly, she looked to diplomacy as a way of safeguarding her global profile – and it was during Victoria's reign that this became particularly noticeable to other European powers. In common with other European powers, Britain had largely abandoned direct royal diplomacy and relied, especially post-1714, on soft royal diplomacy as practised through royal marriages and the maintenance of family ties. British diplomacy, as at the Congress of Vienna, had largely been in the hands of appointed representatives such as Viscount Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington, agreed by the Prince Regent and the Prime Minister. The primacy of career diplomats as the key representatives and guardians of Britain's diplomatic interests was maintained throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, until the marriage of Victoria to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1840 ushered in a new era in British diplomacy.<sup>17</sup>

Britain had received a number of royal state visits to its shores, but they have not been particularly noticed or studied by British or diplomatic historians except as relatively minor contributions to the development of British diplomacy as managed by the British government and its diplomats, acting in the name of the monarch but with relatively little active monarchical input into policy. Queen Victoria herself received an early state visit in 1839, from the future Tsar Alexander II (then simply one of the potential heirs to the Russian throne), to see whether a marriage was a feasible option (it was not). Tellingly, it was not a visit that received any press coverage in Britain beyond a cursory mention in the Court Circular.<sup>18</sup> The press did note the state visits of the Kings of Prussia and Belgium to Victoria and her husband Albert on the occasion of the christening of the new heir to the throne (they were to be his sponsors) in January 1842, which included a visit in state to the theatre. This was lavishly covered – but as a British royal event, with no mention of any diplomatic dimensions to the encounters between these crowned heads of state. These royal sponsors of the heir to the British throne were essentially understood as being there in a family supporting role – an exercise in soft royal diplomacy at best.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For details of Victoria's early reign, see Christopher Hibbert (2000) *Queen Victoria: A personal history* (London: Harper Collins), pp. 53–111.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, 'Court Circular', *The Times*, 10 June 1839.

<sup>15</sup> 'Royal Christening', *The Times*, 26 January 1842.

Soft royal diplomacy was something which continued to play a role in the interchanges between European royals, because of the reality that, thanks to their private family and kinship links, the individuals concerned could, in their personal character, expect to maintain contact with cousins, nephews and nieces as well as seeking for appropriate spouses. As the experiences of pre-modern royals had established, this provided for a very substantial private network of unofficial contacts to be maintained in ways that stood apart from official political developments, at least to some extent. When the new climate of the nineteenth century enabled official or state visits to resume, this meant that rulers and their advisors had to make decisions about whether a royal visit to another state was to be of a formal or an informal character. A ruler attending an event with a personal dimension, such as a wedding or a christening (especially if the visiting rulers were acting as godparents or sponsors to a royal child), was likely still to characterise this as a private royal affair, and so attend in a private persona without any formal diplomatic implications, even if there were – as at the christening of the Prince of Wales in 1842 – some public functions of a state nature (such as a banquet) to celebrate the event. This was now particularly important, because it avoided any suggestions of a formal diplomatic endorsement of any new relationships between European states which might result from marriages between members of Europe's royal families. Increasingly, though, such events were also capitalised on by rulers to affirm their own positions and importance within their own states, rather than as part of a diplomatic strategy with political connections. The British were good at this aspect of soft royal diplomacy, as the well-publicised marriage between the Queen and her chosen consort, Prince Albert, underlined.<sup>21</sup>

### **Prince Albert's Vision**

Albert encouraged a development of British royal diplomacy, however, by which the public could be introduced to their monarch in a new light, and appreciate her importance to the nation in new ways. This was as a result of his encouragement of the use of state visits, which had a purpose beyond pomp – adding a political (if not party political) dimension to the exercise. This reinvention did not happen overnight,

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

however. In 1843, Victoria and Albert made their first overseas state visit – to Louis-Philippe of France. But they did not visit him at his official residence, or in Paris; instead, they went to his personal royal residence, the Chateau d’Eu. The visit went largely unnoticed by the British public, being substantially unreported by the British press, as was the return visit by the French King to the Queen at Windsor in 1844. Yet it is plain, from royal records and court circulars, that a considerable amount of pomp and ceremony was observed by both courts during these visits and that even without mass publicity, the respective royal courts still ensured that the events were lavish affairs.<sup>21</sup>

However, by the 1850s, there had been a significant change in the way in which royal visits by the British sovereign were presented for popular consumption in the British press, and this is substantially because, by that time, Albert had succeeded in his ambition of reviving the direct diplomatic power of the British royal family. In this respect, Albert proved himself to be no cipher, content to be a symbol as Prince Consort and nothing more. He had a vision, which he gradually successfully imparted to his wife, which was intended to reshape British diplomacy permanently, by resurrecting the direct intervention of the sovereign in the shaping of Britain’s foreign relations in Europe. Albert’s idea was to capitalise on the potential offered by soft royal diplomacy, ensuring, through the marriages of his and Victoria’s children, that a new and more active royal diplomatic climate could be established in Europe, promoting a particular vision of international relations which would have an impact on the states themselves. But its achievement depended on the British monarchy rejoining the royal diplomatic stage, and capitalising on that rejoining by repackaging their profile for popular consumption in Britain, along the lines that Albert was already familiar with and was being encouraged to develop through his marriage by mentors like his Uncle Leopold. This meant that, for the first time, the British monarchy became aware of the positive potential of cultivating a public profile for mass consumption, using the channels provided by the modern media, as their European counterparts were already doing, as Paulmann underlines.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dunlop, Ian (2004) *Edward VII and the Entente Cordiale* (London: Constable and Robinson), Chapter 1.

<sup>22</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*; Stanley Weintraub (2000) *Uncrowned King: The Life of Prince Albert* (New York: The Free Press), Chapter 16.



The first example of Albert inspiring a usage of direct royal diplomatic power in the shape of an overseas state visit manifested itself in the idea that his wife, Victoria, should undertake a high-profile and well-publicised state visit to France. Relations between Britain and France in the post-Napoleonic Wars period had slowly been reconstructed to an extent, but both sides were wary of formal alliances. For a start, rivalries between the two states over their overseas possessions were developing, rather than lessening, in the age of European imperial expansion in Africa and Asia. Yet there were also areas where the interests of both nations coincided, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, where the ongoing legacy of the Holy Alliance was upsetting the long-standing power balance. Britain and France were mutually interested in continuing to exclude the Russian navy from free access to the Mediterranean. This was the background to the decision to endorse a state visit by Victoria and Albert to Paris.

This has often been seen as a precursor to the state visit to France by Edward VII, discussed in detail later in this volume. It is telling that, although this subtle diplomatic gesture was seen as sufficient in royal and governmental circles, it was not yet understood in that way by the press. The British press went so far as to suggest that Queen Victoria might have been in France entrusted with the responsibility of negotiating some form of formal treaty, and subsequently expressed disappointment when she returned empty-handed. By contrast, the state visit was lauded as successful in diplomatic circles, providing an interesting contrast to the realities of Edward VII's state visits, where his efforts were to be better appreciated by the British media than by his politicians and diplomats.<sup>22</sup>

## **Victoria and Albert in France**

The main gesture that characterised the state visit by Victoria and Albert to Napoleon III in Paris in 1855 related to a previous magnanimous gesture to the French. However, this had not been widely publicised in Britain, for fear of popular hostility. As part of the attempt to repair relations between Britain and France, Napoleon III's predecessor, Louis-Philippe, had written directly to Victoria, as monarch, to explain to her that a stumbling block to better relations was the near-unanimous belief of his French subjects that Britain no longer thought of France as an important power and the French people as a significant nation.

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<sup>22</sup>: Robert and Isabelle Tombs (2006) *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London: William Heinemann), pp. 340–6.

He had suggested a symbolic gesture on the part of Britain to overcome this, in the shape of a state visit by the Queen to France. Given the lack of publicity given in Britain to that visit by the Queen, little had been achieved in terms of improving popular perceptions of the French within Britain, especially as Louis-Philippe's return visit to Britain the following year had been equally poorly noticed in the British press. This contrasts interestingly with the wide publicity that the French, and other continental media, had given to this exchange.

However, a development associated with these state visits in 1843 and 1844 was to ensure the success of the Queen's 1855 state visit to France, especially in French eyes, but also in Britain. During the long-drawn-out preparations for their visit to the Chateau d'Eu in 1843, Victoria and Albert had consented to something that the British government and general public had long opposed: the return to French soil of the remains of Napoleon Bonaparte. After his death on St Helena in 1821, the British had made it clear that the former Emperor would remain buried there, despite his will stating that he wished to be buried by the Seine. At the time, with the unpopularity of the Bourbon restoration in France, the British were fearful of the impact that the symbol of the Emperor might have in France. They did not wish his tomb to become a rallying point for French radical political feelings, provoking a re-run of the events of 1789. However, British fears had quietened down by the 1840s, and when Victoria informed her government of the concerns expressed by the French King, agreement was reached by the British government that the remains of the former Emperor should now be returned to France.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, the government ensured that this was presented to the French as a gracious gesture by Britain, something underlined by the British presence supervising the exhuming of Napoleon on St Helena. But it was certainly part of a broader diplomatic initiative led by Victoria, and Albert's probable influence on her decision should not be ignored either. In the official British response to France, there was an emphasis on the message that the returning of Napoleon's body was intended to send: that it symbolised an obliterating of the old animosity between the two nations in order to promote future peaceful cooperation.<sup>25</sup> If it had little impact in the 1840s, by the time the Queen went on her state visit to Napoleon's nephew, Napoleon III, in 1855 (by which time the elaborate tomb at Les Invalides built to house Napoleon's remains had

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<sup>24</sup> Tombs and Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy*, p. 304.

<sup>25</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*, p. 25.

already become one of the sights of Paris), that gesture was to underpin the popular success of the state visit.

A visit to Les Invalides was always going to be an event on the agenda for the royal visit because it was an appropriate acknowledgement of the British magnanimity in agreeing to return his body to French soil. However, it was the royal couple's actions at the tomb that displayed their new mastery of the public symbolic gesture as a feature of royal diplomacy. While she herself did not kneel, Queen Victoria made the thirteen-year-old Prince of Wales kneel at the tomb of the former French Emperor and instructed him to pray for the soul of the 'Great Napoleon'. This gesture (almost unimaginable fifty years previously) was intended to demonstrate a tangible level of British respect for the Emperor, because it was consciously made by the British royal family personally on behalf of the British state, as Victoria herself noted in her diary – amidst hopes for a prosperous relationship between the two nations in the future.<sup>26</sup> It was certainly so presented in both the British and the French media.<sup>27</sup>

While it is over-exaggerating to say, as some have claimed, that this event started the future Edward VII's love affair with the French nation, the young Prince of Wales did learn a valuable lesson about the public and ceremonial aspects of royalty on show overseas. He would have undoubtedly learned during his school lessons about the British fight against the 'tyrant' Bonaparte alongside victories at Trafalgar and Waterloo, yet here he was kneeling at the grave of the man whose navy had killed Nelson. But what his parents both understood, and will have ensured that the young Bertie did also, was the reality that Napoleon had now become an important symbol for the French nation, because his achievements were intrinsic to the French sense of national and historical pride. This gesture by the heir to the British throne demonstrated that, in a spirit of reconciliation, Britain was willing to embrace France as an ally, without the formality of a treaty. If Edward learned anything that day in Paris, it was likely to have been not so much a love of France but, rather, an appreciation of the importance of cultural symbols in diplomacy.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, 'The Queen's Visit to Paris', *Lloyds Weekly*, 19 August 1855.

## Prince Albert and the Trent Affair

It is one of the ironies of history is that by the 1860s Britain was developing into a thoroughly modern monarchy in line with its European counterparts. It was well versed in symbols, as was shown with the French visits, and also could interfere directly in British policy, as was shown by Albert's interference in the diplomatic niceties of the Trent Affair. This particular episode, described as one of the most dangerous incidents in the history of Anglo-American relations, demonstrates the extent of Prince Albert's skills as a diplomat and underlines the impact of the public diplomatic gestures such as those made by his wife and his son in France was a result of his conscious intervention in the shape and nature of British royal diplomacy. During the US Civil War, the Royal Mail packet RMS *Trent* was detained by the US Navy on the grounds that it contained two diplomats from the 'rebel' Southern states, on their way to Europe (especially Britain and France) in the hopes of negotiating a possible intervention or mediation in the conflict in favour of the South. The US naval action was deemed unacceptable by the British, and in response, they prepared for possible hostile action against the USA by deploying 10,500 troops on the Canadian frontier and making plans to despatch the Channel squadron across the Atlantic.<sup>28</sup> The US government did not want war with Britain, but they felt they had acted appropriately in the circumstances and so were not prepared to be conciliatory and release the vessel. Unfortunately, the terminology used in a proposed British ultimatum to the USA about the release of the *Trent* was so confrontational that, if it had been received in Washington, Abraham Lincoln would have had little alternative but to declare war in order to save face. Queen Victoria's concerns about the potential consequences of issuing the ultimatum in such terms encouraged her to consult her consort, Prince Albert, to examine the situation – including reviewing her government's proposed ultimatum. With his long-term commitment to the peaceful resolution of international difficulties, Albert readily undertook this task and produced a more conciliatory version of the terms in which the British should respond to the detention of the *Trent*. Interestingly, it was accepted as the way forward not just by Victoria (which would have been expected, given her known loyalty to her beloved husband) but also by her government. It

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<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Burk (2007) *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown), p. 270.

was Albert's version that went to Lincoln.<sup>25</sup> Historians have agreed that this intervention was key in achieving the release of the *Trent* and so avoiding conflict between the two states. What is most interesting, and substantially ignored to date, is the reality that this was a royal diplomatic initiative – instigated by Victoria consulting her husband, and by Albert producing a skilled diplomatic response. It was not one produced by the civil servants in the Foreign Office or the elected politicians in her government. This can be said to mark the beginnings of what was to become one of the most important aspects of twentieth-century active royal diplomacy: the relationship between the UK and the USA.<sup>30</sup>

### Albert's Death and the Empress of India

It would be fair to say that Albert's vision of what monarchy should do in the field of diplomacy, as well as in domestic affairs, did have a lasting legacy, even though after his death, overseas state visits by the British monarch were suspended for the rest of his widow's life. If she continued to receive (with some reluctance) state visits by royal figures, after Albert's death she refused to involve herself personally in active royal diplomacy overseas. This is not to say, however, that she did not continue to be influenced by his diplomatic strategies. Much has been written, with some wry amusement given the events of 1914–1918, about the royal couple's plans to create long-term peace and stability in Europe by marrying off their children into European royal houses and so creating a network of royal relations imbued with a liberal political and diplomatic vision. However, this deserves to be taken more seriously, in that this policy of managing royal marriages put the British royal family into a practically dominant position amongst European royalty as the home of 'Mama & Papa'.<sup>31</sup>

Family ties between ruling families have never sufficed to prevent conflicts, as the wars of medieval and early modern Europe underline. However, Albert's plan for the creation of an essentially dynastic royal diplomacy which could then help to shape the political diplomatic relationships of Europe underlines both the understanding that a visionary like Albert had of the potential for royal diplomacy as a positive force

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<sup>25</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> Burk, *Old World New World*.

<sup>31</sup> Daphne Bennett (1973) *Vicky: Princess Royal of England and German Empress* (London: Book Club Associates), Chapters 1 and 5.

in the modern era, and the importance of symbolism in modern diplomacy. The influence that the Prince Consort had over his daughter, Princess Victoria, even after her marriage to the heir to the Prussian throne ensured he had access to the Prussian court, which displayed the power that such dynastic royal diplomacy could have. Even after Albert's death, Victoria continued to practise such dynastic diplomacy, including having a substantial influence over her daughter in Prussia. However, her impact was lessened by her unwillingness to involve herself in active royal diplomacy. It was due to her absence from royal diplomacy that the well-documented decline in royal diplomatic power began to accelerate, as politicians were forced to fill the gap.<sup>32</sup>

Yet it would be a mistake to think that Victoria's withdrawal from the public stage of royal diplomacy meant that she was uninterested in the symbolism associated with the public face of the British monarchy, both at home and abroad. Tellingly, Victoria approached her Prime Minister, Disraeli, rather than the other way around to express dissatisfaction about her title: she had already been irked when the Romanov Tsars had begun to translate their title as 'emperor' for consumption within Europe. As merely a queen, she was outranked by the ruler of a state that was not considered by other European powers as either fully civilised or properly European. But partly because of this, she had been able to ignore its implications, especially as there had been no state visit to, or from, Russia to force the difference on her in any practical way. However, the adoption of the title of 'emperor' by the Hohenzollerns, as part of the unification of Germany into a unitary state, was too much for Victoria to accept with any equanimity.<sup>33</sup> She felt it deeply inappropriate and also dangerous to British interests that the Queen of England, with the greatest overseas global empire, should not have a title which reflected that greatness in the eyes of consumers of royalty at home and abroad. Disraeli saw his royal mistress's point and set about the task of persuading parliament, and the country, of the wisdom of this move.<sup>34</sup> As a result, Queen Victoria became also Empress of India. This is often dismissed as an example of Victoria's personal vanity; but this is to misunderstand her motivations and Disraeli's endorsement of them.

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<sup>32</sup> Vernon Bogdanor (1995) *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>33</sup> For the creation of the Hohenzollerns as emperors, see Matthew Seligmann and Roderick McLean (2000) *Germany from Reich to Republic, 1971–1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), pp. 6–13.

<sup>34</sup> He neglected to tell the Prince of Wales, who was most irritated.

It might have been a personal irritation to be outranked by her own daughter, but that alone could never have persuaded either a canny politician like Disraeli, or a parliament and public that were initially distinctly sceptical of the move, to agree to it. It was because Disraeli was able to present it to key political figures as being symbolically important to British interests that the title change went through. Underlining this, Cannadine has suggested that the symbol of the Empress of India came to represent the heart of her vast empire. In other words, by insisting on this gesture, Victoria was practising effective royal diplomacy in a way that aided the political interests of her state.<sup>35</sup> Her Golden and Diamond Jubilees must also be seen as important episodes in a continuing royal diplomacy in Britain which, if lower-key and less active than that which Albert had promoted, was still visible as a significant symbolic feature on the British diplomatic landscape. It was a feature largely ignored by her politicians and diplomats, even while they made ample use of that symbolism (the flag and the ceremonials which accompanied so much of the day-to-day administration of empire). But it was not lost on her son, the Prince of Wales.

What the future Edward VII understood was that despite his mother's success in establishing an important new symbolism for the British monarchy, in practical terms Britain had, by the latter decades of the nineteenth century, begun to suffer from the failure of active royal diplomacy being practised on the international scene. To the peoples of Britain and the Empire, the symbolic monarchical idea was sufficient. But, as Paulmann has underlined, the positive impact of direct royal diplomacy on the interests of Britain's neighbours in Europe left Britain in a diplomatic 'splendid isolation' which worked against her ability to exercise her influence in the ways in which Albert had envisioned. By refusing to travel abroad as Queen, Victoria was denying the British state the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to honour a foreign nation with a visit from the state in ways that advanced her country's influence. Of course, Lord Salisbury's policy of splendid isolation also meant that the state made fewer demands on its monarch: a position endorsed by British diplomats and politicians because they no longer fully appreciated the positive impact that wisely used symbols could have on developments in European diplomacy.

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<sup>35</sup> David Cannadine (1983) 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c. 1820-1977' in E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 138.

When the British again had a monarch who would travel overseas, the government was consequently genuinely taken aback by the reception he received. This was partly because British politicians and civil servants also failed to appreciate – partly because of Victoria’s personal disapproval of her son – the depth of Edward’s own understanding of his position as King and the potential he now possessed to have an impact on the diplomatic landscape. But, even before he came to the throne, there were signs which could have signalled to them that the Prince of Wales was preparing to undertake a more active monarchical presence than his mother had done in the years of her widowhood. During the long years when Bertie was excluded from actively assisting his mother in her royal duties, he had, in fact, been preparing himself practically for the duties he would eventually assume. His tours overseas provided him with a detailed knowledge of local affairs, cultures and customs, which he was later to use to considerable effect, as the succeeding chapters of this book will underline. He had also increasingly undertaken some ceremonial duties, because as a result of the acquaintances he made abroad, and the links he cultivated with his royal cousins in Europe, it became common for visiting dignitaries and royals to visit the Prince of Wales when in Britain as well as seeing the Queen.<sup>36</sup>

### Attention Turns to Edward

A survey of media coverage of the Prince of Wales in 1898, the year when he attended his first Privy Council meeting because of his mother’s failing health, is informative.<sup>37</sup> In the Christmas edition of the *Windsor Magazine*, aimed at a popular mass middle-class market, he gave access to the royal celebrations of the season at Sandringham in terms which underlined the Prince of Wales’s sense of himself as both a private individual and a symbol of ‘Britishness’ for his people. He is described as being personally most comfortable in ‘the tweed suit and felt hat of an ordinary English gentleman’ but also a man very aware of ‘the burdens and responsibilities of his high state’. These required him at times to adopt ‘the pomp and panoply of symbolic dress’ and involve himself in the ‘pageantry of the Court’, but in ways that were entirely suited to the modern era: they had ‘laid aside the exclusive traditions of the house of

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<sup>36</sup> For details on Edward VII as Prince, see Jane Ridley (2013) *Bertie: A life of Edward VII* (London: Vintage).

<sup>37</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*.



Hanover' and 'put themselves forward as the chief representatives of the democratic spirit of the age, which has penetrated all ranks of the social system'. It was intended to signal that, when he became King, Edward would symbolise his subjects in the way in which he approached his royal duties.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 'How They Spend Christmas at Sandringham', *Windsor Magazine*, viii, 1898.

# 2

## The First Royal Visits

### Introduction

Edward's trip to the German Empire in February 1901 to see his dying sister (the Dowager Empress) marked his first trip abroad as sovereign. It was followed by a subsequent trip in August to attend her funeral. Neither of these royal visits was the first made to Germany by Edward VII, but they were the first he made in his new role as monarch. This chapter explores the revival of British state visits, as opposed to the royal visits overseas by Victoria and her family on pleasure trips or to visit relatives on the continent. Germany had been a regular destination, but so had France, for the British royal family, as reports in both the British and continental media of the nineteenth century show. Equally, in the last forty years of the nineteenth century, European royals had regularly undertaken family visits to their British royal relatives and also enjoyed a share of leisure activities, taking part in events such as Cowes Week. Thus, interchanges between royal individuals across state boundaries were fairly commonplace for the British as well as other European royal families.<sup>1</sup>

As already underlined in the Introduction, the crucial difference between a royal visit and a state visit is that the former was (and is) undertaken in a private and, to some extent, informal capacity, foregrounding the royal as an individual. It involves making the overseas visit for personal motives, even though these may include some form of semi-formal visit to, and reception by, other royals within the country

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<sup>1</sup> Karina Urbach (ed.) (2008) *Royal Kinship. Anglo-German Family Networks 1815–1918* (Munich: Walter de Gruyter and Co.); Theo Aronson (1973) *Grandmama of Europe: The Crowned Descendants of Queen Victoria* (London: Macmillan).

being visited. A state visit capitalises on the symbolic presence of a monarchical state, encapsulated in the body of the current sovereign or a senior member of the royal family deputed to act in that capacity on behalf of the sovereign.<sup>2</sup> In the first year of his reign, Edward VII had probably not planned to undertake such formal royal diplomatic duties – but events (and the actions of his diplomatically sophisticated nephew) were to dictate that, to an extent at least, the King was forced to do so.

## British Diplomacy and the Royal Family by 1901

At the time of Edward VII's accession to the throne, the British monarchy had not made state visits overseas for nearly half a century (though, interestingly, formal visits by Victoria to towns and cities in her realm had been described in the media as 'state' visits). At a time when, as Paulmann has underlined, the 'Pomp und Politik' of diplomacy was reviving and being modernised elsewhere in Europe,<sup>3</sup> even state visits to Britain by foreign heads of state had only nominally involved the monarch. Victoria had normally received these at Windsor or Osborne, and treated visiting royals more as family members than as visiting heads of state. She left any ceremonial element in the visit to others – her politicians and, possibly, the Prince of Wales, if she was in charity with him at the time.<sup>4</sup> As already noted, his long years as heir to the throne had given the King a direct acquaintance with the concept of the royal state visit. He had observed how it worked to the advantage of the countries involved if royals were involved in the practices of diplomacy. A crucial visit here had been his trip to India in 1875, which was undertaken in order to soothe the feelings of the Indian princes in the aftermath of the trial and deposition of the Maharajah of Baroda.<sup>5</sup> He understood that he was sent, rather than the Foreign Secretary of the day, because of the impact it would have on India if a senior royal figure undertook

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<sup>2</sup> Usually, it is the heir, the heir apparent or the consort who would be deputed to undertake a state visit.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 123–3, 150–2.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Rowbotham (2007) 'Miscarriage of Justice: Postcolonial Reflections on the "Trial" of the Maharajah of Baroda', *Liverpool Law Review* 28(3), pp. 377–403.

such a diplomatic mission. He also had a better sense of how diplomacy worked because he had made regular trips overseas, including to nations that were republics, notably France, and, of course, he undertook a tour of the US as Prince of Wales in 1860. While these were not state visits, an amount of protocol and negotiation in preparation was still involved: no European royal ever travelled truly privately or incognito!

## Edward VII and the Diplomatic Tradition

However, there was no recent tradition of British ministers – especially British Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries – evolving diplomatic protocols and strategies that actively involved the monarchy as part of the diplomatic agenda. Victorian politicians had long learned to conduct diplomacy by working around, rather than with, the persona and institution of the monarch.<sup>6</sup> Victoria's name had become a symbol – with contemporaries talking of the Victorian era even before she died. Because of this, in Britain in 1901, the existing structures managing everyday diplomacy did not specifically either include or exclude royal diplomatic input. The fiction of Victoria's involvement had always been there: the reality was missing. The expectation of Edward's ministers was that, when it came to diplomacy, there would be no change: he would be a symbol along similar lines to his mother (if for a shorter period). Instead, Edward VII deliberately decided to use this monarchical symbolism in a more active, and arguably a more personal, way. He was better able to take the initiative in implementing his decision because he actually did not need to engage explicitly with any formal structures when moving to revive diplomatic involvement by the sovereign. Edward VII simply had to take advantage of what was already there – an expectation that diplomacy would involve the monarch – and tweak it to suit him, which was the more readily done because his ministers had not anticipated initially that the King would involve himself in active diplomacy, and thus did not send to consult or instruct him about the nature of his interchanges overseas. The expectation was that, while he would continue to travel, those travels would be overseas royal visits, not state visits, and they would be of short duration. The political conceptualisation of the King's role saw him as active within his own kingdom, not externally to it.

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<sup>6</sup> Vernon Bogdanor (1995) *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

What forced the issue of monarchical state visits to the forefront of Edward VII's mind at the start of his reign were the actions of his nephew, Wilhelm II of Germany, and the positive reactions of the British, as well as the German, media to Wilhelm. As the Introduction underlines, there was, by the start of the twentieth century, a wide newspaper-reading public in Britain, and also, to a slightly lesser extent, in Germany. The interest in royal stories, already omnipresent in the media, was further enhanced by the inclusion, at low cost, of photographic illustrations in newspapers as well as periodicals such as the *Windsor Magazine*: such photographs had become a major selling point in both countries. In addition, new media were being developed in the form of film – news documentaries were now starting to be filmed and given public dissemination, as the pictures of Queen Victoria's funeral underline. The modern media thoroughly understood the appeal of royal news, especially if accompanied by striking pictures which emphasised that the central figures were royals, because they were dressed as such and surrounded by the symbols of royal pomp.<sup>7</sup>

Within weeks of his mother's funeral, at a time when the images of the assembled European royals were fresh in the popular mind thanks to media efforts in Britain and Germany, Edward undertook the first of three visits to Germany. These were, in terms of their original intent, royal visits. They were, to his mind, private, and of a type which he had regularly undertaken as Prince of Wales, but which – when actually in progress – acquired a state dimension for a variety of reasons, and so they paved the way for more formal state visits. These private visits to Germany bookended the failure of political attempts to reach a *rapprochement* between the nations in that year, but they occurred before there was a public consciousness in either nation of any dangerous hostility between them. Consequently, it was not a matter of debate for either the government or the public whether or not he should make these 'private' royal visits, even though Edward did, of course, inform his government of his intention to leave the country to visit his dying sister, and later to attend her funeral. In reality, they were to act as the early stages in the learning process that would influence state visits, and emphasise the difference between these and royal tours overseas, throughout the Edwardian period. It also shows just how close the relations were, and had long been, between the British and German royal families. Being close, however, did not mean that individual members always got on,

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<sup>7</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

and there was a long-standing dislike between Edward and his nephew, the Kaiser – something which affected their personal relationships. What is interesting is that both men understood that there was a difference between their personal and their symbolic roles as monarchs.

### **Wilhelm II at Queen Victoria's Funeral: the Experienced Royal Diplomat**

When the Kaiser had heard his grandmother was dying, he had asked if he could come and see her one last time before she passed away. Edward had reluctantly let him come to Osborne House, as he had felt it would be improper for him not to do so.<sup>8</sup> When the Kaiser arrived, his British family remembered that 'To everyone's surprise, he behaved with unusual tact and delicacy.'<sup>9</sup> At one point he even enquired whether he should leave, as his presence was becoming a disturbance. Queen Victoria had several conversations with him on her deathbed, and when she died on 21 January 1901, she did so clinging to his arm. This was made much of in the British, and the wider European, media, though the German press was particularly delighted to report the words of the Foreign Secretary that 'Her Majesty passed away clinging to the arm of her grandson.'<sup>10</sup> What is interesting about these reports is that many other members of the royal family were present in the room, including Victoria's own son and heir, but their location is seldom mentioned. Instead of mentioning the new King and his role at his mother's deathbed, the media was awash with words of praise for the Kaiser's actions and how the image of the Queen dying on the Kaiser's arm symbolised a supportive future for Anglo-German relations.<sup>11</sup> Though the memory of the First World War has distorted this, it is important to stress how popular the Kaiser was in the British media, and public opinion, at this point.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a full explanation of the relationship between the Kaiser and Queen Victoria, see Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar. Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray), pp. 13–14, 104–7.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2001) *Queen Victoria. A Personal History* (London: HarperCollins), p. 493.

<sup>10</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA), FO800/10/21, Lansdowne to Lascelles, 21 January 1901.

<sup>11</sup> It also meant that he remained popular, despite commonly held views of Germany; Matthew Seligmann and Roderick McLean (2000) *Germany from Reich to Republic, 1971–1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Media approval increased further when the Kaiser announced he would remain in Britain until the funeral, portraying himself very effectively as a grieving grandson: 'It was inevitable that the prolonged stay of the German Emperor in England, that striking tribute of respect to his Grandmother, would excite the imagination of the world.'<sup>13</sup> The family sentiment apparently guiding the Kaiser's actions even helped him gain the approval of those who had previously been very critical of his bombastic character. Lord Lansdowne commented approvingly that 'His Majesty made it clear that he came here as the Queen's grandson and not as the ruler of an empire.'<sup>14</sup> The improvement a simple family visit had achieved in the public's perception of Anglo-German relations should not have been lost on the British government. It was certainly not lost on Edward VII. The new King obviously felt that after the numerous gestures his nephew had made to his British relations, he should make a show of his appreciation in return, of a kind that would also receive media attention. He did this by presenting Wilhelm with a diamond for his birthday present at Osborne House, as Queen Victoria had wished before she had become ill; the Permanent Under-Secretary of State Thomas Sanderson reported: 'The King has decided to present this [the present] in accordance with his mother's wishes and we have selected Osborne for this purpose.'<sup>15</sup>

To the general British public, who read of this in their newspapers, it would have seemed a generous gesture on the part of their King, showing compassion for his nephew. However, they were not aware that only two weeks previously, when still only Prince of Wales – though acting on his mother's behalf – Edward had refused to send even a minor royal to Berlin for the Kaiser's birthday.<sup>16</sup> This elaborate, as well as prompt and public, reaction to Wilhelm's role in the events surrounding Victoria's death clearly displays that Edward had already begun to learn certain lessons from his nephew. Edward followed up this gesture by making the Kaiser a field marshal in the British Army, which again generated much positive discussion in the press. It was commonplace for royal families to bestow ranks in their forces on fellow royals, especially monarchs and heirs. Victoria had made the Kaiser Colonel-in-Chief of the 1st Royal Dragoons in 1894, so this was

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<sup>13</sup> 'Great Britain and Germany', *The Times*, 1 February 1901.

<sup>14</sup> TNA FO800/10/21, Lansdowne to Lascelles, 21 January 1901.

<sup>15</sup> TNA FO800/10/26, Sanderson to Lascelles, 23 January 1901.

<sup>16</sup> TNA FO800/18/2, Lascelles to Lansdowne, 5 January 1901.

simply a gesture building on such established traditions – something that went both ways. This is why Edward VII had already, by 1901, collected a number of foreign uniforms and would continue to do so during his reign, while his heir, George, had also accumulated such honours and uniforms.<sup>17</sup> *The Times'* correspondent in Berlin pointed out, however, that 'The distinction had a special political importance in the view of the fact that the British Constitution renders necessary the co-operation of the government in such appointments.'<sup>18</sup> It was not purely in the gift of the King, unlike the situation in other European monarchies.

The significance of the Kaiser's visit to Britain is that it showed that a simple private gesture such as visiting a dying relation had the power to have an impact on the European political scene, due to positive reactions amongst the peoples of both nations. It also had an effect on Edward. The poor health of his much-loved elder sister meant that Edward voluntarily and informally told his nephew that he would make a private visit to Germany in the coming year to see the Dowager Empress. This contrasts interestingly with Edward's stance when he was still Prince of Wales; even though he had an official capacity as heir to the throne, he had so disliked encountering the Kaiser that he had made every excuse not to see him before Queen Victoria's death.<sup>15</sup> Once he had become King, Edward could no longer behave in such a way, as he had begun to learn.

### Edward's First Royal Visit Overseas – and Its Consequences

Edward VII's private visit to the Kaiser came even sooner than he expected when he had engaged with his nephew and had almost certainly, in that *rapprochement* after Victoria's death, indicated that he

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<sup>17</sup> Edward VII was later to receive the rank of field marshal in the German Army. The uniforms of Edward VII and George V in non-British forces still exist, although these were later packed away because of the war. See Hibbert, *Edward VII*.

<sup>18</sup> 'Great Britain and Germany', *The Times*, 1 February 1901.

<sup>15</sup> Edward's dislike for the Kaiser is a well-documented fact. Detailed accounts of their relationship can be found in Roderick McLean (2001) *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Chapter 2; Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1975) *Uncle of Europe* (London: Collins), pp. 83–8; although most of the biographies on the subject of Edward or the Kaiser mentioned in this book also discuss the issue.



would also pay a reciprocal private visit of respect to his nephew. The condition of the Dowager Kaiserine, suffering from spinal cancer that had prevented her from attending her mother's funeral, deteriorated unexpectedly.<sup>21</sup> In his memoir of his time as Assistant Private Secretary to Edward VII, Frederick Ponsonby stated: 'Soon after his accession the King began to receive alarming accounts of the health of his sister, the Empress Frederick of Germany, and at once decided to go to Cronberg to see her.'<sup>21</sup> It is a measure of the new need for Edward to take account of his position that when he began to make arrangements to visit his sister, both Ponsonby and his superior Knollys (the Private Secretary) stressed to him that he could no longer simply travel to Germany without official notification to the German government of his presence, especially since he also planned to visit Berlin, even if that visit was intended simply as a private courtesy call on a nephew. As monarch, his courtiers argued, all of his conversations with the Kaiser must be supervised by a member of the Foreign Office. Edward responded that as long as he was visiting only as a grieving brother visiting a sister, who might encounter a nephew on the way, he believed he could travel without a Foreign Office accompaniment. While he accepted that, now he was King, he could not travel to Germany without meeting his nephew and fellow monarch, he had yet to learn the lesson provided by the reaction to the reportage of Wilhelm's presence at Queen Victoria's deathbed. Instead, Edward seemed confident that, as long as this visit remained a strictly family matter and proper inter-family protocols were observed through making a gesture to his nephew by visiting him as well, he could visit his sister without government representation. Ponsonby's memoir confirms this: 'He had not realised yet that being a King was a totally different thing from being Prince of Wales.'<sup>22</sup> What also needs to be noted here is the failure of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister to recognise the need to provide the King with an appropriate diplomatic structure in which any discussions could take place. They did not advise him on

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<sup>21</sup> Details of the illness and last years of Victoria, Princess Royal, can be found in Daphne Bennett (1971) *Vicky: Princess Royal of England and German Empress* (London: Book Club Associates) pp. 328–35.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Frederick Ponsonby (1951) *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode), p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p.107; Edward's travels as Prince of Wales as well as the manner in which he travelled are covered in Hibbert, *Edward VII*, Section One: Prince of Wales.

what he should, or should not, say. He was left totally unguided by his government.<sup>23</sup>

This first visit was to be a steep learning curve for Edward in terms of how his new status had changed his position. When he left for Germany, it was noted that he was annoyed that large crowds of people, with members of the press amongst them, were lining his route to Victoria Station from Buckingham Palace: 'King Edward was much put out.'<sup>24</sup> He had still to accept that no royal visits made by the King were ever truly private, in the sense that he had enjoyed when heir to the throne.

What Edward VII had yet to learn was that, despite the sad personal reason for the private visit, the Kaiser was determined that it should be known, not just to their respective governments but also to the media, that he and his uncle had had a private audience: a formula which suggested rather more than that they had simply been in company together, as uncle and nephew, at the Dowager Kaiserine's sickbed. The stratagems adopted by Wilhelm II to ensure that this impression was received by both the German and the British media appear to have been a revelation to Edward and his courtiers. They were simply not prepared for a political conversation to be introduced into a private meeting. Nevertheless, Edward was prepared to be obliging to his nephew, as his host, and so went for an impromptu private summit with his nephew: 'When we arrived the Emperor was most affable and full of chaff, but went off at once with King Edward.'<sup>25</sup> In fact, nothing of substance was discussed at this meeting, largely because neither the King nor his government had expected this development. But Wilhelm's intention of giving the impression that it was a politically, as well as personally, significant event made a mark on the British media. *The Times*, discussing the importance of this visit, felt it important to assure the British public that the meeting between the two sovereigns was of an entirely non-political nature.<sup>26</sup> It is unlikely that the working-class press was entirely convinced of this: *Reynolds News* was notoriously suspicious.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The silence of the Royal Archives on this point of advice to the new King on his first trip to Germany is particularly telling on this point, given the consciousness of Ponsonby and Knollys that there was such a need. It makes it seem unlikely that they did not send private word to the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister at least suggesting it, though such documents have not been found.

<sup>24</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>26</sup> 'The King's Visit to Germany', *The Times*, 25 February 1901.

<sup>27</sup> 'Editorial', *Reynolds News*, 3 March 1901.

The Kaiser was almost certainly disingenuous in pretending to believe that any private discussion with his uncle could be expected to have a political dimension: he was sufficiently experienced and familiar with the way in which the constitutional British monarchy worked to realise that meeting Edward VII of Britain was going to be very different from encounters with his cousin Nicholas II of Russia. These two emperors had independent diplomatic power, which Wilhelm must have been aware that, despite being a fellow emperor, a British monarch lacked, and, consequently, they did habitually discuss serious political matters. This had been the reality of their relationship once both had become rulers, and the political aspect of their private encounters is underlined by the fact that, on one subsequent occasion, the pair actually drafted a defensive treaty at Björkö.<sup>24</sup>

Edward, however, was determined not to abuse the constitutional restraints placed on his crown, and was also determined not to be cowed by the demonstration of monarchic power offered by his nephew. Instead, he simply refused the opportunity to engage politically with the Kaiser, keeping the meeting non-political. The encounter, however, was probably the key event teaching him that diplomatic activity was expected of him by his fellow royals now that he was King; that (when duly briefed by his government) these were the kinds of conversations that he should expect to have with the other members of the Trade Union of Kings. This encounter with his nephew woke him up to the potential for future exchanges.

What is also telling about the significance of this visit is the interest that the British had in what Edward VII had seen as a purely private, if also royal, affair. Despite Edward's attempt to keep the visit as low-key as possible, the idea of his going abroad to meet with the Kaiser had clearly caught the public imagination; witness the crowds at Victoria Station to watch his departure. Shortly after his return from Germany, *The Windsor Magazine* published an article by the well-known figure and novelist Marie Belloc (later Lowndes) on the topic of royal visits overseas.<sup>25</sup> Although the piece is, at first glance, a historical interest piece on Queen Victoria's trips, for contemporaries it would have had real political relevance to the way in which they would then have understood Edward's recent German visit. The article broke the myth

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<sup>24</sup> See, for full details of this event, Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar*, pp. 251–2.

<sup>25</sup> Marie A. Belloc, 'Queen Victoria's Visits to Foreign Countries', *The Windsor Magazine*, XIII, December 1900 to May 1901, pp. 523–31.

that too many historians have subscribed to, created by Victoria's officially reclusive widowhood, that British monarchs did not leave the UK. It discussed the extensive official visits of Victoria and Albert prior to the latter's death, and contextualised these by reference to Victoria's continuing, if low-key and officially incognito, royal visits overseas after Albert's passing. Particular attention was paid to the pleasure that such visits inspired and the positive reactions of foreign leaders to even these unofficial royal tours, and how these were made familiar to a wider public through royal stories in the British and European media. Of greater significance, the article reveals an expectation that the fiction of diplomatic involvement by the sovereign which had characterised the last years of Victoria's reign would cease to be a fiction under the new King. It stressed that he was already well-qualified to undertake such duties, as a result of his own travels and consequent insights. Thus, the idea of overseas travel using the royal yacht as the most efficient mode of travel was also described in significant detail.<sup>30</sup>

The mention of Edward's habits of travel on royal visits as Prince of Wales highlights a particularly interesting aspect of Belloc as author of this piece. A well-known society figure, she had yet to become the popular novelist she later was, but she was already a regular contributor of articles and short pieces to periodicals. At the time of this publication, her most famous work was an analysis of the Prince of Wales' life and career until 1898, making her a perfect candidate for instruction on the new King's practices.<sup>31</sup> Belloc's goal when writing this article was clearly to shape the understanding of her readers so that when future visits of this nature occurred in the future, they would not be seen as a personal extravagance on the part of the King but as the proper continuation of a royal diplomatic tradition which brought positive patriotic benefits. The piece reminded readers that state visits had not always had serious political points, but were instead, and normally, part of a diplomatic courtesy which helped to preserve the status quo between nations. The implication was that Edward's trips to Wilhelm should not be understood as part of any new diplomatic

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Marie Belloc (1898) *HRH The Prince of Wales: an account of his career* (London: G. Richards). Published anonymously in 1898, it was revised and republished with her name attached in 1901 under the title *His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII*.

initiative, changing British relations with Germany. And, as a way of emphasising her expertise and the accuracy of her insights, Belloc could not resist giving a piece of implicit advice to the King and his ministers: she reminded readers that Queen Victoria would never visit her eldest grandson in Berlin, and revealed that the reason was due to what she described as the 'fatiguing nature' of German court protocol. This served two purposes: it underlined the superior nature of British court practices and warned that any private visit to the German court would, in fact, become a formal spectacle despite any intentions to the contrary.

The willingness of the *Windsor Magazine* to publish such a piece underlines the media interest in Britain in all Edward's actions. The reaction in Germany to the Kaiser when he attended his grandmother's funeral led them to assume that their own King would likewise be able to raise the profile of Britain in Germany by his private visit. As already noted, the British media were aware that the Kaiser regularly engaged in political chit-chat with royal visitors, and when Wilhelm seized the opportunity to try this with Edward VII, the media message to British politicians and courtiers was that they had to make sure that their own sovereign was prepared for meetings.

This meant that the ground was being prepared for a resumption of royal state visits by the British, if largely due to Edward's own consciousness of the need for this and media pressure rather than at the behest of the elected ministers. But one thing which Edward had no appetite for, and which would also have been unpopular with his ministers, was the ceremonial and ritual dimension to the German model of even the 'private' royal overseas visit, let alone the inevitably more pomp-framed state visit. Both the King himself and British politicians and courtiers disliked the fanfare with which the Kaiser liked to surround such private guests. Edward remained determined to sustain some clear distinction between his private royal travels as Edward of Saxe-Coburg Gotha and his state missions as King, even while accepting that his royal travels could never, now, be truly private. In reality, Edward felt that the over-exaggerated display put on by his nephew was distasteful – something which increased his personal dislike for him.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sydney Lee (1927) *King Edward VII. A Biography*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan), p. 125.

## Edward VII and British Diplomatic Realities in 1901

Shortly after Edward had returned from Germany, he was briefed that the Kaiser's government was being critical of British foreign policy. What he also learned, however, was that the Kaiser was busily turning the recent private visit from his uncle, the King of England, into positive propaganda for his own political benefit. It was a warning to Edward about the realities of European royal diplomacy, and one that had to be taken very seriously. What Edward realised was what Paulmann highlights: that by the end of the nineteenth century, the diplomatic niceties of royal diplomacy between the majority of European states had become very sophisticated, but in many ways the British had remained largely outside these complexities and nuances.<sup>53</sup> When, after the return of the King to Britain, the Kaiser held a lengthy discussion with the British ambassador, Frank Lascelles, the latter swiftly reported back to the British government that the Kaiser was saying he was very pleased that his uncle had come to visit *him*, ostensibly ignoring the real and private reason for the visit. Instead, it was: 'The Emperor wishes to convey to His Majesty his constant friendship and affection', a message which added a clear political dimension to a private meeting.<sup>54</sup> In the concluding paragraph of his report, Lascelles also warned both the Foreign Secretary and the King that while the Kaiser was stressing his friendship to his uncle, the German government 'levels severe criticism on your Majesty's government' over British policy in South Africa.<sup>55</sup>

This report caused considerable diplomatic tensions. Despite the Kaiser's official stance that Edward's long-awaited visit had done a great deal of good for Anglo-German relations, little apparently had changed in terms of the attitude of the German government towards Britain and her King. This seemed to provide evidence to British politicians that private visits and small gestures had no real impact on bringing governments together. It might have pleased the Kaiser, but that had little value for them. Thus, there was at this stage no perceived need on the part of the British government to revive state visits overseas as an asset to the usual method of conducting British diplomacy.

With the Boer War still going on, in the period immediately after the February visit, the German government's attitude to Britain could

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<sup>53</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

<sup>54</sup> TNA FO800/128/120, Lascelles to King Edward VII and Lord Lansdowne, 13 April 1901.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

reasonably be described as contradictory, shifting between two policy lines which reflected a more conciliatory stance from the Kaiser and a harder line from his politicians. But it was the German politicians, not the Kaiser, who concerned British politicians when working out an appropriate diplomatic response. In February, the British government had intercepted a letter that suggested that the German government was actively encouraging the republican French government to join an anti-British diplomatic coalition. The Foreign Office now accused the German government of 'suggesting to France that there are secret arrangements between England and Portugal which are hurtful to French interests'.<sup>36</sup> It was also a problem for the Foreign Office that the Germans were sympathetic to the possible French-led initiative, which would also have involved Russia, to form a coalition against Britain during the Boer War.<sup>37</sup> What the Foreign Office effectively ignored was that, simultaneously with this, the Kaiser was writing to his uncle, both directly and via his ambassador in London, warning of the threat of a combined Franco-Russian assault on British possessions in the Far East. In involving the German ambassador in London, the Kaiser was, in many ways, challenging the Foreign Office and its elected politicians by acting as if his uncle were active in British diplomacy. The tone of his letter suggests that the Kaiser expected his uncle to engage with his ministers and make them listen to him, when he advised Edward that the Japanese would be very suitable allies to counter this threat: 'I have learned from Eckardstein that Japan distrusts most Russia, next America and she has full confidence in Germany and England.'<sup>38</sup>

It cannot be argued that the Kaiser had much effect on actual British policy details. Though the Kaiser was unaware of it, the British were, quite independently, already conscious of the advantages of an Anglo-Japanese alliance and were already in negotiations. But it did make a contribution to Edward's own awareness of the potential for royal diplomatic interventions. Edward himself was conscious that there was a change in the Kaiser's own attitude to Britain generally following the

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<sup>36</sup> TNA FO800/10/35, Report of an intercepted letter from Baron Eckardstein to contacts, 19 February 1901.

<sup>37</sup> See, for an account of France and Germany's dealings against Britain during the Boer War, Christopher Andrew (1968) *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale* (London: Macmillan), chapter 8: 'The Failure of Intervention'.

<sup>38</sup> TNA FO800/ 10/45, Bertie to Lascelles commenting on the former's interview with Eckardstein, 6 March 1901. Baron Hermann von Eckardstein was the German *attaché* in London.

visit to Berlin in February 1901. He realised that Wilhelm was certainly influenced by such personal contact, and that the letter of advice on Japan was a gesture underlining this. But, because the British government did not in any way capitalise on Edward's visit in their relations with the German government, the gap remained between the German court and German government ministers in terms of policy strategies. Wilhelm was charmed by his uncle's visit, and consequently ready to continue the positive atmosphere created at the time of Victoria's death, but the failure of the British government to appreciate this and the entry it might have given into German political circles meant that the Kaiser's government maintained their previous line of anti-British sentiment.<sup>35</sup> It was actually inconvenient to the German government, with their own expansionist plans, that their sovereign was sufficiently enthusiastic about his British royal relatives that his gestures of amity towards them effectively amounted to an alternate foreign policy.<sup>40</sup>

The German government actually disliked King and Kaiser being together too often. Lascelles reported that the attitude in Berlin was that 'too great an intimacy between the German Emperor and the King of England was not desirable'.<sup>41</sup> The significant thing for Edward, however, was that it demonstrated for him that a key diplomatic effect could be achieved by the staging of a public image of unity displayed by two sovereigns.

## Edward VII and the Second Royal Visit to Germany, 1901

'My beloved sister has passed away peacefully and painlessly you will I know feel for my fresh sorrow but for her a great mercy,' wrote the King to Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister.<sup>42</sup> In subsequent correspondence, Edward made it clear to both Salisbury and the Kaiser that he intended to attend her funeral. This, of course, was to be expected, but what surprised both men, for different reasons, was the King's announced intention of paying a private family visit to the Kaiser immediately after the funeral. Given the aftermath of the February visit, there were British concerns about how it would be perceived publicly if the King paid

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<sup>35</sup> Paul M. Kennedy (1980) *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (New York: Humanity Books), p. 246.

<sup>40</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War* (London: HMSO), Vol. 1, No. 322, p. 259.

<sup>41</sup> TNA FO800/18/6, Lascelles to Lansdowne, 26 January 1901.

<sup>42</sup> Salisbury Archives (henceforth SA), 3rd Marquess, Papers, Telegram from Edward VII to Salisbury, 5 August 1901.



two visits characterised by royal pomp and ceremonial to the German Emperor in the same year. Edward, however, got round this by arguing (rather disingenuously) that his previous visit had been to his dying sister. This second was what he described as his first official private visit to the Kaiser, something which had come about unexpectedly due to his sister's death and which simply echoed the official private visit the Kaiser had paid to him on his mother's death.<sup>43</sup> His position was that this would be his first proper meeting with the Kaiser, and that he would not be caught off-guard, as in the impromptu February summit. This time he made it plain that he expected his politicians to ensure that he would be properly prepared for the interview. There would be formal overtones to their exchanges, even if there was no formal political exchange of notes.<sup>44</sup> It was not yet a state visit, but the determination of the King to play an active royal diplomatic role was manifesting itself.

Edward had no intention of letting the Foreign Office continue to elude any royal involvement in diplomacy. He used his awareness of his nephew's willingness to turn such encounters into something more politically significant to frame the letter he wrote to the Cabinet, which reminded them that the Kaiser would undoubtedly want to talk about British policy when the two met formally after the Empress's funeral. He demanded to be informed of what to say to the Kaiser if various questions arose in the discussion, as he would not like to speak against the government's wishes and give the Kaiser any false impressions about British foreign policy intentions. He received no reply, so when he arrived in Germany he wrote to the government again, this time through the ambassador, Lascelles. This time, he demonstrated his own diplomatic abilities by putting forward some suggestions of his own on the topics of conversation that he might safely undertake: 'I send to you a memorandum of one or two points which his Majesty mentioned to me yesterday.'<sup>45</sup>

Their hand being forced by Edward in this way, the Cabinet did respond, not by briefing him directly but by sending a lengthy 'Memorandum on questions which may be mentioned by his Majesty the King to the German Emperor and the Chancellor'.<sup>46</sup> It was a very safe document

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<sup>43</sup> Lee, *King Edward VII*, p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1975) *Uncle of Europe* (London: Collins), p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> TNA FO800/128/193, Lascelles to Lansdowne, 10 August 1901.

<sup>46</sup> TNA FO800/128/187, Memorandum on questions which may be mentioned by His Majesty the King to the German Emperor and the Chancellor, 21 August 1901.

diplomatically, in terms of informing Edward how he could fob Wilhelm off. It clearly outlined what, from the Cabinet perspective, the British government thought the King could mention, and it also identified what the King should refrain from commenting on. But there was little of the imperative – telling the King what he *must* avoid – and this indicates that the Cabinet and Foreign Office still did not appreciate or expect any advantage from active royal diplomacy. However, it does indicate that structures enshrining a level of trust as the basis of relations between the British monarch and the government were still present in British diplomatic protocols, and this made it easier for Edward to involve himself in active diplomacy. It is also telling that there was no indication that the Cabinet were concerned that Edward would ignore their advice, even though they must have realised that he intended to make use of it, having asked for it (twice). On the one hand, this indicates Edward's own will to work with his ministers rather than strike out his own line and expect them to comply with his initiatives. On the other, it suggests either a trust on the part of his ministers that the King would follow the suggested government line when dealing with his nephew, or that it did not matter to them what he did, even though – in the absence of any imperative instructions to the contrary – Edward could have easily added his own reflections on the various issues. These comments, as Edward knew, would have been taken seriously by a nephew who took a different perspective on the positions of monarchs within a state from that of his uncle.<sup>47</sup> Instead, as a further demonstration of Edward's intention to work constitutionally when involving himself in British diplomacy, he ensured that Lascelles was present during the interview. In his transcript of the interview, Lascelles took pleasure in confirming to the Cabinet that the King's responses 'used the observations contained in your Lordships' memorandum'.<sup>48</sup>

According to Ponsonby's recollections, the nature of the interactions between Edward and Wilhelm was rather more complex, partly because he was grieving and also deeply irritated with his nephew's insistence on using the occasion for his own purposes, in a way that he felt was inappropriate. By this time in chronic poor health, Edward based himself at Homburg, travelling from there to the funeral at

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<sup>47</sup> On the Kaiser's interpretation of monarchy and its proper powers, see Matthew Seligmann and Roderick Mclean, *Germany from Reich to Republic*.

<sup>48</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents*, Vol. 1, No. 323, p. 260.

Potsdam and subsequently to Wilhelmshohe to stay with his nephew at his own palace. Staying at Homburg to take the waters was something he was accustomed to doing when in Germany, and, even on this occasion, was something he undoubtedly saw as a strictly private thing in between his official royal appearances. But, instead, an insistence by the Kaiser on the trappings of state had been a factor from the moment of the King's arrival in Germany. The Kaiser's efforts to ensure regular and public demonstrations of the pomp and ceremony surrounding royal interactions in Germany was clearly driven by his understanding of the effects these demonstrations of ceremonial had on the German population, thanks to the active German media, and his determination to exploit for his own purposes this personal visit by his uncle, who also happened to be the British King. The impression he wanted to create was that the King had come to visit him, not to attend the Dowager Kaiserine's funeral. Wilhelm would also have realised that this presentation of things would have a significant impact in the British media, certainly the illustrated press which was so popularly read. The British press stated that the King was staying at the Ritters Park Hotel in Homburg 'as the guest of the German Emperor'.<sup>49</sup>

Consequently, as soon as Edward arrived in Germany he found himself at the centre of reporters and, above all, press photographers. At Homburg, a member of the King's suite soon discovered that 'His photographs were in every shop-window meaning the crowd never had any difficulty in spotting him.'<sup>50</sup> The photographs clearly indicated the Kaiser's key message in this publicity: that the King was there primarily to see the Kaiser, rather than to attend his own sister's funeral. They also encouraged the German public to go and see the British King for themselves, suggesting that if they ventured to the spa, they could potentially catch a glimpse of him. The impact of the media was considerable: gawping locals surrounded his every move outside, pointing and shouting as they saw Edward taking the waters. Reports of the King's every public movement were featured in several German newspapers, which also took care to suggest that the sovereign of the British Empire had come to visit the Kaiser. Edward himself was not impressed, probably at least partly because of the disrespect this implied to his much-loved sister: 'He was furious and swore he would never come there (to the

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<sup>49</sup> 'Notes from Homburg', *Sunday Times*, 18 August 1901.

<sup>50</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, p. 120.

waters at Homburg) again.<sup>51</sup> The King's irritation with this even reached the British press: the *Sunday Times* reported that an appeal had been published that 'the public in Homburg should refrain from following the King about' and also that he 'particularly disapproves' of the 'Kodak fiends' trying to take photographs of him.<sup>52</sup> The level of his fury can also be estimated by the fact that, though members of the King's suite found out that the Kaiser had encouraged the placing of Edward's picture in local shops, they decided to conceal this from the King, probably fearing that he would be unable to be polite to his nephew if he knew this.

The King travelled again from Homburg to Wilhelmshohe to see his nephew during the week after the funeral. Edward undoubtedly expected some formal ceremonial reception (on the basis of his previous visit to Wilhelm) but also that, given the occasion, it would be the framework to what would be, essentially, a quiet informal discussion. Instead, his arrival was greeted by the number of troops usually reserved for state occasions. As Ponsonby observed, 'When we arrived there seemed to be an enormous number of troops in the streets and they told me afterwards that the Emperor had sent for 15,000 men, which seemed to me to be overdoing it in view of the fact that the visit was supposed to be private.'<sup>53</sup> The Kaiser seemed determined to create all the fuss and procession of a state visit, something which seemed to the British quite out of keeping with the sombre background to the meeting. According to Ponsonby, initially Edward was so irritated by his nephew, as well as upset, that, instead of talking to Wilhelm as originally planned, Edward had handed across the notes passed on to him from the Cabinet, without bothering to discuss them.

But a meeting between uncle and nephew did take place during Edward's short stay at Wilhelmshohe. Little was made of the significance of this visit between the two, even at the time. It was reported in the German press, but barely noticed in the British press – the British newspapers were not yet used to the resumption of an active royal diplomacy, and so took little account of it, beyond seeing it as a typical meeting of royal relatives. But, despite the royal irritation with the excessive ritual and the downplaying of the real reasons for Edward's visit, the eventual private meeting between the King and the Kaiser was not unprofitable for the British, if less immediately and publicly profitable

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> 'Notes from Homburg', *Sunday Times*, 25 August 1901.

<sup>53</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p. 121.

than the visit was for the Kaiser. Edward did pick up something of use from the meeting when he observed how strongly his nephew felt about Anglo-Japanese relations: 'It was evident that the Emperor was under the impression that Japan had been badly treated by His Majesty's Government.'<sup>54</sup> Edward and Lascelles made little response to the Kaiser at the time, because the Memorandum from which they were working did not mention the issue. It is a measure of Edward's determination to act in line with government policy that he did not even hint that active negotiations were then ongoing. But it is also a measure of Edward's sound diplomatic antenna that he picked up his nephew's interest in the topic and insisted on its importance in terms of good Anglo-German relations.

When, six months later, in early 1902, the British concluded their alliance with the Japanese, the King commented on the final draft that there should be 'no loss of time in informing the German government' of the agreement.<sup>55</sup> His point was that they would quickly learn of it, 'secrecy being almost an impossibility', and that 'The Emperor will be much interested in the news as he has strongly advocated a close alliance between Great Britain and Japan.'<sup>56</sup> Edward realised that Wilhelm would be very pleased, not just by the alliance, but also to be informed of it so promptly, because he could then feel that it was partly his doing. It underlined evolving consciousness on his part that another function of these private meetings was the ability of a sovereign to glean information from his relations that could be used politically and reported back to the government. Edward believed very strongly that little gestures such as making the Kaiser feel he had had a hand in organising the Anglo-Japanese alliance, even though he had not in reality, had a substantial positive effect, which could be achieved at very little political cost to the British. It was the art of flattery, something at which Edward was adept and which the mechanics of royal diplomacy made it easy for him to practise, even if his government was slow to recognise the advantages this offered to them.

British media coverage of the trip to Germany had focused either on the King's time at Homburg, in the gossip columns, or on his behaviour

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, Vol. 2, No. 125, p. 121. Full details of this alliance can be found in Philips Payson O'Brien (ed.) (2004) *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902–1922* (London: Routledge Curzon), particularly Ian Nish's and Keith Neilson's contributions: chapters 1 and 3, respectively.

<sup>56</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, Vol. 2 No. 125, p. 121.

at his sister's funeral only a week earlier. *The Times* had commented on the 'Immense crowd that was assembled along the road at a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the gates', and its surprise that it was not a public occasion on the same level as Queen Victoria's funeral.<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, in terms of royal diplomacy at work, the British press did take the time to observe how well-dressed the King's staff were. This was something that the King had seen to personally, as he knew how important ceremony and dress were to the German Emperor. This was much to the annoyance of his staff, though, as Lascelles' comment underlines: 'Knollys told me today that the King has troubled the Emperor through you with an absurd question as to your costume at attending the Empress' funeral.'<sup>58</sup> Edward's courtiers, too, were not yet accustomed to a revival of active royal diplomacy overseas.

### Edward's Diplomatic Manoeuvring: Georgy's Trip to Berlin

Edward had certainly wanted only to pay a quiet visit to his nephew, in a way that was a complement to the visit that Wilhelm had paid to his uncle at the time of Victoria's death and funeral. Instead, the Kaiser had deliberately turned the event of his mother's funeral and its aftermath into a public spectacle. The substantial coverage of the funeral ceremonials, including the uniforms worn by the various royals present, underlines the importance of ritual as a key factor in the way in which monarchs were understood as symbols in both countries. The coverage in the German press was more extensive, but there was no substantial public interest for either country in what the King and Kaiser would discuss politically. The German press ignored this: the British had simply wanted to be assured that their King would not engage in such discussions himself.

However, one thing that British politicians had begun to learn, especially from the second visit, was that private exchanges between ruling monarchs could double as important fact-finding missions. Britain was, at the time of Edward's accession, diplomatically isolated, largely due to the European response to the Boer War. This meant that Britain was actively seeking friends at the time of Edward's accession: something which could have been a factor in the readiness the King showed, when making that second visit to Germany, to engage the Kaiser when he

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<sup>57</sup> 'The Late Empress Frederick', *The Times*, 9 August 1901.

<sup>58</sup> TNA FO800/10/159, Lascelles to Bertie, 25 July 1901.

found out that the previous visit had pleased him so much. Taking into account the compliment to Germany that the German government assumed from the visit by the British King, it became evident that the withdrawal of a proposed royal visit could be similarly deployed as a form of mild displeasure. This was utilised by Edward when he felt that the Reichstag was making unfavourable statements towards Britain. As a result of these first private royal visits to Germany and the way they had been capitalised on there, the King understood that the Kaiser would always be likely to be receptive to gestures which had a public dimension. A further diplomatic gesture was made when Edward announced that he would be sending his son and heir, George, on a private royal visit to Berlin to mark the Kaiser's birthday. It did greatly please Wilhelm, as the following extract underlines: 'Lascelles has told me that you kindly intend sending Georgy to Berlin for my Birthday, which is a most kind idea and gives me great pleasure. We shall do everything to make him like his stay.'<sup>55</sup>

The proposition that the Prince of Wales should undertake this trip was made shortly after Edward returned from Germany and then Denmark in September 1901, and in the full knowledge that Wilhelm would surround that visit with a great deal of ceremony, using it for his own propaganda purposes. It is a measure of the importance Edward placed on the diplomatic gesture that he took charge of organising the schedule for the visit, acting through his Private Secretary and his ambassador to Berlin. He sent various enquiries to Lascelles, who would be accompanying his son during his time in Berlin. Lascelles responded: 'Emperor told me yesterday that the Officers to be attached to Prince of Wales during H.R.H.'s Visit to Berlin will be General von Loewenfeld and van Kessel.'<sup>60</sup> One indication of how the Kaiser hoped to enhance the impact of what might otherwise have been a small family matter is given by the suggestion from the Kaiser that perhaps the Prince of Wales might like to dine with the Victoria Dragoon Guards. But Lascelles tactfully reminded the Kaiser 'that H.R.H. had expressed his fear that the shortness of his stay in Berlin would prevent his accepting a dinner but that perhaps a luncheon could be managed'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Royal Archives (henceforth RA) VIC/MAIN/X/37/52, Kaiser Wilhelm II to King Edward VII, 6 January 1902.

<sup>60</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/53, Decipher Telegram from Sir Frank Lascelles, 13 January 1902.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the cordial royal negotiations about the proposed visit, the two countries' overall diplomatic relationship was at one of its lowest points of the entire Edwardian period. It was, after all, during the Boer War period that Britain began to think of Germany as not just another power in Europe but a diplomatic threat that had to be countered.<sup>62</sup> Equally, at this time Germany was becoming increasingly Anglophobic, the German military in particular. In this tense atmosphere, the British were very sensitive to anti-British sentiments in Germany: something of which the King was very aware.<sup>62</sup> Thus, when the German Chancellor, Count von Bülow, made an inflammatory speech (known as the Granite Speech) to an enthused Reichstag, full of condemnation of British foreign policy, particularly the Boer War, and followed this speech with a second equally insulting but well-received speech against British ministers, this was taken seriously in Britain, as the critical coverage in the press underlines.<sup>64</sup> Both the Cabinet and Parliament as a whole considered the speeches to be unnecessarily aggressive. The resulting popular anger inspired many anti-German feelings, similar to the anti-British sentiment that was becoming increasingly apparent in Germany. *The Times* published an article called 'The Literature of German Anglophobia', with an opening sentence which read:

Count Von Bülow's recent speeches in the German Reichstag have unfortunately afforded such unmistakable evidence of the deference with which the Imperial Chancellor feels himself constrained to treat the passions aroused throughout the length and breadth of Germany against this country.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly, this wider German hostility was neither wanted nor endorsed by the Kaiser. Speaking to the British ambassador on the subject of his Chancellor's speeches, Wilhelm II seemed to be very upset about the British press response, because he insisted he only had good intentions for Britain: 'The Emperor sincerely desires a good understanding between the two Countries, although he is hurt at the outburst of indignation in the English press.'<sup>66</sup> His argument was that, though

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<sup>62</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 251.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>64</sup> Full details of the speech, as well as Bülow's intentions in writing it, can be found in Lee, *King Edward VII*, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup> 'The Literature of German Anglophobia', *The Times*, 13 January 1902.

<sup>66</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/54, Sir Frank Lascelles to King Edward VII, 14 January 1902.



there were some unfavourable sentiments in Bülow's first speech, the second speech had been meant to be friendly, and had been taken out of context by the British press. Lascelles' comment to Edward underlines this. He wrote to the King expressing his surprise at the reaction: 'he [the Kaiser] was not surprised at the outburst which Count Bülow's first speech had occasioned in England, he had been disappointed that His Excellency's second speech, which he was convinced was intended to be friendly, should have been so unfavourably received'.<sup>67</sup>

Despite this, however, Edward wrote to Salisbury to the effect that he felt that this incident needed to be taken notice of, at a level which would be noted privately by the Kaiser but which would avoid inflaming diplomatic tensions still further. In another demonstration to the British government of just how useful royal diplomacy could be, Edward informed Salisbury that he would not now be sending George to Berlin, as a symbol of *his* displeasure – making it something separate from official British diplomatic actions. Edward sent Salisbury a draft of his proposed letter to Wilhelm informing him that the Prince of Wales would not now be visiting: 'The King desires me to send you the enclosed draft of his letter to the German Emperor. Will you kindly say if you think it will do? I am to show it afterwards to Lord Lansdowne.'<sup>68</sup> The initiative of using even a private royal visit as a diplomatic tool came from the Palace, but Salisbury agreed that this would be a suitable response, showing the Kaiser the British displeasure without taking any official action. Salisbury was a practised politician and diplomat, and his respect for the monarchy ensured that at times like this, he did his best to work with the King. As he reported to Lord Lansdowne, 'It is in the King's judgement that some indication of dissatisfaction at Bülow's speech is necessary. HM has the opportunity of taking it in his own hands, for he has only to delay for some little time the visit of the Prince of Wales.'<sup>69</sup>

Edward's letter informed Wilhelm that 'In sending my Son, George, to Berlin to spend the anniversary of your Birthday with you, I intended it as a personal mark of affection and friendship towards you.'<sup>70</sup> However, he continued, Bülow's 'Violent speeches' had been perceived as an insult

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> SA Knollys to Lord Salisbury, 14 January 1902.

<sup>69</sup> TNA FO 800/129/6, Salisbury to Lansdowne, 10 January 1902.

<sup>70</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/58, King Edward VII to Kaiser Wilhelm II, 15 January 1902.

to England, to British colonial ministers and to the army.<sup>71</sup> Edward also revealed that he had a personal reason for cancelling George's visit: his fear that his son would receive a hostile reception: 'I think that under the circumstances it would be better for him not to go where he is liable to be insulted.'<sup>72</sup> But at the same time, Edward's letter also did contain a friendly personal message, when he thanked Wilhelm for making him an admiral in the German Navy. He told Wilhelm that he saw the offer as 'an additional proof of your affection towards me'.<sup>73</sup> This shows that Edward was very conscious that there was a difference between making diplomatic gestures, including royal ones, and personal relationships when it came to inter-monarchical communications.

Edward had clearly hoped not to upset the Kaiser personally, but despite Edward's efforts, his nephew was deeply hurt by this news, and found the passage suggesting that his cousin George would be insulted in Berlin particularly upsetting. Lascelles commented in a letter to Knollys that the Kaiser prided himself upon the fact that he was a master of ceremony and that his well-trained Berlin police would deal with anyone who dared insult his guest. Lascelles warned that Edward's comment had the potential to be perceived by Wilhelm as a slight on his ability as a host: 'The Police administration of Berlin is such as to render such a thing almost impossible and I fear that the Emperor will feel hurt at the suggestion of his inability to protect his honoured guests from insult in Berlin.'<sup>74</sup> Lascelles plainly felt that the Kaiser had made it clear that he had not expected the speeches to be received so unfavourably, and more, that he had not known what was in them before they were delivered: 'I do not quite agree with you in thinking that the Emperor must have known what Bülow was going to say.'<sup>75</sup> This reveals how differently the British government and monarch viewed such royal visits than a German public and a Kaiser who were much more accustomed to such events.<sup>76</sup>

An upset Wilhelm claimed that being told of the cancellation of the Prince of Wales' visit by Lascelles was the first that he had heard of it, denying he had received any letter from Edward. He informed Lascelles that he had already formally announced the visit to the German Princes,

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/61, Sir Frank Lascelles to Sir Francis Knollys, 17 January 1902.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

and Lascelles, in turn, reported to Edward that Wilhelm had said that the 'non-arrival of Prince of Wales now that H.R.H.'s visit had been announced to all the German Princes & after all preparations had been made for his reception, would be a most serious matter'.<sup>77</sup> More, 'His Majesty had considered Prince's visit as a family matter and had made preparations to receive him with every honour, and he was evidently taken aback at hearing that visit might be postponed.'<sup>78</sup> However, despite the Kaiser's claim that the visit should be strictly private, he ended the conversation with this warning: 'H.M. considers an inquiry on the subject, or even a suggestion that it might have been advisable to postpone the visit would have enabled him to give explanations, and avoid political aspect which H.R.H.'s non-arrival would now assume.'<sup>79</sup> With the Kaiser maintaining that he had not received Edward's letter, his position was that he could make no official response to his uncle via formal channels. The British were unconvinced: 'He [the King] is bound to say that he does not believe one word of the story that his letter to the Emperor has been lost.'<sup>80</sup>

On this occasion, the King and his government did work together to arrive at a suitable solution, with Salisbury advising the King on the potential political implications of this attempt to intimidate the British government into taking no further action while he continued to prepare for the visit:

But his silence this morning seems to indicate another plan. He will continue preparations in an ostentatious manner for the Prince of Wales but he will make no reply to Your Majesty's letter. He will calculate on Your Majesty's dislike to anything meaning the appearance of an open break and will expect that the Prince of Wales will come over.<sup>81</sup>

Salisbury added that aside from the Kaiser's threat, the visit could have other diplomatic effects, due to having an impact on German public opinion of Britain as a result of media coverage of any proposed slight. He suggested that if the Prince went to Berlin without any further action being taken, the British government would be seen in the eyes of the

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<sup>77</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/64, Cypher from Sir Frank Lascelles, 22 January 1902.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/65, Sir Francis Knollys to Henry, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, 22 January 1902.

<sup>81</sup> SA Salisbury to Edward VII, 22 January 1902.

German people to have backed down. This would further escalate the public war of insults that currently existed between the two nations' presses: 'If the Prince of Wales was to come over without any further invitation from the Emperor, every newspaper in Germany will treat it as an act of English submission and the English newspapers will reply in a similar tone.'<sup>82</sup> He admitted, however, that if Edward maintained his position, an even more serious breach between the two nations could occur: 'If the Prince of Wales refuses entirely to come over it will to some degree amount to a breach between your majesty and the Emperor, which, again will be applauded by the press on both sides and may affect the future relations of the governments.'<sup>83</sup> Tellingly, this statement acknowledges that the contemporary popular press gained satisfaction from any disagreement between Edward and Wilhelm, as it provided fuel for their stories of rivalry between Britain and Germany. The King responded to Salisbury and Lansdowne that he would prefer to take no action for the time being, temporarily giving the Kaiser the benefit of the doubt about the lost letter: 'The King can do nothing further until he has an acknowledgment from the Emperor of his letter.'<sup>84</sup> Correspondence between King and Cabinet revealed that the greatest concern of both parties was that the Prince of Wales might be insulted because of German attitudes to British foreign policy, and that this could lead to the sort of diplomatic incident they wished to avoid.<sup>85</sup>

Knollys and Lansdowne found the diplomatic solution: informing Lascelles that 'if the Emperor will inform the King by letter or telegram that it is HM's desire that the Prince of Wales's visit should not be abandoned and that HM feels absolutely confident that the visit will not be attended by any regrettable incidents, the King will not press his view and will allow the Prince of Wales to visit Berlin.'<sup>86</sup> This would provide assurances that George would not be insulted in Berlin while ensuring that the Kaiser would not be offended but maintaining the stance of British displeasure over Bülow's speeches. All of this meant that they had not lost face diplomatically. The suggestion also seemed to appeal to the Kaiser, as he sent the required letter to Edward immediately. Knollys acknowledged: 'He is confident that the Prince will be received by the people of Germany

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> SA Knollys to Salisbury, 22 January 1902.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

in a manner befitting HRH's position as a near relative and guest of the Emperor.<sup>87</sup> The arrangements for the visit went ahead, much to the satisfaction of Lansdowne: 'I cannot say how much I rejoice that the matter should have ended in what appears to me a most satisfactory fashion.'<sup>88</sup>

The day George left for Berlin, on 24 January, he was briefed by his father on the niceties of royal diplomacy as Edward understood them. As George recorded in his diary, his father had gone through a selection of papers that had recently travelled between himself and the Kaiser: 'Breakfast at 9.45. Papa showed me some letters & papers from William.'<sup>89</sup> George did not mention the content of these letters, but they were most likely about the recent events surrounding his visit. Later that same day, the German ambassador to London came to see George to discuss matters with him for a lengthy period of time. Again, the substance of this conversation was not recorded, but one can assume that it was about the speeches made by Bülow that had created an unfortunate backdrop for the visit: 'Metternich [German ambassador] paid a visit & we had a long talk.'<sup>90</sup> Upon arriving in Berlin the next day, George noted that Wilhelm had laid on a guard of honour for him to inspect, much in the way one would on a state visit. Luckily, George was as savvy as his father in understanding Wilhelm's tendency to create a parade out of small family events. George recorded the manner with which he was received in his diary: 'We reached Berlin at 7.0. William, all the Princes, & Generals and the Officers of the Dragoon Gds received me, I inspected the Guard of Honour & it marched past. I then drove with Wm. in a state carriage (he wore the Royals uniform) with an escort of Dragoons to the Palace.'<sup>91</sup> This is ironic given that Wilhelm, in his complaints about the cancellation of the visit, had claimed that this was a small family affair that should not be affected by political matters. George must have reflected wryly on the way in which he was paraded by his cousin through the streets of Berlin in a state carriage. As George noted, though, the day did end with 'A small family dinner'.<sup>92</sup>

The next morning George had an honorary colonelship of a German regiment bestowed on him, before having to attend an extremely large

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<sup>87</sup> TNA 800/129/51, Knollys to Lansdowne, 23 January 1901.

<sup>88</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/67, Henry 5th Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir Francis Knollys, 24 January 1902.

<sup>89</sup> RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1902: 24 January.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1902: 25 January.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

dinner that evening, of the sort normally associated with a state visit: 'Dined at 8.0. a large dinner, over 100.'<sup>93</sup> Before the dinner, George was introduced to and given the opportunity to talk to Count von Bülow, the man whose anti-British speeches had almost caused the visit to be cancelled: 'Had a long talk with Count von Bülow.'<sup>94</sup> George was always noted for his frank and honest way of speaking when it came to political matters. His manner impressed Bülow, who reported to Lascelles how pleased he had been with the exchange: 'Count von Bülow on whose left I was placed at dinner expressed his satisfaction at the frank and open manner in which the Prince of Wales had spoken to him, and had allowed him to reply with the same frankness.'<sup>95</sup>

In terms of understanding how far British political recognition of the value of royal diplomacy had come, there is no evidence that George was given a memorandum by the government, and so no politics could have been discussed, aside from George's own personal views. The next morning, George commented that Wilhelm had laid on all of Berlin's officers for him to inspect and to be introduced to: 'I walked with William to Arsenal where all the Officers in Berlin were assembled & gave them the "parole". He presented all the Regiments to me & I shook hands with all the Colonels.'<sup>96</sup> A dinner that night concluded George's visit to Berlin, which had occurred without incident. As the Kaiser had promised, George received no comments about British policy for the duration of his stay. He left for Neustrelitz that evening, leaving behind a very satisfied Wilhelm, who happily sent a telegram to his uncle: 'Georgy left this morning for Strelitz all safe and sound and we were very sorry to have to part so soon from such a merry and genial guest[.] I think he has amused himself well here. Once more best thanks for his visit.'<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusion

To sum up the significance of private royal visits in the early years of Edward's reign, one may draw the following conclusions. There was no initial expectation by British politicians that these visits could have any political dimension. They were soon to discover that if this was their

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<sup>93</sup> RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1902: 26 January.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, Vol. 1, No. 337, p. 271.

<sup>96</sup> RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1902: 27 January.

<sup>97</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/42/70, Kaiser Wilhelm II to King Edward VII, 28 January 1902.

perspective, it was not shared by a state and a monarch with a very different attitude towards the importance and significance of monarchical diplomacy. Wilhelm II's actions to inflate the context of Edward VII's visits ensured that the Germans (politicians and press) would use these visits as propaganda, showcasing them as events intended to enhance popular support for the Reich. Second, even if his government did not appreciate the potential of royal diplomacy, Edward was already predisposed towards a revival of this, and quickly learned lessons from his nephew that even ostensibly private royal visits could have a genuine role in the wider diplomatic landscape.

These visits were presented by the Germans as events that 'proved' Germany's importance as a presence on the world stage, given that the world's most important monarch was visiting their Kaiser. In Britain, as yet only Edward VII took seriously the fact that his nephew's actions could persuade both the German government and the German public to make so much of the smallest private visit (to a birthday party). After all, Edward VII could have refused to cooperate with his nephew from the start, in 1901. He was visiting a much-loved and dying sister, and was personally disinclined to undertake the extra duties which the Kaiser had arranged to accompany his visit. He did not.

Another measure of how Edward VII learned from the Kaiser about the diplomatic, and hence the propaganda, potential of monarchical foreign visits was his management of the proposed trip by his son and heir, the Prince of Wales, in 1902. That was the year of the Peace of Vereenigen, and a year when criticism of British conduct of the Boer War was still resonating in Germany. In the end, the Prince of Wales did go, but only after protracted negotiations, which deeply upset and worried the Kaiser as much as British politicians. It is a measure of the power and relative independence of the monarch as diplomat that it was Edward VII's decision, not that of the British politicians, to refuse, initially, to send the Prince of Wales. Salisbury was deeply worried about the implications for Anglo-German relations of a failure to go ahead with this royal visit. The Kaiser had clearly threatened consequences which Salisbury and others in the British government had taken very seriously. Again, it underlines how important British royal visits were to the recipients – both monarchs and states – as subsequent chapters will show.

# 3

## A Difficult Host: Edward VII's Visit to Italy

### Introduction

Edward VII's first official state visit came in 1903, the year after the careful negotiations that had seen the Prince of Wales visit his cousin in Berlin. But it was during 1902 that Edward first got the idea that the currently poor level of Anglo-Italian relations could be improved by a formal visit to the King of Italy by the King of Great Britain. In other words, the initiative to restore state visits came from the King, and not from his courtiers or politicians. He was the one who believed that they would serve his country and would find a modern role for the monarchy in the constitutional realities of British government at the dawn of the twentieth century. Unsurprisingly, because it was his own concept, the state visit to Italy was also very carefully planned by Edward himself. His role in both the planning and the execution of this visit was very personal, and it is as a result of this that there was an active royal contribution to the development of the modern state visit by British monarchs.

The government's reaction to the proposed visit itself, and also to the preparations for a formal state visit, was a largely uninterested one. When Edward first broached the idea, he made it plain to Balfour that it was to be a visit with a clear diplomatic and foreign policy resonance. In the German visits, even though the Memorandum had been provided by the Cabinet for the second visit, what had actually happened was that the King and the Kaiser had unofficially and spontaneously ended up working together, regardless of the personal issues between them. If the original impetus to turn a private royal visit into a semi-state occasion had come from Wilhelm II, in the end they had both collaborated – or colluded – in the transformation of the visits into something that had resembled a state visit, at least in terms of the media coverage. But there



was a history of dynastic links between the British and German royal families, so the contacts between them had a foundation of past contact and personal familiarity: there was no such history when it came to the House of Savoy, the Roman Catholic Italian royal family, making Edward's proposition of a state visit there highly controversial.

## Italy in Britain's Mediterranean strategy

None of Edward VII's other official state visits was surrounded with as much political controversy as his visit in the spring of 1903 to Italy. It was not the first time Edward had visited Italy; he had first gone there as part of a Victorian version of the Grand Tour in 1859 (also travelling to Spain). Subsequently, he had visited Italy for less overtly cultural reasons, but this was to be Edward's first visit there as sovereign, and, indeed, the first state visit to the young Italian state by a British monarch. The outline itself seemed uncontroversial, consisting of a brief three-day tour of Naples and Rome. However, British political anxieties soon changed that. After their initial lack of interest, the proposed state visit to Italy placed Edward in dispute with his Cabinet, because it was held to have the potential to threaten British strategic interests in the Mediterranean. It also touched on the issue of Catholic rights in the UK itself.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Anglo-Italian relations were arguably more complicated than Britain's relations with other European powers. Italy was part of the Triple Alliance, which also included Germany and Austria-Hungary, a diplomatic group that, after considerable exploration by British diplomats, Britain had opted not to join.<sup>1</sup> One of Britain's main objections to a formal alliance with Germany in 1898 and 1901 had been that it had not wanted to become a *de facto* Triple Alliance member, as this would have meant too great a commitment to central European issues.<sup>2</sup> Italy, though, was not a central European state. With the exception of its northern frontier, Italy's borders were on the Mediterranean coastline, and at the start of the twentieth century, the Mediterranean Sea held the largest concentration of Royal Navy

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<sup>1</sup> For full details of Britain's exploration of a treaty with Germany, see George Monger (1976) *The End of Isolation British Foreign Policy 1900–1907* (New York: Greenwood Press), pp. 21–38. For reasons why the British deemed it against their interests, see pp. 43–5.

<sup>2</sup> Details of Britain's rejection of Germany can be found in C.J. Bartlett (1996) *Peace, War and the European Powers, 1814–1914* (London: Macmillan Press) p. 134.

warships, due to Britain's strategic interest in protecting the Suez Canal, then perceived as its lifeline to India.<sup>3</sup> Italy also had a *de facto* diplomatic significance for the British because of the importance of Brindisi in expediting the passage of mail and passengers en route to India. Italy had also to take account of Britain due to the fact that it was, practically speaking, the only European state completely exposed to British sea power. The British ambassador to Rome, Lord Currie, reminded Lord Lansdowne that 'The Italians of course, feel that it is to their interest to be diplomatically on good relations with us.'<sup>4</sup> Italy and the UK also both possessed a common rival, France, which encouraged good relations, something which was also pivotal to Anglo-Italian diplomatic relations in the pre-Entente Cordiale period.

Largely due to the diplomatic crisis following events at Fashoda in 1898,<sup>5</sup> Anglo-French relations during this period were, in 1903, also at their lowest point since the Napoleonic Wars. Many within military and political circles considered that an Anglo-French skirmish was imminent. This situation was made worse as a result of France's agreements with Russia, with whom Britain also had traditional diplomatic differences. This meant that conflict with France would most likely result in the UK fighting Russia as well. In British forward strategic planning, Italy's central Mediterranean position was at the centre of the naval battleground for the predicted skirmish against the Franco-Russian Entente. The British Cabinet had even received a report entitled 'The Military Requirements of a War with France and Russia'. This suggested that any conflict would take place in the Mediterranean.<sup>6</sup> In this context, Italy's role often arose in the consequent political and military planning discussions. As Lord Currie commented, it would be advisable 'not [to] let Italian friendship slide until the question of what Italy should do has been thoroughly studied and mapped out'.<sup>7</sup>

In a second letter to Lansdowne in late 1900, Currie had again pushed the issue of Anglo-Italian cooperation in the event of a war

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Porter (1996) *The Lion's Share. A Short History of British Imperialism 1850–1995* (London: Addison Wesley Longman), p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO800/132/5, Lord Currie to Lansdowne, 27 November 1900.

<sup>5</sup> For a full assessment of the Fashoda incident and its implications, see following chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Zara Steiner (1969) *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> TNA FO800/132/22, Lord Currie to Lansdowne, 27 November 1900.

with France: 'A report should be drawn up which addresses the issue of how England and Italy could best aid each other in the event of war in the Mediterranean.'<sup>8</sup> Naval strategists like Admiral Fisher agreed with Currie's view.<sup>9</sup> Throughout their correspondence, Fisher and Selborne only ever referred to a friendly or neutral Italy and never to a hostile one, suggesting their views on Italy's position.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, the tension between Italy and France worried the British Cabinet. The fear was that any casual gestures of friendship made by the British government towards the Italians because of the need for cooperation over shared Mediterranean interests might cause the Italian government to assume that Britain would feel obliged to protect them from French hostility. Lord Currie wrote to Lord Lansdowne: 'There is a unanimous opinion in Italy that in the event of a war with France, England is by treaty to defend the Italian coast.'<sup>11</sup> Of course, no such promise had ever been made, despite Britain, Italy and Austria-Hungary all being members of a late nineteenth-century Mediterranean entente to preserve the status quo there.<sup>12</sup> Britain had, however, avoided a formal treaty, not wishing to hamper any chances of an agreement with France on various extra-European issues.

However, Currie and Lansdowne both believed that it was absolutely essential that, while Italian politicians knew that Britain had signed no such assurance treaty, at the same time, in Currie's words, 'We ought not to allow the belief [in British support] to die out in Italy', in case of the need for Italian assistance in protecting British Mediterranean interests.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, this meant that Britain wanted Italy to favour the diplomatic actions of Britain but to do so without the need for a formal agreement. Thus, despite encouragements from ambassadors and the military on the benefits of Italian friendship, the Cabinet remained rather wary of any positive action to promote Anglo-Italian relations.

This was the complicated state of Anglo-Italian relations at the time when Edward came to the throne. In his steps to involve himself actively in his persona as monarch in Britain's diplomatic strategies, Edward came

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<sup>8</sup> TNA FO800/132/36, Lord Currie to Lansdowne, 26 December 1900.

<sup>9</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library (henceforth BOD) MS/Selborne/22/3, Report from Admiral Fisher regarding battle plans in the Mediterranean, 16 September 1901.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> TNA FO800/132/5, Lord Currie to Lord Lansdowne, 27 November 1900.

<sup>12</sup> Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp. 85–7.

<sup>13</sup> TNA FO800/132/36, Currie to Lansdowne, 26 December 1900.

to believe that it was important to make some more significant diplomatic gestures to the Italians to encourage them to favour the British in the event of a Mediterranean conflict which involved the French. His government agreed to an extent, but ministers were absolutely clear, as preparations for Edward's state visit to Italy went ahead, that their key concern was that precautions had to be taken not to give too many assurances to the Italian government.<sup>14</sup> This provided a diplomatically thin line for both Edward and the British government to tread.

### Setting the stage

It is difficult to assess when Edward himself first became convinced that Anglo-Italian relations needed attention. However, his first documented view on the subject as monarch was passed on to Lord Lansdowne by his counterpart, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 19 July 1902: 'King Edward referred to our friendly relations but deplored the absence of any exchange of ideas on matters of common interest.'<sup>15</sup> One can assume that Edward was referring to the fact that the British government were not cooperating diplomatically with the Italians as much as they could, probably following their policy of not giving the Italians any false pretences about British support against the French. In fact, a policy of actually cooling Anglo-Italian relations had, between 1900 and 1902, been pursued so effectively by the British that the Italians were beginning to feel that they were being neglected by the British.

Edward's concern about the state of Anglo-Italian relations was not simply due to knowledge gained in briefings from his own ministers. He had a personal contact in the British Embassy in Rome, in the shape of Sir James Rennell Rodd, who kept in contact with the King during his period there in a supporting role at the Embassy. As a result of that contact, Edward began to evolve the idea of making a great diplomatic gesture that would improve relations to a respectable level: the kind of gesture only a monarch could make. Ten days after Edward's initial message to Lansdowne on 19 July 1902, Rodd, in a letter to Lansdowne, suggested that a state visit from Edward would be a very positive move, insisting that 'It will have a very amiable effect if his majesty would

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<sup>14</sup> Denis Mack Smith (1989) *Italy and its Monarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> TNA FO800/132/113, Conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 29 July 1902.

come to Rome.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that some front-line British diplomats were beginning to appreciate the positive effect on diplomatic relations that a British renewal of the strategy of state visits to a European country could have. After all, they were men who witnessed the impact of such visits being made by other European monarchs, and must have been conscious of the long-standing lack of participation by the British. If this could not have been remedied while Victoria was alive, the possibility was there for renewal under Edward.<sup>17</sup> It is important to stress that this view was not universal amongst either diplomats or British politicians in 1903. However, judging from Edward's comments about his government's relationship with Italy, he had a firm belief in his power to improve the diplomatic landscape for his country, as well as being conscious of a need for such improvement. After a period of inactivity in the summer and early autumn of the year, Edward began to pursue the matter of his state visit to Italy towards the end of the year.

### The issue of the Pope

The core issue for any state visit to Italy by any crowned head was whether or not a sovereign should meet the Pope when he was in Rome. That this could be problematic for a British monarch making a state visit was something first commented on by Rodd in his letter to Lansdowne in 1902. At one level, this was an issue which would affect any state visit by a European head of state to Italy. Pope Leo XIII's relationship with the newly unified state of Italy could best be described as turbulent, as had been the case since 1861 and the confiscation of the Papal States.<sup>18</sup> Confined to the Vatican City, the Pope had continued to constitute a political challenge to the Italian government. At the start of the twentieth century, Pope Leo was still 'adamant in refusing to recognise the existence of a united Italy and continued to expect its imminent dissolution by the operation of divine providence.'<sup>19</sup> He still expected to be treated as if he were a head of state, and that any formal visits to the Italian peninsula by heads of state would entail a visit to the Vatican.

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<sup>16</sup> TNA FO800/132/114, Letter to Lansdowne from Sir J. Rennell Rodd, 29 July 1902.

<sup>17</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Regime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh Paderborn).

<sup>18</sup> A detailed account of the retreat of Papal forces can be found in Mack Smith, *Italy*, pp. 38–41, 48–54.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

However, he also expected all his foreign guests to observe his perspective on the existence of Italy.

The Italian King, Victor Emmanuel, was not particularly anti-Pope, and despite his family's excommunication by Leo XIII, he had tried to do his best to remain a good Catholic, with the aspiration of being one day accepted as being back in formal communication with the Papacy. Effectively, he understood that the expectation that a man like Leo XIII would recognise a superior secular authority over himself was impractical. Given the status of the Roman Catholic Church, and the number of Catholics in the populations of most European states, Victor Emmanuel also respected the difficulty that foreign leaders faced when they paid a state visit to him and also wanted, or found it expedient, to call on the Pope. Not all Italian politicians shared Victor Emmanuel's tolerance of the Pope's stance. Many believed that the foreign dignitaries should not go out of their way to please the Pope and as a result implicitly insult the Italian government, especially when the Pope used all his spiritual authority to speak out against the Italian government and to influence the predominantly Catholic Italian population against it.

There was another, additional issue for a British monarch: Edward was not only a secular head of state but also Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and so also possessed spiritual authority of his own, at least in theory. That added a further complication to the issue of whether or not a British state visit to Italy should include a visit to the Vatican. Strategically speaking, in view of the need to placate the Italian government, it would have made sense for Edward not to visit the Pope at all. Rennell Rodd commented to Lord Lansdowne in 1902: 'What would please the Italians must be a visit to the monarch without a visit to the Vatican.'<sup>20</sup> However, despite being officially Protestant, Edward's realm had, thanks largely to Ireland, large Catholic minorities, and he felt that he could not afford to perpetrate what would be seen as an insult to the leader of their faith.<sup>21</sup> It was also pointed out by Francis Bertie, when he became ambassador to Rome, that 'The British Government... may think that the Irish Catholics are past praying for and the English and Scotch Catholic influence is not worth considering, but there are many Catholics in the Dominions beyond the Seas', including important colonies like

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<sup>20</sup> TNA FO800/132/114, Sir J. Rennell Rodd to Lansdowne, 29 July 1902.

<sup>21</sup> Edward's involvement with Irish Catholics can be found in Sydney Lee (1927) *King Edward VII. A Biography*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan), pp. 165–9, 183.

Australia and Canada.<sup>22</sup> They would certainly look positively on a visit to the Vatican. Dealing tactfully with this complicated issue was, therefore, unavoidable as part of preparations for the state visit to Italy.

### Enabling the visit

In October 1902, Lord Currie announced that he would be retiring from the Rome Embassy on the grounds of ill health. This prompted political discussion across society's London drawing rooms on the subject of who would be his replacement. Many in Whitehall believed that Thomas Sanderson would be appointed to the post, due to the fact that Sanderson was seen as one of the least able of the Foreign Office potential appointees and it was thought that it would be safer to place him in the Rome Embassy than somewhere such as Paris or Berlin. That view was very much summed up in one comment reportedly overheard by Francis Bertie, to the effect: 'What does it matter what he [Sanderson] does at Rome.'<sup>23</sup> However, Bertie was also in the running for the post himself, and had the support of the King.<sup>24</sup> Although Edward initially would have preferred Bertie to stay in London, he took it upon himself to do everything in his power to get him appointed when he heard of Bertie's desire to be sent to Rome. Characteristically, Edward pursued the issue initially on the pretence that his mind was made up and, therefore, the situation was resolved. By acting in this way, he was actively overstepping the boundaries of the constitutional monarch. This put his Private Secretary, Lord Knollys, in the difficult position of 'reminding' his sovereign that he was not able to make a move such as this without the approval of his government. When Knollys wrote to Bertie to discuss the issue of a new Italian ambassador with the King, he informed Bertie that he had had to remind Edward that 'The appointments of ambassadors were in the hands of the Prime Minister.'<sup>25</sup> Knollys' rider was, in

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<sup>22</sup> Royal Archives (henceforth RA) VIC/MAIN/W/43/66, Sir Francis Bertie to Sir Francis Knollys, 25 March 1903.

<sup>23</sup> British Library (henceforth BL) Add 63011/ 13, Sir Francis Bertie to his wife, 3 August 1902.

<sup>24</sup> Bertie's career is well documented in K.A. Hamilton (1990) *Bertie of Thame, Edwardian Ambassador* (Woodbridge: Boydell). It must, though, be stated that since Bertie was Sanderson's rival for the post, all comments taken from or to the Bertie camp should be treated with some scepticism.

<sup>25</sup> BL Add 63011/22, Knollys to Bertie regarding Bertie's desire to go to the Rome Embassy, 14 October 1902.

effect, a confirmation to Bertie that when the issue of the appointment was discussed in the Cabinet, 'I think that you can rely on the King's support of your claim to go to Rome.'<sup>26</sup>

Knollys also reported the King's discussions with the Foreign Secretary on the subject: 'The King spoke twice to Lord Lansdowne at Sandringham in connection with the embassy at Rome and I also talked with him on the subject.'<sup>27</sup> The Prime Minister also had his fair share of pressure from the King on the matter. In January 1903, Balfour wrote: 'The King's approval of Bertie's appointment to Rome has been received by the Foreign Office and will be dealt with as soon as possible.'<sup>28</sup> But he also sternly informed Knollys that the King had been persistent in putting forward his recommendation for ambassador to Rome, to the point of being quite a nuisance on the matter.<sup>29</sup>

Edward maintained a good relationship with Francis Bertie in Rome, and felt that Bertie was one of the people whom he could trust. Consequently, he took a great interest in furthering Bertie's career: 'Bertie for his part felt sure that he owed his embassy to the support given to his cause by the King and Knollys.'<sup>30</sup> The King's support was perhaps seen as more influential by contemporaries, since many in the diplomatic service doubted Bertie's character. The doubters included Rennell Rodd, who stated in his memoirs that he had reservations as to whether Bertie, as a 'first class fighting man',<sup>31</sup> would get on in Rome.

However, plainly the King knew already, by the end of 1902, that he intended to undertake the potentially controversial step of renewing the tradition of royal state visits overseas, and of making Italy his first destination for such a visit. His willingness to go to the lengths he went to in order to ensure Bertie got the Rome Embassy makes sense when it is realised that this would mean that, for Edward, there was someone at the Embassy with whom he had a good relationship. In practice, this would mean having someone on the spot who could keep him informed of developments personally, and not simply let the King learn what was happening through information passed on by the Cabinet. This

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> BL Add 63011/25, Bertie to Knollys regarding Bertie's intentions for Rome, 19 November 1902.

<sup>28</sup> BL Add 49683/122, Balfour to Knollys, 4 January 1903.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Sir James Rennell Rodd (1925) *Social and Diplomatic Memories 1902–1919*, 3 vols (London: Edward Arnold), Vol. 3, p. 24.



conclusion is further reinforced by looking at Edward's later diplomatic manoeuvring along these lines, such as when he resorted to similar tactics to promote the installation of Bertie in Paris and, later, Charles Hardinge in St Petersburg in the wake of his successful visits to those cities. Therefore, it is safe to assume that in pushing Bertie's promotion into the Rome Embassy, the King was not merely thinking about the advancement of his minister's career as a personal gesture of his support.

## Planning the visit

Ponsonby noted that the King began privately to plan his visit to Italy in late February and early March 1903.<sup>32</sup> From the start, Edward felt that as well as visiting Victor Emmanuel, he should also visit the Pope, partly because he had done so on two previous occasions when Prince of Wales. He felt 'Obliged to honour the ninety three year old Leo XIII with a visit in this, the twenty-fifth year of his pontificate'.<sup>33</sup> Like his mother, Queen Victoria, and his son, George V, Edward was able to look beyond the racial and religious prejudices of his court and society. To him, a king was a king, despite his ethnicity, and a world leader was a leader, despite his religion, and he included Leo XIII in that category, as he had done when they had first met in 1859.<sup>34</sup>

In early March he made his intentions for the visit known to Balfour and the Cabinet, the majority of whom did not share Edward's enthusiasm for the expedition, as Balfour informed Edward in his Cabinet despatch. In particular, it was the visit to the Pope which upset many of his colleagues, who were 'greatly against the suggestion'. He explained that 'They were unanimous in thinking that the Protestant feeling which said visit would arouse would be most strong', making the point that, as head of the Anglican Church, the Protestant Edward should not be reported as doing something which might be interpreted as acknowledging the status of the Pope.<sup>35</sup> They also feared that the whole event could be seen negatively by many of his subjects because it could be interpreted as 'part of an attempt to conciliate the Irish and to ensure

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<sup>32</sup> Sir Frederick Ponsonby (1951) *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode), p. 154.

<sup>33</sup> Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame*, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII. The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

<sup>35</sup> TNA CAB 41/ 28/6, Balfour to Edward VII, 17 March 1903.

the success of the forthcoming visit of the King to Ireland'.<sup>36</sup> Balfour's letter to the King concluded with a mixed message. On the one hand, he described the visit as 'An attack on the heart of some of your majesty's most loyal subjects',<sup>37</sup> while on the other, he concludes the letter with the statement: 'The Cabinet was also of the opinion that it would be very difficult for your majesty to go to Rome without visiting the Pope.'<sup>38</sup>

A frantic exchange of letters ensued, and the conclusion was finally reached that if the King did not go to Rome and instead went to Naples, he could meet the Italian King there. This gave the British government the excuse that the King was unable to see the Pope because he was only paying a brief visit to Naples and would not be travelling to Rome, a decision that was applauded by Balfour: 'I am glad of the King's decision much as I detest the excessive bigotry of a certain class of opinion in this country, I should be sorry if HM should unnecessarily offend it.'<sup>35</sup> For the time being, this seemed to settle the matter, and the King set off on his Mediterranean cruise with his staff, which consisted only of Hardinge as a representative of the Foreign Office: a man who held no high official post at the time, and thus had no political authority either to advise the King or to act on behalf of his elected government.

### The visit begins – and changes

The beginnings of the trip involved the kind of cruise that Edward had often undertaken as Prince of Wales, and started with what had been intended to be a brief call at Lisbon, but not a state visit there. Edward was, however, delayed in Lisbon due to a scare resulting from intelligence gained by British and French government agents which indicated that a Dutch anarchist was travelling to Lisbon to coincide with the King's visit. The King was instructed to remain secured on his yacht at Lisbon while the French tracked down and detained the man, under the pretence of problems with his papers, so that Edward could then travel on in safety. The threat was seen as significant by the British because of

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<sup>36</sup> Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame*, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> TNA CAB 41/ 28/6, Balfour to Edward VII, 17 March 1903.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* This type of letter was very typical of Balfour, as is seen in his official biography: Blanche Dugdale (1939) *Arthur James Balfour*, 2 vols (London: Hutchinson and Company), Vol 1: pp. 273–4.

<sup>35</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/R/23/60, Sir Arthur Balfour to Lord Knollys, 24 March 1903.

the reputation of the Iberian peninsula for poor security for prominent figures like the King.<sup>40</sup>

However, the delay at Lisbon is significant for the development of this state visit, because it was during that period that the outline of the visit shifted significantly, revealing the extent to which Edward was still in charge of the development of diplomatic and political strategies surrounding the renewal of state visits by the British. The King's yacht had barely anchored when he received a telegram from the Rome Embassy to the effect that Victor Emmanuel did not feel it appropriate that the King should visit him at Naples, as a proper state visit could only be performed in the capital city. This move by the Italians was also motivated by the reality that for them, Naples was a symbol of a pre-unification Italy due to its Bourbon past. Thus, a visit there might give the wrong impression to the Italian media of how the British viewed the Italian state. Victor Emmanuel appreciated the difficult position Edward was in, and intimated that, for their part, he and the Italian government were not over-concerned about where the visit took place. The issue was that public opinion would not be so understanding and would be likely to see it as a snub to Rome, and so as an insult to Italy, which would be damaging to Anglo-Italian relations.<sup>41</sup>

His own consciousness of the importance of the symbolism accompanying state visits meant that Edward immediately appreciated the point made by his Italian hosts. He quickly sent word to both Rome and London that while the visit would still start in Naples, the main venue of the visit had to be changed to Rome. But this meant that the issue of the Papal visit could no longer be elegantly avoided. As Lord Lansdowne commented to Bertie,

When he left England His Majesty was very much opposed to the idea of a visit to the Pope, and the Cabinet held strongly that such a visit was undesirable. If HM would have adhered to the original plan of a visit to Naples, then the difficulties may have been avoided. But when the venue was changed to Rome they reappeared. Norfolk personally visited the FO when I was there to receive him. But he and

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<sup>40</sup> This was later to affect the planning of Edward's 1907 state visit to Spain.

<sup>41</sup> Esme Howard (1935) *Theatre of Life 1863–1905* (London: Hodder and Stoughton). This is also very much in line with what Paulmann argues was the established European perception of the purpose of a modern state visit: that it was much to do with public performances for the benefit of both the home and the foreign media. See Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

Talbot also invaded the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, they were I am told almost hysterical.<sup>42</sup>

The King, of course, was not personally opposed to such a visit, having previously met the Pope and being very conscious of his claims to a quasi-sovereign status. He had, after all, only been persuaded to abandon his original plans to include a visit to the Pope by his Cabinet, as a result of which the expedient of shifting the location of the visit to Naples had been proposed. Now, with the enforced change of venue back to Rome, the capital, the symbolisms associated with a royal state visit once more became prominent and again aroused Edward's appreciation of the need for a visit to the Pope.

The enforced delay of the King's yacht also enabled events in Britain to make a contribution to the issue, in Edward's favour. The Duke of Norfolk and Lord Edmund Talbot were two of the UK's most ardent, as well as socially and politically most prominent, Roman Catholics, and had felt a personal responsibility to promote positive relations between Britain and the Vatican. For instance, in February 1903, they had taken it upon themselves to lead a pilgrimage of British Catholic nobles to Rome to congratulate the Pope on his Jubilee, to ensure a British contribution to those celebrations.<sup>43</sup> When they heard that the proposal was for Edward to visit Italy on a formal state visit and *not* include an audience with the Pope in the formal itinerary, they were outraged, both personally and on behalf of the Empire's Roman Catholic population. Their family connections, as well as their social prominence, enabled them to go beyond protesting letters to the press. Instead, they began to petition members of the Cabinet directly, tackling them in encounters in both official and unofficial situations, to urge their perspective that it would be unforgivably rude, in a way that would have diplomatic and other repercussions, for Edward not to visit the Pope when officially in Rome as King-Emperor. To the disappointment of both men, the Cabinet seemed determined not to be swayed by their pressure, so their strategy was then to appeal directly to Edward, knowing that he was detained in Lisbon. Norfolk and Talbot sent a series of telegrams informing him of the deep disappointment of his Catholic subjects caused by his apparent

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<sup>42</sup> BL Add 63015/15, Lansdowne to Bertie regarding the King's visit to Italy, 10 April 1903.

<sup>43</sup> TNA: Lansdowne Papers/ FO800/132/185, Francis Bertie to Lansdowne, 4 February 1903.

rejection of the inclusion of visit to the Pope while on the state visit to Italy.<sup>44</sup>

It could not be safely claimed that it was this intervention which changed Edward's mind, but it certainly made the King think about how the visit would be perceived by his subjects at home via any media coverage of his visit. Both Edward and Knollys were also acutely aware that in resuming state visits, Edward would find himself being compared with other European royals, who were both far more seasoned in such enterprises and less accountable to their respective governments than the British monarch. Thus, while the Cabinet did not see the issue of whether or not to visit the Pope as being of any consequence, both Edward and Knollys realised that the matter was one by which Edward would be judged by his European peers and by their media. Bertie commented that the British would 'incur the odium of being less liberal minded than the Emperor William and other non-Catholic Sovereigns and Princes',<sup>45</sup> who had all visited the Pope in the past. As Britain resumed royal state visits, the British government and monarchy would be perceived as closed-minded in contrast to other European royals, and this would not help the cause of improving British diplomatic relations. This perspective had a clear effect on Edward, who promptly changed his mind and decided that he would visit the Pope in Rome.

Properly, he informed his government, and asked the Cabinet for advice.<sup>46</sup> According to Frederick Ponsonby, Balfour replied that while he sympathised with Edward's position, the government would prefer that there was no visit. Edward pushed the point again in a further telegram, to which Balfour replied more sternly 'and officially told the King not to go'.<sup>47</sup> Edward showed the greatest displeasure at being told what to do by his government. He quickly drafted a despatch to Balfour; one so direct that if it had reached the Prime Minister unamended, Balfour would have been forced to resign, creating a constitutional crisis. Luckily, Ponsonby managed to get hold of the telegram and tone down the King's language before it was despatched. The issue that frightened the British Cabinet was the fact that they believed the King should not, as head of the Established Church, undertake a formal visit to the head

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<sup>44</sup> BL Add 63015/25, Bertie to Cranbourne, 5 May 1903.

<sup>45</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/43/66, Sir Francis Bertie to Lord Knollys, 25 March 1903.

<sup>46</sup> As a lot of Edward's decision making at this stage of his tour was done verbally, researchers have to rely on memoirs in order to understand his decision-making process.

<sup>47</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p162.

of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet they knew also that they could not stop Edward from doing entirely as he wished, and they knew that he would make the visit if he should choose. And Edward did so choose.

The problem was that, as both head of state and head of the Anglican Church, Edward's actions in the eyes of the world were symbolic of the British Empire as a whole, and such a visit carried potentially explosive implications for the government of a country where Roman Catholics were still subject to some actual discrimination. The Cabinet was also well aware of Edward's tendency for talking too much about private state matters when in company, and feared unguarded words which could cause the British government embarrassment in such a situation.<sup>48</sup> The importance of the political reaction to Edward's position in relation to his Italian visit serves to emphasise the potential power of the monarch in international diplomacy. It challenges the conclusions of those historians who have seen Edward's role in foreign affairs as limited, insisting that, because he was 'more frequently seen at the races or at the gaming tables than at his desk',<sup>49</sup> Edward did not enter into policy debate often enough to make an impact.

The evidence here demonstrates unequivocally that no matter what the official role Edward had in developing his nation's foreign policy, when it came to state visits he made a difference. Throughout his reign, contemporaries became aware of the fact that during state visits, Edward was not just a figurehead when heading the tours. He was in very practical terms the 'man on the spot', with all the potential that descriptor has for a representative acting on his own initiative and leaving a government to cope with the consequences. During a state visit, Edward, not his Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary, even if they were actually present, was the face and voice of his nation. It was he, not the members of his elected government, whom foreign leaders and people wanted to meet; and it was he, not his ministers, to whom people listened. In 1903, the Balfour government was concerned that Edward might say something untoward and embarrass the British government, but they had yet to appreciate the power that a state visit by a British monarch could have on the diplomatic landscape. Nor were they yet aware of how interested the wider European public, as well as the British public, would be in the official activities of the British monarch, and how that European public

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<sup>48</sup> Discussion of Edward's loose tongue in conversation can be found throughout Lee, *King Edward VII*.

<sup>49</sup> Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p. 202.

would view those actions as representing Britain and British policy. They began to learn this during the visit to Italy, but it was the visit to France, addressed in the following chapter, which confirmed to them that they needed to reconsider the value and significance of state visits, particularly because of the public reaction to that visit. In the meantime, it was now left up to Edward and Knollys to negotiate the realities of the Italian state visit, including a visit to the Pope.

### **Edward turns to Wilhelm for advice**

With King and government in disagreement over the visit to the Vatican, and the proposed arrival date in Rome drawing ever closer, Edward turned to what, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, could seem an unlikely source for advice: his nephew, the Kaiser. Much has been written about their supposedly frosty relationship, but while it was not always easy, the realities were far more complex than is often assumed. Personally, Edward may have found Wilhelm irritating, and vice versa; professionally, they were both senior members of what both liked to describe as the Trade Union of Kings. As such, any personal differences between them would never have been permitted by either man to stand in the way of the proper performance of their royal duties. It was a paradox that, in 1903, Wilhelm was by far the more experienced monarch than Edward. Though younger, and a nephew, Wilhelm had treated his uncle as a mere heir to a throne from the time of his coronation as Kaiser in 1888. Edward had certainly found this irritatingly bumptious, but they were now both crowned heads of state and so on equal terms from that perspective, which diminished some of the tension. However, by this time Wilhelm had undertaken a number of diplomatically tricky state visits, and so was in an unparalleled position to offer advice to his uncle. That Edward would avail himself of advice from that source, given his determination to do his job properly, was therefore entirely predictable, even if mildly galling on a purely personal level. And Wilhelm was very happy to give advice, because his long-standing ambition was to make Britain realise that, of all the European powers, Germany was their logical ally.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> While the German and British governments had in the past shared this objective, they had previously (certainly by 1902) decided that it was, in fact, not in the best interests of either power to pursue a closer relationship. Wilhelm, however, did not share his own government's perspective.

Wilhelm was a particularly logical choice for an advisor for Edward in this case because the former had made several state visits to Italy in the past and was intending to make another one less than a month after Edward. This move on Edward's part was reported back to London via the ambassador to Berlin, Lascelles. It was through Lascelles that Edward corresponded with his nephew: 'Some time ago Knollys asked me if the Emperor during his visit to Rome would go to the Pope. I answered that His Majesty had always done so when he went to Rome and would almost certainly do so on the present occasion.'<sup>51</sup> In his letter to London, Lascelles mentioned some more advice that the Kaiser had given Edward on the issue of how to overcome the Pope's policy of not entering the Vatican through Italian soil: 'I said that the Emperor was in the habit of lunching at the German Embassy and of driving from here in one of his own carriages to the Vatican.'<sup>52</sup>

This method of visiting the Pope was acceptable to both the Vatican and the Italian government, as Edward would first meet the Italian head of state accompanied by all the public trappings of a ceremonial state occasion. Then he would quietly re-enter Britain, as the Embassy was considered to be British soil, and subsequently drive from there in one of his ambassador's distinctively British-manufactured carriages to the Pope – but without that carriage being decorated with flags and bunting in a way that would announce publicly that the King was making a ceremonial visit to the Vatican. He would then return from the Vatican in an equally low-key manner, and repeat the whole elaborate process of returning to the Quirinal via the Embassy.

Edward ordered Hardinge to relay his intentions to the government with a new statement about the nature of his visit. In so doing, Edward effectively admitted that he was acting on his own initiative in this diplomatic exercise, and, implicitly, was no longer seeking either the approval or advice of his government but, instead, leaving them to manage their presentation of his actions. As described by Ponsonby, 'The gist of the message was that he withdrew his former request for advice and would act on his own responsibility.'<sup>53</sup> This had the advantage of creating a scenario by which the visit to the Pope could now be interpreted by the British government as a small private affair, without

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<sup>51</sup> TNA FO800/129/185, Lascelles to Lansdowne regarding letters that he has received from Knollys and conversations with the Kaiser, 28 March 1903.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p. 63.



any diplomatic implications: they could believe that Edward was not bringing the British Lion with him. Practically speaking, there was only one final issue which needed finessing: the British government would not, under any circumstances, accept Edward asking the Vatican for an invitation, as this could have portrayed an air of subservience on the part of the British monarch. Instead, the matter was quickly and tactfully resolved via the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>54</sup> He arranged for an invitation to be sent *from* the Vatican *to* Edward after receiving the following private letter from Hardinge: 'Have submitted your letter to the King who appreciates the force of your views. His majesty is willing to pay an informal visit to the Pope if His Holiness expresses a desire to see him.'<sup>55</sup> Both sides were consequently satisfied that the matter was resolved a matter of days before the royal yacht reached the Italian coast.

In all the controversy about seeing the Pope, many in the government had lost sight of the original intention of Edward's visit to Italy: an improvement in Anglo-Italian relations. However, to be fair, this purpose was not lost to everyone. Viscount Cranbourne wrote to Bertie congratulating him in his role of mediator between Edward's vessel and the Italian government<sup>56</sup>. Even so, Cranbourne did not fully comprehend the implications of the revival of the formal state visit as undertaken by the monarch. On the problematic subject of the Pope, Cranbourne still identified the visit to the Vatican as a side issue, instead emphasising that 'either way the Italian government are very pleased with the visit'.<sup>57</sup>

## Edward in Italy

In spite of all of the nervous planning that went into Edward's visit, the trip went off spectacularly well. Edward was first greeted by a demonstration of sea power by the Italian navy in the Bay of Naples which was 'worthy of both host and guest', according to *The Times*.<sup>58</sup> As Hardinge recorded in his memoirs, 'King Edward on his arrival in Rome, had a great reception from the people on his way to the Quirinal in an open carriage with the King of Italy. The population seemed really enthusiastic and

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<sup>54</sup> Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories*.

<sup>55</sup> Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL), Hardinge 4/27, Hardinge to Barrington, 16 April 1903.

<sup>56</sup> BL Add 63015/ 19, Viscount Cranbourne to Bertie, 12 April 1903.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Editorial, *The Times*, 24 April 1903.

gave the King a veritable ovation.<sup>55</sup> At the state banquet given to him by Victor Emmanuel in the Quirinal on his first evening, the King gave one of his impromptu and improvised speeches, delivered without notes.<sup>60</sup> He still managed to deliver a speech which was widely appreciated by his audience, and without mentioning British Mediterranean policy, the Pope or the Triple Alliance. It was a masterpiece of the cultural diplomacy at which Edward was to show himself such a master in succeeding royal visits. His extensive travels as Prince of Wales, as well as his broad education, meant that he was well-placed to point up genuine cultural similarities and indigenous influences on British culture wherever he went. On the second evening of his state visit in Rome, he viewed a specially staged performance at the Teatro Argentino, after a day packed with the receiving of delegations and formal visits to sites in Rome with which he was, in fact, already familiar from his previous informal visits to the city, followed by another state banquet.<sup>61</sup>

As this first visit underlined, Edward never talked politics in the traditional diplomatic sense: instead, he invented a new form of royal diplomacy that relied on emphasising cultural exchanges and mutualities of taste. This shows Edward's consummate skill as a modern royal diplomat, for it removed the grounds for criticism from under the feet of any politician wishing to be critical of this exercise in active royal diplomacy. When the positive press coverage of the visit as a whole, and especially the reports of the speeches made by the King and their positive reception, reached London, the government probably heaved a collective sigh of relief. Edward had managed to engender great enthusiasm within the Italian people without touching on any of the diplomatically delicate subjects (such as the Pope or France) that could have quickly turned the visit sour.<sup>62</sup> At this point, though, they still had not appreciated how Edward was showing himself capable of reshaping important aspects of the British diplomatic landscape. British diplomats still thought it was necessary to be tactful, fearing that although the King of Italy had been 'understanding' about Edward's visit to the Pope, it still might be a sensitive subject for him. According to Hardinge, the issue of the Papal visit was only addressed once, and rather apologetically, by

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<sup>55</sup> Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (1947) *Old Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner), p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> 'The King in Rome', *The Times*, 28 April 1903.

<sup>61</sup> 'The King in Rome', *The Times*, 29 April 1903.

<sup>62</sup> Lee, *King Edward VII*, p. 235.

them: 'It was pointed out to the King of Italy that the King of England had many Roman Catholic subjects and might think it right to pay a visit to the Pope.'<sup>63</sup>

Despite the revival of the royal state visit as a European phenomenon in the previous century, as described by Paulmann, there could still be a gap between the comprehension of their value and impact by elected politicians and the understanding of them displayed by the royals who undertook these visits.<sup>64</sup> Italian politicians, for instance, were consistently negative about the readiness of European royals visiting Italy to grant the Pope the respect he still expected in acknowledgement of his past actual sovereign status (something he, of course, did not accept as being past). Their focus was on a perceived slight to the new Italian state. With Lord Salisbury no longer a presence on the British political scene, British politicians also failed to realise the realities of the royal networks and interconnections that lay behind royal state visits. The personal differences between uncle and nephew have been touched on in relation to Edward and Wilhelm, but it has also been stressed that as fellow monarchs, they felt a professional duty to cooperate and support each other diplomatically, as part of the 'Trade Union of Kings'. The same comprehension operated much more widely, and within that comprehension, Victor Emmanuel knew exactly why Edward saw it as necessary to make the visit, and genuinely wished Edward every success with the Vatican visit, as he did with the other European monarchs who employed similar strategies.

## Visiting the Vatican

The Vatican visit was carried out exactly as had been planned. It took place on the second day of the visit, and was packed between the daytime programme and the evening events. Edward quietly made his way to the British Embassy, and at 4 pm a small entourage, including Hardinge, accompanied the King on his visit to the Pope. Once inside, Edward again displayed the gift for which he was to become famed: that of knowing what it was appropriate to say in every situation by invoking diplomatic niceties without encroaching on actual policy details. According to Hardinge, the Pope (as at least an honorary member of the royal Trade Union) was very sympathetic to the difficulties that Edward

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<sup>63</sup> Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy*, p. 90.

<sup>64</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

had suffered. Showing that he was ever aware of public reactions to his visit, Edward apparently took care that the appropriate protocol covered his entourage and not just himself. He 'Said it would never do for it to be known that the members of his suite had kissed the Pope's ring, and after some thought he said that we should remain at some distance from the Pope and bow to him three or four times.'<sup>6c</sup> This was also carefully reported to the media. Beyond the niceties of how the Pope came to meet the King and then escorted him for a half-hour exchange in his private apartments, no description was given in the press of any ceremonial details marking the visit, apart from the information that the King had admired the uniforms of the Papal Guard and asked for a signed photograph of the Pope, and this was promised.<sup>6c</sup>

## Aftermath

The Italian people were so won over by him that their consequent enthusiasm for the British King caused concern amongst their Triple Alliance allies that they were moving towards an alliance with the UK. It is ironic, given the value of Wilhelm II's advice to Edward in helping the success of the visit, that the German government were so worried that they got their military *attaché*, Major Von Chelius, to confirm with the Italian government that their allegiance was still with the Triple Alliance.<sup>67</sup> When Edward left Rome, no one could deny that the state visits both to the Pope and to the King of Italy had been great successes. In fact, the only repercussion that he received from his visit was a pamphlet circulated around London suggesting that, in private, Edward was a practising Roman Catholic like James II, the last British king to have encountered the Pope. However, this never received widespread media attention and was completely ignored by most newspapers.<sup>68</sup>

Within a month of Edward's state visit to Italy, the Kaiser also made his own visit to the Pope and King Victor Emmanuel. Despite his advice to Edward about how to proceed, the Kaiser's visit adopted a very different style. Thanks to the widespread media coverage of both visits, the short time span between the two state visits brought them into

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<sup>6c</sup> Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy*, p. 90.

<sup>6d</sup> 'The King and the Pope', *The Times*, 30 April 1909.

<sup>6e</sup> *German Diplomatic Documents* vol. 3, ed. E.T. Dugdale (1928) *European Diplomacy of the Nineties* (London: Taylor and Francis).

<sup>6f</sup> Hibbert, *Edward VII*.

direct comparison. While Edward's visit to the Vatican from the British Embassy had been low-key and personal, the Kaiser paraded down to the Vatican from the German Embassy with fanfares and guards, resulting in the appearance of tremendous pomp and ceremony. Given Wilhelm's diplomatic experience and skills, as well as his ability to use his actions as propaganda in the German interest, this raises the speculation that the intention of Wilhelm's advice to Edward was somewhat like the curate's egg: good in parts. He had certainly wanted to help his uncle overcome a real difficulty in a suitably diplomatic way: it would have been of no advantage to the Trade Union of Kings for Edward's conduct in either visiting or not visiting the Vatican to cause a diplomatic incident. However, he had certainly also had no intention of being upstaged by his uncle, who had the physical presence that Wilhelm lacked. He had probably emphasised that his past visits had, genuinely, been low-key, without telling Edward that he did not plan for his forthcoming visit to be equally discreet. However, Wilhelm's approach was not universally popular in Italy itself. It was seen by some there as a demonstration of German might. Overall, it did not go down well with the Italians, who felt that in acting this way in order to display his power, the Kaiser had not shown the respect and courtesy to Italy that Edward had done.

Other European observers certainly felt that Edward's Italian visit had been the more successful. The French ambassador to Rome personally congratulated Bertie on his role in piecing together such a delicate matter: 'The French Ambassador told me that the general effect in Italy of the King and Emperor's visits had been more favourable to the former than the latter.'<sup>65</sup> The ambassador praised Edward's good judgement in how he approached the visit and criticised that of the Kaiser: 'The people disliked the display that the Emperor made for the Vatican and that the King had come without parade or fuss and had not made his visit to the Pope a demonstration.'<sup>71</sup> He made a similar report back to Paris.<sup>71</sup> The French ambassador's view clearly shows that from the start, Edward had the ability to be an asset to British diplomacy, as he could win positive public opinion for his country in foreign lands, in contrast to the Kaiser, whose pretentious approach had the tendency to make

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<sup>65</sup> BL Add 63015/31, Bertie to Cranbourne regarding Bertie's meeting with the French Ambassador, 11 May 1903.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Alfred Costes (1931) *Documents Diplomatiques Français, Origines de la guerre de 1914* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale), vol. 3, Document No. 217, p. 295. For further analysis. see Document No 219, p.296.

his country seem arrogant and rude.<sup>72</sup> However, both visits reflect the importance of these state visits for a country's prestige in the eyes of the world. The actions of two men on a state visit to Italy had made a deep impact on how their nations were viewed by the receiving country. This reflects why the British government were so afraid of Edward's actions during his visit to the Pope: if he had caused offence by being less tactful, he could have jeopardised their position both in the Mediterranean and within the Catholic minorities in the UK.

## Conclusion

Edward's visit to France often overshadows his visit to Italy, as the former is credited with being the precursor to the Entente Cordiale. However, in many ways Edward's Italian tour actually provides a better example for understanding the monarch's role in organising and delivering the ceremonially intensive and demanding royal state visit. First, the idea of using a royal visit to mend Anglo-Italian relations was Edward's own initiative. His government was, in fact, not too keen about him making this visit. Second, Edward made all the arrangements himself and conducted the majority of the relevant correspondence either himself or via his Private Secretary; very little went through the government channels. But, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Cabinet could not stop Edward from making the visit in the style that he wanted, even though they were aware, by the time he departed, that the actions that he took would reflect upon them. This shows, therefore, that Edward was prepared to take issues that he felt mattered into his own hands, and was not afraid to meet disapproval from his Cabinet if he felt that he was right in his decision. The fact that he was ultimately proved right when the visit turned out to be a great success showed that he was prepared to act as the nation's foremost ambassador because he knew that diplomacy was more than foreign policy conducted from behind the desks of Whitehall. His success in this visit, his first official state trip, inspired his future royal visits, reflecting the importance of getting out and representing one's country, something that is considered central to royal duty to this day. However, as the chapter on the state visit to Spain in 1907 will reveal, there was one important lesson the British government had not

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<sup>72</sup> Further accounts of Edward's and the Kaiser's visits to Italy can be found in Lord Newton (1929) *Lord Lansdowne, a Biography* (London: Macmillan), pp. 276–7.

learned from the reactions to the respective state visits to Italy of Edward and Wilhelm: that less powerful European states with a consciousness of past historical glories were not enthusiastic about any state visit that conveyed the idea that a visit was more about an opportunity to display superior military might than about diplomatic niceties.

From Italy, Edward VII went straight to France. Some of the issues identified from the Italian visit remained unresolved and unreflected on by both the King and the British government until after his return from Paris. This means that much of the learning process from this first visit was absorbed into a broader consideration of the overall success of the enterprise in royal diplomacy that included France as well. This will be considered in the next chapter. However, some key points can be made here. First, Edward VII had himself decided that there was an issue in the poor relations that existed in 1903 between Britain and France, and that he should do something about it. It is a measure of how innovative the King's vision was that he had the inspiration for this visit: it was not something which would have been considered by a government that rated Italy low on its list of priorities. Interestingly, what this visit did do was promote Italy up the ranking of Foreign Office priorities: it had been shown that popular support for Britain could be generated in Italy, and the government was now interested in sustaining this. The trip to Italy showed the British government that it was possible to use royal diplomacy to avoid having to negotiate a difficult treaty: sending a King served to win popular favour.

The negative aspects of this related only to the issue of the Pope and the Vatican. This really brought home to the British government the reality that with a revival of royal diplomacy overseas, they were potentially putting a great deal of practical foreign policy into the hands of one man, and a figure over whom they had little control. Unlike an ambassador or governor, he could not be sacked. It was only Edward's own sense of constitutional proprieties that ensured that he did not interfere in British foreign policy details, and restricted himself to general platitudes and diplomatic rhetoric, delivered with great personal warmth.

On the trip to Italy, he went only with Hardinge. This was the last time Edward was allowed to travel in such a way unopposed by government interests. He went on to France accompanied only by Hardinge, but the trip to France did not raise such contentious issues, and so it mattered less. The importance of the Italian visit is that, more than the trip to France, it encompasses the beginning of tension between Edward VII and his government about who was, or who should be, in charge of identifying the targets for royal tours and the personnel who should

accompany the monarch – something only resolved finally by the new tone of state visits under George V. The state visit to Italy was also significant because it was the beginning of what may be called a modern continental rivalry in royal tours for the twentieth century: which ruler would go where, and why. After all, while the Kaiser gave Edward VII the advice that his visit to the Vatican and the Pope should be low-key, Wilhelm subsequently ensured that his trip was high-profile, and it is difficult to see that as being anything other than royal one-upmanship. It must have been galling for Wilhelm II, however, that the political and popular consensus across Europe was that Edward VII's trip to Italy was by far the more successful of the two.



# 4

## Edward VII's Gift to Diplomacy? 1903 Visit to Paris

### Introduction

Edward VII's most famous and most exhaustively discussed state visit was his trip to Paris, following on from his trip to Italy, which had concluded a Mediterranean cruise in the spring of 1903. Indeed, the extent of the discussions makes it almost tempting to keep the Paris visit to a footnote to the Italy chapter, since there is no need to go over the narrative details of what is already such a well-trodden path in diplomatic histories of the period. However, what these histories do not do is locate this state visit in the framework of the new diplomacy, with its emphasis on the cultural and symbolic significance of such enterprises. In terms of the significance of the visit, Edward has often been popularly credited with being the architect of the Entente Cordiale – but, as figures like George Monger point out, he played no part in the initial negotiations that laid the foundations for the Entente.<sup>1</sup> Nor, afterwards, can he be shown to have been particularly interested in the diplomatic niceties of its actual operation. Yet this chapter still insists that his visit was essential to the establishment of the Entente Cordiale, both in the initial achievement and in its maintenance, because of the symbolic importance of his public endorsement of the value of the link between Britain and France. We are often taught to think of a royal tour as being an ornamental addition to the daily duties and achievements of diplomacy. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, the negotiations around the Entente Cordiale reveal how Edward VII's visit was at the very least a

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<sup>1</sup> George Monger (1976) *The End of Isolation. British Foreign Policy 1900–1907* (New York: Greenwood Press).

catalyst, and possibly even a new chemical, in the reaction between the two countries, at a very critical phase in the sensitive diplomatic landscape of the time.

### **British/English royals and France before the reign of Edward VII**

From the sixteenth century at least, France was considered (certainly it considered itself) to be the diplomatic centre of the world. Taking advantage of its geographical situation, amongst other things, France and the French language and culture became entrenched in European (and wider) diplomacy as *the* language of choice for delicate and sophisticated negotiations – mirroring what the French themselves certainly saw as the advanced sophistication of a French cosmopolitan culture. What better language, and culture, then, to use for the subtle and complex nuances that were central to effective diplomacy? It was in France, also, that the links between diplomacy and monarchy reached their apogee; but they remained powerful until France became permanently a republic.<sup>2</sup> During the seventeenth century, the Sun King, Louis XIV, dominated European diplomacy with his masterly manoeuvrings.<sup>3</sup> One of the earliest diplomatic adventures undertaken by what was then the English monarchy was the Field of the Cloth of Gold, between 7 and 24 June 1520 – the encounter between Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, as already discussed in the first chapter of this book, one of Queen Victoria's most significant state visits had been to the court of Napoleon III in 1855. Whether or not that visit amounted to a prototype Entente Cordiale remains open to debate – but it means, certainly, that Edward was following in his mother's footsteps in undertaking a state visit. The key difference was that, with France now being a republic, there

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<sup>2</sup> While, as Mattingly points out, modern diplomacy emerged during the Renaissance in Italy, as he also acknowledges, its post-Renaissance centre was France. See Garret Mattingly (2010) *Renaissance Diplomacy* (New York: Cosimo Classics), p. 131. See also Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne (1994) *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (London: Routledge), for a discussion of the central role played by France from the sixteenth century on, and the power of the French monarchy up to the republican period.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the discussions of how Louis XIV used the resources of Versailles to enhance his diplomatic successes in Robert W. Berger and Thomas F. Hedin (2008) *Diplomatic Tours in the Gardens of Versailles under Louis XIV* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press).

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 1.

was no initial British expectation of a return state visit from a French President which would involve public pomp and ceremony. Edward's visit to Paris, after his successful visit to Italy, changed that.

That Edward should be interested in Anglo-French diplomacy is not surprising. Apart from his own personal fondness for France, his mother's influence must also have had an effect. Probably at least partly because of her fond memories of her trip with Albert to Paris, and also her genuine liking for Eugénie, Queen Victoria had continued to take a keen interest in Anglo-French affairs throughout her reign. As various prime ministers found, Victoria insisted on being the first person to know about any developments in Franco-British relations. Some were more content with this royal interest than others: Lord Salisbury, for example, obligingly sent documentation regarding his government's policy towards France to her for approval before sending it to his French counterparts. He would often take her detailed opinions into consideration, although it could be argued that this may have been more to do with Salisbury's established policy of dealing with the Queen, whereby he sought to avoid confrontation through apparent appeasement.<sup>5</sup> However, in his correspondence with the Paris ambassador, Edmund Monson, Salisbury would press the point that all details of his dispatches were to be considered unofficial until they had been approved by the Queen – 'The issue has not yet been formally approved by the queen'<sup>6</sup> – which would suggest that her opinion on the matter was actually considered important, by Salisbury at least. From the correspondence of Queen Victoria that is currently available, it appears that in her last ten years she did not protect her right to have a voice on international relations with any other nation as ferociously as she did with France.<sup>7</sup>

This included overseeing strategically important treaties, such as that of the pre-Fashoda Nile sovereignty proposal. She insisted on seeing the draft before it could be sent to the French, as Salisbury told Monson: 'Both drafts have gone to the Queen, and her approval will be telegraphed to you as soon as received.'<sup>8</sup> Victoria fought hard for a right to be informed in these matters, which she felt were so important

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2001) *Queen Victoria: A Personal History* (London: HarperCollins), p. 374.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford Bodleian Library (henceforth BOD) MS. Eng. C. 594/25, Salisbury to Monson, 7 September 1897.

<sup>7</sup> See G.E. Buckle (ed.) (1932) *Letters of Queen Victoria 1886–1901*, 3 vols (London: John Murray).

<sup>8</sup> BOD MS. Eng. C. 594/29, Salisbury to Monson, 10 September 1897.

to her nation's security. She was so determined to be involved that, as Anglo-French relations worsened with the Fashoda crisis, and shortly afterwards the French outrage at the British actions during the Boer War, Queen Victoria abandoned her policy of using Lord Salisbury as mediator. Instead, she communicated directly (and improperly) with Edmund Monson. Her letters to Monson enquired into all aspects of Anglo-French relations and constantly asked the question whether, if the current situation led to war, there would be a danger of Russian involvement in that conflict. This shows the level of her understanding of the broader ramifications of any Anglo-French skirmish.<sup>9</sup> According to Christopher Hibbert, this activity of writing to Monson was one of her main occupations in her final years. The only one to which she dedicated more time was the scrapbook she was compiling of the personal details of those who had died in her service during the Boer War.<sup>10</sup>

However, it is difficult to gauge how far Edward VII's interest in Anglo-French relations was simply a development of an interest first inculcated in him by his mother, when he had accompanied her on the visit to Paris in 1855; or whether it stemmed from a personal (and hedonistic) enjoyment of what France had offered him during his years as heir to the throne. Did he have an inclination to favour France, as many of his biographers have suggested, or were the issues involved more complex and nuanced?<sup>11</sup> As already discussed in the opening chapter, Queen Victoria had involved Edward in his first official gesture towards the nation with which he would forever be associated in popular understandings of him as man and monarch. He had been made to 'kneel before the tomb of Napoleon' and pray for his soul.<sup>12</sup> As part of the cosmopolitan education that Albert had impressed on Victoria that their son needed, French had been prominent amongst the European languages he had learned, and the culture he had been invited to appreciate.<sup>13</sup> However, this must not be taken too far. For most of his adult life, thanks to his mother's opposition to involving him in state affairs until her failing health made it imperative from 1898, Edward had developed and followed his own ideas quite independently of that maternal influence.

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<sup>9</sup> BOD MS. Eng. C. 594/86, Queen Victoria to Monson, 11 October 1898.

<sup>10</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII. The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Dunlop (2004) *Edward VII and the Entente Cordiale* (London: Constable), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Hibbert, *Edward VII*, p. 14.

Thanks to his long apprenticeship as heir to the British throne, and the lack of any formal occupation in that role, Edward had travelled throughout Europe during his adult years, and had made a number of connections and developed many social networks amongst the elites of the various states he visited regularly. In these places, he was known to be the heir to the British throne, and thus it is not surprising that as early as the 1890s, he was regularly receiving official dispatches from the ambassadors of the majority of European capitals and Foreign Secretaries alike, quite independently of both his mother and her government. This makes it plain that, even before he came to the throne, Edward was well acquainted with the European diplomatic landscape he was to enter into as King. Inevitably, he will have developed his own opinions about his country's foreign policy agendas, and what his priorities should be when he came to the throne. Certainly, some historians and biographers have argued that during his long apprenticeship for rule, Edward developed strong pro-French and anti-German feelings – feelings he felt able to draw on when he became King. However, the realities were more complex than this simplistic conclusion suggests. An examination of Edward's views based on comments made and correspondence sustained during this period makes it obvious that he did have a clear personal preference for France and French culture. It was no secret to his contemporaries that Edward favoured French society, probably above all others (including his own). He enjoyed the relaxed decadence of lavish French dinner parties in restaurants with famous chefs to cater for his *gourmand* tastes; he appreciated the extravagant performances at French opera houses, and enjoying the witty conversation and gossip that he found in all of these places, especially the company of entertaining and well-dressed women.<sup>14</sup> He also liked the warm climate to be found in the South of France; it was good for his health, as the warm air made his breathing easier.<sup>15</sup> For Edward, this ease contrasted with the greater formalities of German society, which, aside from reminding Edward of his father, he found very stiff. Therefore, while he made many private visits to both Germany and France, it was in France that he felt most relaxed.

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<sup>14</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*.

<sup>15</sup> Modern doctors would have quickly diagnosed Edward's respiratory issues as being due to his heavy smoking, and not stress, though he often put it down to the latter cause: 'The death of King Edward', *British Medical Journal*, 14 May 1910, 2576, pp. 1183–6.

However, the extent to which this personal preference coloured his political views cannot be assumed as consisting of a straightforward link. As has already been shown in the chapter discussing Edward's relationship – personal and political – with the Kaiser, Edward's views were sophisticated and many-layered. For a start, he made no more quasi-official visits as Prince of Wales to France than he did to Germany. If, on balance, he spent more time in France than in Germany, the explanation for this strictly private preference is given above. True, there is contemporary evidence which seems to 'prove' he had a political inclination to favour France. Sydney Lee, for instance, interviewed several people whom Edward socialised with in France. Those people unanimously agreed that Edward never talked politics directly with any clear objective, but also that he was often in conversation with people such as leading actors, and not members of the French Cabinet.<sup>16</sup> What Lee himself considered most telling, and what has therefore been emphasised subsequently, was the outcome of Lee's interview in 1911 with George Saunders, the correspondent in Paris for *The Times*. In the perfectly preserved transcript, Saunders insisted that while Edward would only talk politically on these occasions if prompted by someone else's comments, and that his views would be more loose observation than direct opinion, he would occasionally make some comments about the British government's policy on a certain issue. According to Saunders, on such occasions, 'When he talked politics it was sometimes in a rather indiscreet fashion.'<sup>17</sup>

Even that assessment of his indiscretion is not always well made. During the Franco-Prussian War, when he was in France during its initial stages, it was reported by the French media that he hoped France would win – and this has since been made much of by some historians. The significance of this was, at the time, almost certainly exaggerated by the European media generally, and then used by European politicians, for a variety of purposes. For instance, the Prussian ambassador complained to Queen Victoria that her son should not have taken such an open view on something that was not a British affair.<sup>18</sup> But while many scholars and contemporaries have subsequently taken this incident as evidence of Edward's pro-French attitude, the incident needs

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<sup>16</sup> Sydney Lee (1927) *King Edward VII. A Biography*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan), see Vol. 2.

<sup>17</sup> BOD MS. Don. C. 186. 13, Saunders to Lee, 22 November 1911.

<sup>18</sup> Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar, Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray).

to be placed into its contemporary context if it is to be understood. An expert in social *politesse*, Edward would not have offended his French hosts by expressing a pro-German sentiment. Further, there is no sign that he initiated the conversation, and the hope for a French victory was both general and vague. To be fair to Lee, he addressed the issue in his biography of Edward and concluded that, as no two people were able to give a clear account of what Edward said at the table, or why he said it, the whole incident should be dismissed as a comment taken out of context and not a substantial piece of evidence to show Edward's political views.<sup>15</sup>

There is too much mythology surrounding Edward and his preference for France, which is heavily rooted in the knowledge of what happened afterwards in European history. It would be fairer to argue that, although during his time as Prince of Wales Edward had shown that he was a cultural Francophile, there is not a great deal of evidence to suggest Edward had strong pro-French feelings politically. Much of his supposed growing affection for a French alliance during his time as Prince of Wales has been greatly exaggerated in the period after the Great War in contemporary memoirs such as those of the Kaiser. Written retrospectively, the Kaiser frequently claimed that 'My uncle was working for the policy of encirclement for the annihilation of Germany.'<sup>20</sup> Bitter in defeated exile in Holland, Wilhelm consoled himself by creating scapegoats for the loss.<sup>21</sup> However, contemporary evidence shows that the Kaiser made no comments about his uncle aiming to encircle Germany until 1908, and even then this was suggested to him by a foreign ambassador – and Wilhelm II seems to have endorsed the comment, though how far as a matter of politeness rather than conviction is open to debate.

## Anglo-French relations leading up to the 1903 visit

In the post-Napoleonic period, France was one of the UK's greatest rivals in terms of their mutual imperial ambitions and agendas as well as being a valued fellow European state; something which set up a number of contradictions within Anglo-French relations. In terms of their imperial possessions, the two nations had contiguous borders in Africa, Asia, the

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, *King Edward VII*.

<sup>20</sup> Wilhelm II (1922) *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888–1918* (London: Harper and Brothers), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Caribbean and the Pacific. The reality of such contiguities was that there was, at times, a level of confusion leading to territorial disputes over a lack of clear definition of where borders were.<sup>22</sup> But while the majority of the two nations' disputes were over limited amounts of territory, they were still of huge significance for Anglo-French relations, because of the extent to which national pride and international prestige were involved. The symbolism of 'defeat' over an issue involving rival territorial claims meant that sometimes the two nations would contemplate a full-scale conflict between them, which could include French plans to invade the UK. A key example of this, shortly before Edward came to the throne, was the Fashoda incident of 1898 – and the resonances of Fashoda were certainly still affecting Anglo-French relations when Edward ascended the throne.<sup>23</sup>

As part of the long-running dispute between Britain and France over control of the Nile Basin, the aftermath of the highly contentious decision by the British to go ahead with its occupation of Egypt in 1882 was still heightening tension between the two powers in the late 1890s.<sup>24</sup> From the British perspective, since the Khedive of Egypt laid claim to the entire upper Nile Valley, in theory a British presence there was in support of the Egyptian Army. However, since the 1885 death of General Gordon at the hands of a rebellious native element in the population, the British had been largely absent from the region in terms of permanent garrisons there.<sup>25</sup> The French, after the embarrassment of the failure of what had been intended as a joint enterprise with the British in Egypt, saw no reason to respect the claims of the Khedive to the Upper Nile region, and (from their Saharan bases) organised an expedition into the area in order to claim it for France.<sup>26</sup> French expansionism in northern Africa had been largely shrugged off by the British up to this point, because no encroachments had been made on what Britain considered to be its core interests. This latter incursion was different,

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<sup>22</sup> P.M.H. Bell (1996) *France and Britain 1900–1940. Entente and Estrangement* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Alfred Costes (1931) *Documents Diplomatiques Français, Origines de la guerre de 1914* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale).

<sup>24</sup> Full details of Egypt's occupation by Britain can be found in Bernard Porter (1996) *The Lion's Share. A Short History of British Imperialism 1850–1995* (London: Addison Wesley Longman), pp. 90–4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Morrison Beall Giffen (2012) *Fashoda: The Incident and its Diplomatic Setting* (Whitefish MT: Literary Licensing).



taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the lack of permanent British garrisons in the region. This time, as Lord Salisbury observed in late 1897 to Monson, the British ambassador in Paris, 'The French government, have...sent expeditions into the very territories covered by the British treaties', and worse, 'their officers give themselves the right to settle these disputed [territorial] points in their own (France's) favour'.<sup>27</sup> Instead of confining themselves, as would have been possible, to a dignified diplomatic rebuke, the British responded to the French incursion by sending a detachment of the Egyptian Army, under the command of Kitchener,<sup>28</sup> to organise a showdown with the objective of sending the French back to their own agreed boundaries. Kitchener and his troops met up with the French detachment on 18 September 1898. After a brief but tense stand-off, it was the French who backed down and headed back to French Saharan territory.<sup>29</sup>

The incident exposed the fragile state of Anglo-French relations at the end of the nineteenth century. Within days of the French retreat in the face of Kitchener's small force, the French navy had drawn up plans for the invasion of the UK, plans which the UK government had become aware of thanks to their military *attaché* in Paris.<sup>30</sup> It is easy to interpret these as idle diplomatic threats by the French (who were also, at the same time, planning for war with Germany on various issues). But contemporaries were concerned – not so much about the reality of the threat as about its implications for Britain at a time when it was diplomatically isolated and already involved in the stand-off with the Boer Republics that was to lead up to the Boer War. Thus, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Lansdowne, took the French threat seriously as an indicator that the French were now even more unlikely to back Britain in any international disputes.<sup>31</sup> More, since France had a number of alliances, powers such as Russia would also be likely to look with disfavour on Britain diplomatically, further consolidating British isolation

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<sup>27</sup> BOD MS. Eng. Hist. C. 594/31, Dispatch from Salisbury to Monson, 4 September 1897.

<sup>28</sup> Kitchener's views on the issue can be found in Philip Warner (2006) *Kitchener, the Man behind the Legend* (London: Cassell), pp. 101–4; for a detailed account of his interactions with the French garrison, see George Arthur (1920) *Life of Lord Kitchener*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan), 2: pp. 246–51.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur, *Lord Kitchener*.

<sup>30</sup> Lord Newton (1929) *Lord Lansdowne, a Biography* (London: Macmillan), p. 152.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

at this point. What the Fashoda incident showed the British was that a small and apparently insignificant colonial dispute could have alarming diplomatic consequences.

But, while the Fashoda incident led to enhanced tension between the states, a second diplomatic development in subsequent years led to the French being willing to consider coming to an understanding with Britain over its various outstanding imperial issues. This was France's failure to construct and lead a practical coalition against Britain during the Boer War. The French were aware that they could not act alone against Britain, and now they had failed to gain Germany as an ally in a plan to develop an initiative which would see the British being supplanted in Egypt by a Franco-German alliance. Andrew has argued that the realisation by Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, that 'he had no hope of ending the English occupation of Egypt marked an important stage in the origins of the Entente Cordiale'.<sup>32</sup> This cannot be taken too far: Delcassé remained an opponent of coming to an understanding with Britain as long as he believed that Britain opposed France's interests in Morocco, something of which he remained convinced until 1903.<sup>33</sup>

### King Edward ascends the throne

When Edward VII ascended the throne on 22 January 1901, he quickly assumed what he saw as his core new duties as head of state. This meant an involvement in foreign affairs in particular – something he was convinced he was well-equipped for, as well as having a preference for this over domestic matters. The beginning of his reign also marked the beginning of a change in British diplomatic perspectives, which were already seeing a development in the state of Anglo-French relations. The diplomatic confidence of the high Victorian era had passed, and it now mattered to Britain, in the aftermath of the Boer War, that it had no diplomatic allies in Europe and could even face the possibility of a coalition of powers against it, which might threaten areas of Britain's imperial interests.<sup>34</sup> Britain also felt vulnerable militarily for the first time since the Crimean War, because the Boer War had exposed tactical

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<sup>32</sup> Christopher Andrew (1968) *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale* (London: Macmillan), p. 179.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Bell, *France and Britain 1900–1940*, p. 10; Andrew, *Theophile Delcassé*, Chapter 8.

inefficiencies in the British Army. It had taken three years to defeat essentially a group of farmers.<sup>35</sup> During the war's course, Kitchener had mused on Britain's prospects in the event of a war with another European power: 'What you say about us being the most un-military nation is true and I greatly fear that when we meet a truly military enemy our house of cards will tumble down.'<sup>36</sup>

Thus, with a new king on the throne, British policymakers were in serious doubt about how they could continue to defend their vast empire, and came to the conclusion in late 1901 that Britain needed a new diplomatic strategy: one which would end the policy of 'splendid isolation' and replace it with alliances with important states around the globe.<sup>37</sup> The first alliance the British concluded was with Japan, as this meant that the Royal Navy could withdraw from Far Eastern waters and concentrate on more vital areas of their empire, such as India and the UK itself.<sup>38</sup> It was also rooted in a shared suspicion of Russia, as Lansdowne recorded when meeting with the Japanese minister.<sup>35</sup> But Japan was not sufficient as an ally, and British diplomats began to explore a range of options, including alliances with either Germany or France. The plans to engage more closely diplomatically with the Germans fell apart in 1902, and this meant that by 1903, the main focus of British diplomacy was on trying to evolve some sort of alliance, or at least entente, with the French. In these early years of his reign, Edward watched these affairs with great interest and sought for at least a degree of involvement. He made a number of comments about a potential Far Eastern conflict on the documents sent to him by Lansdowne. However, Edward's formal input seems to have been confined to the sort of comments that usually ran along the line of 'A very satisfactory dispatch,'<sup>40</sup> or other endorsements of various actions taken by his diplomats. He did not, visibly, give any advice himself or appear to push any aspect of established foreign policy. Indeed the memoirs of several politicians who served during

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<sup>35</sup> David Reynolds (2000) *Britannia Overruled. British Policy and World Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Pearson), p. 64.

<sup>36</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO30/57/31, Kitchener to person unknown, 25 January 1903.

<sup>37</sup> Zara S. Steiner and Keith Neilson (2003) *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p.70.

<sup>39</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO, 1927), 2: p. 89, Document 99.

<sup>40</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, I: p. 271, Document 337.

his reign include several statements which appear to suggest that while Edward took a great interest in all of these affairs, he took no formal steps to involve himself actively in any of the negotiations with France, for instance. According to Zara Steiner, 'Although Edward received dispatch boxes every day, Balfour and Lansdowne all strongly denied that the sovereign made any important suggestions.'<sup>41</sup>

One interesting aspect of the background to the negotiations between Britain and France is that the British were largely unaware that the French were also, by this time, feeling vulnerable.<sup>42</sup> *Documents Diplomatiques Français* contains documentary evidence which suggests that the French became increasingly concerned about increasing German military might. Consequently, they, in turn, had begun to increase their own military expenditure.<sup>43</sup> They were, therefore, coming to the conclusion that it would be sensible to acquire an understanding with Great Britain in order to counter the German menace.

### **The background to the visit: Anglo-French negotiations begin to break down**

Thanks to its links with Russia, France also feared that the Anglo-Japanese alliance meant that it might have to go to war against Britain to support Russia if the latter went to war with Japan. This is the background to the 1902 enquiries sent to the British, encouraged by Theophile Delcassé, about the possibility of a colonial accord.<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that it was, therefore, the French who had first tabled the idea of an entente. But on the British side, Lansdowne in particular was pleased to hear such positive noises from the Paris Embassy: 'Delcassé said that he and his colleagues were keen to assure you of their desire to create and maintain the friendliness of relations with England.'<sup>45</sup> Any scepticism that was felt in the Cabinet about French intentions was further dispelled by the news that the French were no longer in a mood to challenge Britain: 'The French are reluctant to pursue enterprises that will result in a new Fashoda.'<sup>46</sup> As the British and French entered into diplomatic negotiations

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<sup>41</sup> Zara S. Steiner (1986) *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898–1914* (London: Ashfield Press), p. 203.

<sup>42</sup> Bell, *France and Britain*, pp. 9–14.

<sup>43</sup> Costes, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew, *Theophile Delcassé*, p. 182.

<sup>45</sup> TNA FO 800/ 125/25, Lord Lansdowne from Paris, 16 November 1900.

<sup>46</sup> TNA FO 800/ 125/100, Paris Embassy to Lord Lansdowne, 28 June 1901.

on 2 January 1902, Lansdowne reported to Monson that it marked the turning of a corner in Anglo-French relations.<sup>47</sup>

However, despite the French and British governments realising that it was in their best interests to come to an agreement, both found it hard to find common ground. By 1903, the negotiations were in complete deadlock. Lord Cromer, with his Egyptian experience, identified that negotiations could be divided into six territorial questions, the solving of each of which relied on the goodwill of either Britain or France: 'There are six outstanding questions, viz: (1) Newfoundland; (2) Morocco; (3) Siam; (4) the New Hebrides; (5) Sokoto; (6) Egypt. In Morocco, Siam and Sokoto the French want various things which we have it in our power to give. In Newfoundland and Egypt the situation is reversed. In these latter cases we depend to a greater extent on the goodwill of France'<sup>48</sup>, the issue, in his experience, being that this goodwill was at this stage in short supply. The French were still very sensitive over their humiliation at Fashoda, feeling that they had been unjustly forced from their claim to this region. It was not surprising that they would not let the British get the better of them again and insisted on not conceding a single claim to the UK, while feeling that the British had to, on principle, concede their claims to France. It was reported to Lansdowne: 'The length of anti-English feeling is both public and government in France.'<sup>49</sup> Soon the British had come to the conclusion that talks would have to be abandoned, and this conclusion framed the decision of Edward VII to undertake a state visit to France.

## The king begins to plan his trip

King Edward was as disappointed as was his Cabinet when he learned that the Anglo-French talks were to break down due to anti-English feeling. According to W. Edwards, 'The King followed the slow progress of the negotiations with France with growing anxiety, more particularly as the situation in the Far East had taken an alarming turn.'<sup>50</sup> Edward realised that a major diplomatic gesture was needed if the negotiations were to continue, and he probably felt that as head of state it was his

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<sup>47</sup> BOD MS. Eng. Hist. C. 595/ 50, Lansdowne to Monson, 2 January 1902.

<sup>48</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> TNA FO800/ 125/66, Lord Roberts to Lansdowne, 7 February 1901.

<sup>50</sup> W.H. Edwards (1928) *The Tragedy of Edward VII. A Psychological Study*, translated from the German (London: Victor Gollancz), p. 191.

responsibility to make this step. He was going to tour the Mediterranean for his health in April 1903, and he enquired with Lansdowne as to whether he could make a state visit to Paris and meet the French President, Loubet, at the conclusion of this tour. Lansdowne told Monson on 11 March 1903: 'The King thinks of taking a cruise for the benefit of his health on the Portuguese, Spanish and Italian coasts during the earlier part of next month. It would have given K much pleasure to meet M Loubet on French soil.'<sup>51</sup>

The date would suggest that this was all being arranged at the last minute, and if the King had prior thoughts and objectives on this matter, he kept them very close to his chest – so much so that even those closest to him were kept in the dark. His Assistant Private Secretary, Frederick Ponsonby, recalled: 'The King kept the whole arrangements in his own hands, most of the arrangements were kept dead secret and most of his suite had no idea where they were going.'<sup>52</sup> One might interpret Edward's secrecy as ensuring that the plans and the credit remained his, and he may have been fearful that if any minister fully understood his intentions, they could hijack the visit and take the responsibility which he felt was his; although it must be added that this is merely an interpretation based on Edward's character, as his real motive for keeping the plans of his visit a secret is, unfortunately, undocumented.

If Lansdowne or Balfour did understand what Edward was intending by his Paris visit, they were very nonchalant about it, and their respective papers show little interest in its possible effects. This is reflected in the discussion that occurred in the Cabinet in the weeks before Edward set off on his voyage, where the topic of debate was Edward's intention to visit the Pope in Rome. However, Lansdowne helped Edward by making necessary arrangements with the French. Loubet responded favourably to all Lansdowne's enquiries, and told Monson that 'A visit from the King would in the present temper of France do an amount of good.'<sup>53</sup> Loubet appeared to have appreciated the importance of the visit in ways that the British Cabinet missed. According to Loubet, 'In this capital his majesty while Prince of Wales, had acquired an exceptional popularity, and he would find, whenever he returned here, that this feeling was as warm as ever, and his many friends would be overjoyed to

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<sup>51</sup> TNA FO800/125/246, Lansdowne to Monson, 11 March 1903.

<sup>52</sup> Sir Frederick Ponsonby (1951) *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode), p. 154.

<sup>53</sup> TNA FO800/125/259, Report from Monson to Lansdowne after meeting with Loubet, 13 March 1903.

see him again. But this contentment was not confined to his old friends, but was general among all classes.<sup>54</sup>

Negotiations followed about the date of the visit. Despite seeing the whole operation as a key part of his personal mission to enhance Britain's international position, Edward came close to calling the whole thing off. This suggests that, while Edward did understand that state visits conducted by monarchs to foreign states were both valuable and something he had the power to reinstitute for the British, he did not yet understand the full symbolism that distinguished the state visit from the private royal visit. Edward had learned that at the time his tour would reach a conclusion, while he would be travelling to Paris, Loubet would be in Africa inspecting the French colonies there. Changing the timing to accommodate Loubet's return to Paris would mean that Edward would miss the Ascot races – long a high priority on his personal calendar of enjoyments. So, despite all the preparation that he had put into this meeting, Edward was prepared either to change his plans by moving the meeting to the coastal port of Cannes or to cancel the whole visit. Either would have had the same effect, as moving the meeting to Cannes – a replacement amusement – would have reduced the visit from a formal state enterprise to simply a personal royal visit of the type Edward had so often made. It would, therefore, have had none of the propaganda effect or symbolic power that the entente negotiations needed.<sup>55</sup> As Lansdowne also failed to comprehend the symbolic significance of the visit, he made no attempt to persuade his sovereign to act otherwise. This underlines how distant was the memory of royal state visits, and the understanding of how useful they could be.

In the end it was Loubet, the republican President, and not the monarch, Edward, who saved the situation. After all, although France was a republic, French politicians still had an appreciation of state visits and their significance that meant Loubet was likely to appreciate the contribution Edward might make to the stalled negotiations, even if the British side did not. Certainly, Loubet made the gracious offer of cutting his visit to Africa significantly short. This act, which apparently showed the President of the French Republic sacrificing French interests in order to meet him, inspired a change of heart in Edward. He decided that he would meet Loubet half way as far as dates were concerned, and miss half of the Ascot races so as to be in Paris on 1

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> BOD MS. Eng. Hist. C. 595/75, Lansdowne to Monson, 11 March 1903.

May 1903. As Lansdowne informed Monson, 'HM tells me it was his intention to return to England by the end of April, but first in order to meet the president on French soil he would postpone his return until the 4<sup>th</sup> May.'<sup>56</sup> The King was so happy that the arrangements had been successfully made that he temporarily broke protocol and wrote to Monson directly. Knollys told Monson: 'The King has heard with great satisfaction that the president will be able to meet him in Paris on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.'<sup>57</sup>

Given that Loubet perceived the importance of this visit so clearly, he was certainly averse to any actions that would offend the King and derail the negotiations. He was, therefore, horrified when a scurrilous and cruelly critical cartoon of Edward VII began circulating all over Paris. It was on a postcard, and depicted Edward in his hedonistic Prince of Wales persona, cavorting (cigar in mouth, absinthe glass in hand, and an attentive waiter with a bottle to refill that glass) with a prostitute leaning over him.<sup>58</sup> It was, in fact, only one of a series of deeply offensive French cartoons reflecting on the reputation of Edward VII for having a playboy lifestyle when Prince of Wales. Worried that these (particularly if they caught the attention of the British press and were negatively commented on there) would make either the King or the British government reconsider coming to an agreement with France due to this insult, Loubet not only ordered that any future productions of this particular cartoon be banned but also despatched teams of French policemen around Paris to collect them all up. They were so successful that by the time of the King's visit not a single one remained on display.<sup>59</sup> However, although apparently unaware of the postcards, the British Cabinet were, in fact, looking at the visit critically. Many politicians and advisors, including Lansdowne, wondered about the wisdom of the visit, suggesting that Edward was setting himself up as a target for the people of Paris to throw anti-British insults at.<sup>60</sup> What this underlines is how strikingly different the experience of undertaking a state visit was for this British monarch. Paulmann comments on the support that other

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<sup>56</sup> TNA FO800/125/257/, Report of Lansdowne to Monson after meeting with the King, 13 March 1903.

<sup>57</sup> TNA FO800/125/259 /, Knollys to Monson, 17 March 1903.

<sup>58</sup> It has not been possible to include the image here, but it may be viewed in Robert and Isabelle Tombs (2006) *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London: William Heinemann), p. 440.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*.



European monarchs could count on from their politicians and advisors when evolving a state visit.<sup>61</sup> By contrast, Edward's idea of reviving royal state visits to other European nations was met with, at best, indifference and from many, downright scepticism. This scepticism included doubts of both Edward's personal abilities to act in a way that would enhance Britain's status, and, more broadly, of the value that a royal state visit could have to Britain's challenged diplomatic profile at the start of the twentieth century.

### King Edward VII in Paris

However, despite the reservations of his ministers and others, and encouraged by his successes in Italy, Edward arrived in a gaily decorated Paris as scheduled. He was met on a red-covered station platform by M. Loubet, accompanied by Delcassé and various other representatives of the French Cabinet: unusually, though, Edward was dressed in the uniform of a British field marshal, although his hosts were in civilian formal attire.<sup>62</sup> As with the rest of his Mediterranean tour, Edward took with him no British politician or other figure with a senior government standing. Hardinge was his sole government representative – a man of some seniority in the Foreign Office but without elected office or, in his civil service capacity, any formal instruction from the Foreign Secretary or Cabinet about Edward's behaviour while in Paris. Initially, the fears of those in Britain who thought that the visit was a bad idea seemed likely to be fulfilled. Hardinge's memory of the events during Edward's first carriage ride through Paris, though in agreement with Ponsonby's comments, indicated that Edward's initial reception was not warm: 'I could not fail to notice that amongst them [the crowd] there were small groups who shouted, "*Vivent les Boers!*".' However, the newspaper coverage does stress the substantial number of spectators who turned out to greet the King and enjoy the brilliant ceremonial display.<sup>63</sup> It is a measure of Edward's natural talent for diplomacy that Hardinge

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<sup>61</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>62</sup> 'The King in Paris', *The Times*, 2 May 1903. In visiting a republic, careful nuances to the normal niceties of a state visit had to be observed, so as to maintain the royal dignity of the King while avoiding any implicit offence to his republican hosts.

<sup>63</sup> 'The King in Paris', *The Times*, 2 May 1903.

could add: 'Naturally the King heard nothing.'<sup>64</sup> It seems likely that this pretence of ignorance was due to the fact that Edward still believed the visit would eventually be a success and that he had the ability to win the crowds over – given time. Throughout the first day of the visit, if there was some lack of popular warmth towards the King from the French crowds, there largely to enjoy the spectacle rather than welcome the man, this certainly was not matched by any lack of warmth displayed by French government officials. However, a chance meeting on the second day turned the whole visit around and changed the attitude of the crowds completely.

As part of the usual programme of events for a state visit (and in an echo of the earlier state visit of his mother), Edward was due, after an afternoon spent at the races at Longchamps and a second state banquet, to visit the Théâtre Français with Loubet and others. Upon leaving the theatre, he encountered a famous (and popular) Parisian actress, whom he remembered from his previous visits to the city as Prince of Wales. The King went out of his way to speak to her, and in French. He told her that on his previous visits he had greatly enjoyed seeing her perform and hoped that he would have the pleasure of seeing her again on the stage in the near future.<sup>65</sup> Word of this conversation, conducted in French, rapidly spread around Paris. It conveyed, to a formerly sceptical French public, that Edward had a genuine appreciation and love for French culture, based on those many hitherto despised visits to the country. As a result, the popular mood in France changed overnight. Instead of vicious chants, the British party found that Edward was met by riotously cheering crowds.<sup>66</sup> His popularity grew further because Edward built on this initial success by going on to make more speeches at various locales around Paris, all of them in French and without notes. During these apparently spontaneous speeches, Edward did not once mention politics. Instead, he chose to focus upon the shared cultural heritage that the two nations of Britain and France enjoyed, as well as stressing his own deep affection for the French people as a whole. Thanks to these speeches, the people of Paris went into a near frenzy wherever the King appeared in public, and the previously critical French press also changed

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<sup>64</sup> Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (1947) *Old Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner), p. 94.

<sup>65</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*, p. 203.

<sup>66</sup> Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns*, p. 170.

their tone and became thoroughly appreciative of this British visitation, as the British press also approvingly noted.<sup>67</sup>

What impressed press, people and politicians so much was the fact of this apparent heartfelt spontaneity in all Edward's speeches. His love of French culture appeared entirely genuine to an audience which, on the evidence of the cartoons so ruthlessly suppressed by Loubet, had been prepared to be highly critical of this man with his reputation as a lightweight *bon vivant*. It also underlines how unprepared Edward's own entourage, as well as the British government, were for the ramifications of such formal visitations, which included a keen interest from the press. It caused Ponsonby considerable stress when journalists regularly asked for transcripts of Edward's speeches, forcing him to write up press notices from hasty shorthand notes that he had taken down from his master's words.<sup>68</sup> Again, it must be stressed that it was here that Edward's real talent for diplomacy manifested itself. It was not, for him, a matter of engagement in documents and policy developments for which previous historians have gone in search. Instead, he concentrated his abilities on winning over the peoples of foreign nations – drawing increasingly effectively on his appreciation of their culture. He could do this effectively because he had travelled so widely across Europe when Prince of Wales, but only in an unofficial capacity – meaning that it had always been their cultural dimensions which had impressed him. In particular, he had not gone as a tourist, wanting to gawp at the sights; rather, he had always enjoyed throwing himself into the social life of the places he visited. Consequently, revisiting them as monarch on a state visit, he could also show an appreciation of food, landscapes and personalities in ways that struck chords with the local crowds. He instinctively understood that the people of Paris were not interested in political niceties but in the expression of a charismatic personality. He knew he had charm, and demonstrated real skill in using it on these visits. The problem for later historians has been that this dimension was, at the time, largely overlooked (and unappreciated) in his ministers' memoirs.

On 4 May, Edward left Paris in triumph, having won over France in its entirety. By the time he returned home, the news of his success had also reached the British public via the correspondents in France for the various British newspapers. Reading these reports engendered a sense of pride in their monarch and what he had achieved, which also boosted

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<sup>67</sup> 'Latest Intelligence', *The Times*, 4 May 1903.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Edward's popularity at home – and also, it has to be said, Edward's own confidence in his diplomatic abilities in ways that would, as later chapters reveal, pose certain problems for his ministers. But at the time, people and politicians alike spoke out publicly in favour of what they hoped would be the future of Anglo-French relations. One of the first of these was the then leader of the opposition, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who made this speech to an audience at Leeds: 'Now, come to France, the old hereditary enemy! The old hereditary enemy it may be, but not mine. In the old days there was this hereditary enmity between France and Great Britain, but now the traditional enmity is nothing but a tradition. With the France of today we have no quarrel whatever.'<sup>65</sup> What Edward had done was to emphasise the fact, in the various speeches he made in Paris, that although the two countries were naturally suspicious of each other, he was still capable of enjoying French culture, scenery and society. This underlined that, if the people could put aside the old feeling of animosity, they, too, could realise many things that they had always liked about France and the French as well. Edward's stance had also simultaneously encouraged the French to embrace the things that they enjoyed about British culture.<sup>70</sup> Andrew points out the impact that the visit had on the French, and Delcassé in particular: 'To the French the state visit also had considerable diplomatic significance, for they believed that Edward had it in his power to determine the direction of English foreign policy.'<sup>71</sup> He claims, in terms of the visit's effect on Delcassé, that 'Étienne,<sup>72</sup> who had formerly complained of Delcassé's reluctance to seek an agreement with England, found that "he could think only of Edward's reception".'<sup>73</sup>

## The Entente talks progress

In this newly congenial atmosphere, for the first time in months, the entente talks with France began to move forwards, and Lansdowne's once gloomy reports to Balfour about the progress of the negotiations now glistened with a new hope that the two nations would overcome

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<sup>65</sup> J.A. Spender (1923) *The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited), p. 89.

<sup>70</sup> A report of the French opinion of Edward's visit can be found in Costes, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 4: Document No. 138.

<sup>71</sup> Andrew, *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale*, p. 209.

<sup>72</sup> Eugène Étienne.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew, *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale*, p. 209.

their differences. Lansdowne's minutes for the negotiations gave the impression that the King's visit had reduced the French government's reluctance to abandon territorial claims and that they were prepared to move on from the anger that they felt towards the British after Fashoda.<sup>74</sup> This was reflected in the fact that for the first time the French were actually open to the idea of abandoning some of their territorial claims to the British: 'He [Cambon] did not seem to me to be unapproachable to the idea of territorial concessions.'<sup>75</sup> The British Naval *attaché* that was sent to Paris in the negotiations talked openly in his report to Lord Esher's war committee about how the sovereign's actions had changed everything: 'Thanks to His Majesty's magnificent initiative, a change has come over our charming, if volatile and inconstant neighbours.'<sup>76</sup> What is so telling about this quote is its demonstration of a contemporary appreciation that the idea was the King's initiative and not that of one of his ministers. It suggests that at least some in government circles who had initially doubted the usefulness (and wisdom) of the King's actions had now come to understand that he did have a role to play in British diplomacy, and had been right to reinstate the British state visit overseas.

While there, Edward had further cemented his role as a contributor to British diplomacy in his capacity as sovereign. He had wasted no time in negotiating a return state visit from Loubet, to include Windsor as well as London.<sup>77</sup> The President had readily accepted the initiative – which, again, came from Edward and was not a suggestion by his government. Tellingly, though, the King did insist that the visit must not take place until after Ascot had finished.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that there was still a way to go before Edward himself fully appreciated the importance of his state visit policy for his country – at a crucial time in Anglo-French negotiations, something of which he was well aware, he put his personal pleasure ahead of state business.<sup>79</sup> Despite this, the King continued to demonstrate an appreciation of the factors that made his visit to Paris a

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<sup>74</sup> Newton, *Lord Lansdowne, a Biography*.

<sup>75</sup> British Library (henceforth BL) Add 49728/158, Lansdowne to Balfour, 11 January 1904.

<sup>76</sup> Churchill Archives Centre (henceforth CAC) ESHR 10/41, Report of the naval *attaché* to Paris, November 1903.

<sup>77</sup> Paul Cambon's account of the event can be found in Paul Cambon (1940) *Correspondance*, 3 vols (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset), 2, 1898–1911: pp. 95–7.

<sup>78</sup> TNA FO800/126/5, Hough O'Bourne to Lansdowne, 20 May 1903.

<sup>79</sup> It must also be remembered that Edward and Alexandra had long been the Royal representatives at this event; thus, his non-attendance would mean a breach in protocol.

success. His understanding that what had worked had been his emphasis on treating the French as old friends (of both the country and himself) is reflected by the orders he gave Lord Esher to carry out when Loubet visited Windsor Castle. Knollys told Esher: 'The King instructs that the president is to see all over the castle including their majesty's private rooms.'<sup>80</sup> Seeing the most intimate chambers of the King would be a very significant personal gesture of friendship, and one that did not go unnoticed. Under Edward's guidance, Loubet's return visit was a roaring success, and further improved relations.

Edward subsequently watched the process of the Anglo-French negotiations with great interest, but without further active intervention. It seems likely that he purposely stayed out of the intricate negotiations due to his constitutional role, rather than because of his lack of diplomatic training, as some of his harsher critics have suggested. However, no one can deny that he kept a great interest in events, frequently writing to the Prime Minister with words of encouragement and approval of proceedings. He often reminded Balfour that there should really be no cause for Anglo-French disagreement: 'He [Edward] feels if possible we should have no bone of confrontation with the French.'<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, he was very much in favour of conceding small pieces of territory to the French in order to keep the negotiations proceeding smoothly.<sup>82</sup> He also displayed a great interest in the matter by always asking questions of the variety of people involved in the affair, much to the annoyance of Esher, who got very angry with the King's Private Secretary. The latter wrote to Esher: 'My dear Esher, It is all very well you telling me not to bother you, but the King asks a variety of questions about these matters, and it is necessary that I should be able to answer them.'<sup>83</sup>

This is not to deny that there were several issues that threatened to derail the negotiations. For instance, there were still a range of territorial challenges, over matters such as the British possession of Gambia.<sup>84</sup> But in the aftermath of the state visit, Monson reported to Lansdowne:

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<sup>80</sup> CAC ESHR 5/17/191, Knollys to Esher, 26 June 1903.

<sup>81</sup> BL Add 49684/35, Knollys to Balfour, 28 February 1904.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> CAC ESHR 10/47, Knollys to Esher, 10 November 1903.

<sup>84</sup> C. Lowe and M. Dockrill (1972) *Foreign Policies of The Great Powers: The Reluctant Imperialists* (London: Routledge), p. 8; the French account of the halting of the negotiations over the Gambia issue can be found in Costes, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 4: Document No. 198. The decision to continue the negotiation can be found in Document No. 240.

'The French would have of course never have dreamed of entering a negotiation of such intensive proportions' without intending, genuinely, to seek a positive conclusion.<sup>85</sup> This suggests that following Edward's visit, the French were now prepared to give away prejudices that they had held for so long, all for the improvement of Anglo-French relations.<sup>86</sup>

It could also be said that Edward had made an impression on how the British Cabinet dealt with the French, as Cabinet records show that when the negotiations fell into difficulty, Balfour encouraged Lansdowne to speak to Cambon officially, based on the belief that two men could come to an agreement more quickly than a team of negotiators: 'Lord Lansdowne was authorised to speak to M Cambon unofficially on the matter', was the statement in one letter from Balfour to King Edward.<sup>87</sup> It was inevitable that old issues, such as fishing rights off Newfoundland, were going to arise throughout the negotiations.<sup>88</sup> However, due to the new age of good feeling between the two nations, the talks continued, with regular encouraging reports from Lord Lansdowne, such as this dispatch to the King: 'Lord Lansdowne held out hopes to the Cabinet that the differences between himself and M Cambon on the French negotiations were lessening and that he has every hope of the treaty being brought to a satisfactory conclusion.'<sup>89</sup> Eventually, the long talks bore fruit with the signing of the Entente Cordiale in April 1904.

## Assessing the visit

Edward VII's 1903 visit to Paris suggests the significance of royal visits for British diplomacy when negotiating with foreign powers. It must be said that French foreign policy was not made in the theatres and opera houses of Paris but by French diplomats in the Quai d'Orsay, and that the real entente was formed by the give and take of territory between Lansdowne and his French counterparts. However, what Edward brought to the table with his visit to Paris was a contextualising

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<sup>85</sup> TNA FO800/ 126/54, Monson to Lansdowne, 16 October 1903.

<sup>86</sup> Although the French desire for Morocco was also a factor; see Andrew, *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale*, pp. 212–13.

<sup>87</sup> TNA CAB 41/28/26, Balfour to Edward VII, 11 December 1903.

<sup>88</sup> Lowe and Dockrill, *Foreign Policies of the Great Powers*, p. 8; for further details, see Bell, *France and Britain*, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> TNA CAB 41/29/6, Balfour to Edward VII, 1 March 1904.

desire to make the Anglo-French agreements work, a desire that spread from the man on the Parisian street up to men such as Delcassé, and it can be said that it was Edward's speeches and visits that brought about the 'good feeling' between the two nations that helped the negotiations reach a satisfactory conclusion. As Roderick McLean agrees, 'The King's visit to Paris acted as a catalyst, which persuaded Delcassé to open negotiations with London, and it also created the atmosphere of good-will, which was necessary before such an understanding could be arrived at.'<sup>90</sup>

Of course, the roots of the Entente are to be found in the reign of Queen Victoria rather than in the reign of Edward VII. In appreciating the efforts of the King, it must also be accepted that an Entente would almost certainly have been signed between the nations eventually, if not in 1903.<sup>91</sup> For contemporaries, though, Edward's contribution was dramatic, partly because it was unexpected. The British dimensions to the visit reflect the fact that both the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister had had little belief that a royal visit could possibly have any influence in fixing British foreign relations. Yet when it took place, both were pleasantly surprised at the results that it reaped, and were not slow in giving credit where it was due. Both acknowledged that the negotiations would probably have been abandoned, at least for some time, if Edward had not stepped in. As McLean explains, 'At the time of the signing of the Anglo-French agreement in 1904, there was a general feeling in both countries that King Edward VII's visit to Paris had played a major part in smoothing the way towards a *rapprochement*.'<sup>92</sup> According to McLean, Cambon commented that 'any Clerk at the Foreign Office could draw up a treaty', but that it was only Edward VII 'who could have succeeded in producing the right atmosphere for a *rapprochement*.'<sup>93</sup>

In conclusion, the contribution of the good feeling engendered by the royal visit of 1903 was the crucial factor. It converted the Entente from a mere foreign policy political agreement, which, in the nature of things, would always (given the lack of any formal status) have been susceptible to the impact of changing circumstances, into something which

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<sup>90</sup> Roderick McLean (2001) *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 147.

<sup>91</sup> Dunlop, *Edward VII*, pp. 1-27.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*



was more enduring. It was this that enabled the Entente to survive the First Moroccan Crisis, which the Kaiser expected to bring the Entente to an end. The British government was certainly conscious of this dimension to the Entente in the aftermath of that crisis, and it explains why they were so urgent that George V should undertake a repeat royal visit to France in 1914, as a way of reinvigorating that good feeling and so ensuring that the Entente would endure. It explains, and to an extent justifies, the close association between Edward VII and the Entente. He came to personify that diplomatic achievement because he was the one who gave it a substance which could not be measured quantitatively but which, qualitatively, explains its ability to endure into the First World War. However, perhaps a legacy of the previous visit to Italy was the discontent behind the scenes in Britain about the high profile that Edward VII had accumulated for royal diplomacy. One certain result of this first royal enterprise, first to Italy and then to France, was that Edward VII would never again be as free to engineer the dimensions of his royal tours in the remaining seven years of his reign. True, the British government, given the success of the trip, were less vocal in their comments on incidents in France than they were about the incidents of the Italian trip. But this does not mean that they were not conscious of the potential for problems that both trips suggested in terms of the damage that a royal diplomat, unaccompanied by a senior politician with foreign policy clout, could do.

In terms of the broader impact of the trip to Paris on the European diplomatic landscape, contemporaries saw the trip, and its outcome, as being directed against the Kaiser. *Punch*, for instance, depicted Wilhelm II as being abandoned by the British Lion/John Bull and Marianne.<sup>94</sup> In fact, initially, the Kaiser was not particularly concerned by the outcome of the visit to Paris. Wilhelm II's fears of encirclement were not created by this visit, because he did not see it as enduring. It was the consequences of the visit, when the Entente, sustained by the good feeling Edward VII had generated, did not collapse in the wake of the First Moroccan Crisis, that eventually made the trip to Paris important in the eyes of the Kaiser. His sarcastic comments at the time emphasise that he did not see this as a failure in the game of one-upmanship that he was already playing with Edward VII, as in the case of the German royal visit to Italy.<sup>95</sup> Although

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<sup>94</sup> See Dunlop, *Edward VII*, p. 208.

<sup>95</sup> Although he did warn the Tsar that their uncle was weaving a net of secret information. See Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar*, p. 252.

the visit to France was not the first royal visit conducted by Edward, it was the first in which the display put on by a visit was seen as having a visible effect on British diplomacy. It consequently influenced how the British government used their monarch when attempting to win over popular support with rival powers.

# 5

## A Virtual Royal Occasion: Edward VII's 1907 Visit to Spain

### **Introduction: formal and informal visits overseas**

Immediately after the royal visits to Italy and France, Edward VII made a number of other overseas royal visits, but these were either unofficial family visits – especially those to Denmark – or visits to Germany, where they assumed the same quasi-state nature as the 1901 visits there had done. The Kaiser had no intention of letting a visit to his domains by the King of England pass unnoticed when it could in any way be used to boost his own profile at home. Because this volume focuses on state visits, the private family visits are not discussed in detail. Even the quasi-state visits to Germany are not directly relevant to the main focus on the evolution of state visits, because they were substantially replicas of the events in 1901 and so add little to the analysis. After all, while he made use of them, Wilhelm himself did not count these post-1903 visits in the same way as the first visits by the new King in 1901. He later complained that Edward had yet to make what he called a visit to Germany: what he meant was a formal state visit to his country – something which irritated his uncle, who pointed out ‘the sheer volume’ of visits he had made to Germany in the previous seven years.

The difference between these post-1903 visits and the two trips in 1901 was that Edward had not revived the British royal state visit overseas. Once he had done so, for Wilhelm to have made too much of them would have underlined their lack of official status, because the King did not arrive for any of these private visits accompanied by an official even of the level of Hardinge. Only one needs to be noted briefly: the visit to Kiel Week in 1904, because it is sometimes

(wrongly) dubbed a state visit.<sup>1</sup> It was not. As British newspapers commented at the time, it was a personal return visit in response to the one made to Sandringham by the Kaiser in November 1902.<sup>2</sup> As such, the British press reported the event almost in passing. What was of more interest, because of its maritime and commercial dimensions, was the side visit that Edward made, during that week, to Hamburg, with its substantial British 'colony' of merchants. With his Assistant Private Secretary, Captain Ponsonby, and with the British ambassador to Berlin in tow, Edward went off to inspect the harbour and have lunch with the Burgomaster and Senate of the Free State of Hamburg. Underlining the fact that it was not a state visit, Edward had assumed the uniform of a German admiral, and had with him some of the members of a German entourage provided for him by his nephew. The Hamburg trip was, according to *The Times*, extremely successful as a recognition of the 'the bond of widespread commercial interests which unite Hamburg with the world of British trade', and thanks to the King's usual affability in his speech thanking the Burgomaster and Hamburg dignitaries.<sup>3</sup>

Kiel Week was the German equivalent to Cowes Week, something which Wilhelm II had started promoting as such from his first attendance in 1889. In informing his nephew that he intended to accept the standing invitation to attend Kiel Week,<sup>4</sup> Edward was making a personal gesture to appease Wilhelm in the aftermath of the signing of the Entente Cordiale. Edward realised that it would be particularly important to his nephew for his uncle to be there that year, because the event would also mark the occasion of the opening of the extension to the Kiel Canal. The King clearly understood that it would enable his nephew to show off, and so, almost certainly deliberately, chose to go to Kiel Week that year to calm him down. Again, this has important implications for an understanding of the nature of the relationship between uncle and nephew. Personally, as well as politically, Edward may have found Wilhelm irritating, but the supposed hatred existing

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<sup>1</sup> Roderick McLean (2001) *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, 'The French at Waterloo', Paris Correspondent, *Sunday Times*, 26 June 1904, which commented that the French were interested because of the wider implications that it might have for Franco-Russian relations. The general reportage of the event in the British press was distinctly low-key.

<sup>3</sup> 'The King at Hamburg', *The Times*, 29 June 1904.

<sup>4</sup> Equally, Wilhelm had a standing invitation to attend Cowes Week.

between them is not supported by this voluntary gesture. Edward was not required to make it by his politicians, and he made it even though he knew it would upset his wife. This is not the act of a man who detests his nephew.

Royal biographers have noticed this visit because the extension to the Canal was only possible because of land that Germany had acquired from Denmark as a result of the Second Schleswig War in 1864. As a Danish princess, Queen Alexandra had never forgotten or forgiven Germany for the human and territorial losses in that conflict, and she certainly did dislike Wilhelm, though largely for what he represented rather than personally.<sup>5</sup> But it has also been noted by diplomatic and international historians. The reason why Kiel in particular has risen to such scholarly prominence is due to the obvious strategic impact of the Kiel Canal on Anglo-German naval relations, and particularly in the context of the achievement of the Entente Cordiale. Röhl has commented that the wider context for Edward's visit was one of continuing tension between Britain and Germany – but also emphasises that this was a matter for the politicians of both states. What he also insists on is the informal nature of Edward's visit, however – and the extent to which Wilhelm, typically, ignored his uncle's desire for the event to be low-key as far as Edward was concerned. It was 1901 all over again.<sup>6</sup>

## Britain and Spain

The next fully official royal visit after 1903 was to Spain in 1907. This is a trip that has not been given much attention by historians, because it was in many ways a very strange affair. But, for the purposes of this book and its explorations of British royal diplomacy, it is taken very seriously, and consequently, an entire chapter is devoted to it and to its implications. By this time, the British government, as well as the King, had had the opportunity to reflect on the aftermath of his first state visits, to Italy and France.

Before the decision to initiate a state visit by the King to Spain can be discussed, it must be contextualised within an understanding of broader Anglo-Spanish relations during the period, as this gives an insight into

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<sup>5</sup> Georgina Battiscombe (1969) *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable), p. 226.

<sup>6</sup> John Röhl (2014) *Wilhelm II: into the Abyss of War and Exile 1900–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 258–60.

why the British government felt it was important for the King to visit Spain. Spain, in the Edwardian period, was going through a transitional process in terms of both its foreign policy and its domestic politics.<sup>7</sup> The war with the USA in 1898 had ended Spain's imperial role in the Americas, its traditional area of empire, leaving it with only a few holdings elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> While the British Empire had been expanding in the nineteenth century, the Spanish Empire had been in steep decline since the Napoleonic Wars, with all Spain's mainland American possessions being lost by 1820. This had made the final stages in the destruction of Spain's American Empire an inevitability, especially in the face of US pressure.<sup>9</sup> The British were interested observers of this, especially by the end of the century, when Spain could no longer count as a serious threat to British colonial interests overseas. It is a measure of British contemporary calmness over Spain's international position that it could be pointed out that 'amongst informed opinion it was taken for granted, before hostilities broke out, that Spain would lose any war with the United States'.<sup>10</sup> But Britain also acknowledged that Spain's defeat would provoke a domestic crisis within Spain, affecting its position in Europe, which would have an impact on British interests.<sup>11</sup> The loss of trade in these colonial markets hit Spain hard, and many began to question the continued viability of the old system, especially since from the perspective of the Spanish population, 'It was the politicians rather than the soldiers and sailors who were held responsible for defeat at the hands of American "sausage-makers"'.<sup>12</sup> Within Spain, critics (especially those from the already powerful republican movement there) began to argue that the final loss of Spain's American colonies was 'proof' that the monarchy itself was outdated, because it had made the Spanish unprepared to continue to hold their place in the modern world.<sup>13</sup> The problem that this posed for the British

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<sup>7</sup> Sebastian Balfour (1997) *The End of the Spanish Empire 1898–1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); Raymond Carr (1980) *Modern Spain 1875–1980* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

<sup>8</sup> For a guide to empires in North America in this period, see Kenneth Bourne (1967) *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America 1815–1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

<sup>9</sup> Balfour, *End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Carr, *Modern Spain*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

was essentially a diplomatic one. Spain began to turn its attentions towards Morocco<sup>14</sup> in a move that they hoped would give it back a serious imperial profile at a time when European thought was that a nation's international standing was dependent on its having overseas possessions. This was problematic for Britain, because the Spanish claim to Morocco was based on Spain's Moorish past,<sup>15</sup> which, in turn, inflamed Basque separatists, further adding to the sense of there being an internal anarchy in Spanish cities, which was in itself worrying for surrounding nations. But equally, making a claim to Morocco meant that Spain had a conflict of interests with France.

In the longer-term perspective, Spain's most important diplomatic relationships in Europe at the start of the twentieth century were with Britain, France and Germany. But Britain's interest in Spain, both political and popular, was boosted by a recent development in the Anglo-Spanish relationship which derived from the recent marriage of Edward's niece, Princess Victoria Eugenie Julia Ena (known to the British as Princess Ena), to Alphonso XIII. The match had required her conversion from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism, and consequently it had not won widespread support from the British public. Instead of its being just another royal romance, the British media interpreted it as the tale of how a pretty and popular princess had abandoned the 'faith of her fathers' for a throne, as the popular novelist Marie Corelli had put it.<sup>16</sup> Nor had the match been popular with many in Spain (including Alphonso XIII's mother).<sup>17</sup> Thus, the marriage had added tension to the diplomatic relationship between the two states, rather than improving it.

This was of concern to the British government, because in terms of other European diplomatic relationships, Germany was being considered as a potential alliance partner in Madrid by the Spanish. They seemed to have things in common, both were looking to expand their overseas

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<sup>14</sup> Juan Pablo Fusi Aizapurua, 'Centre and Periphery 1900–1936: National Integration and Regional Nationalisms Reconsidered' in Lannon, Francis and Preston, Paul (1990) *Elites and Power in Twentieth Century Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 185.

<sup>16</sup> Marie Corelli, *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 14 April 1906. See also Rev. Robert Ransford, 'The Spanish Marriage', Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 3 February 1906; 'The Spanish Marriage', *The Times*, 3 March 1906; 'The Spanish Marriage', *The Times*, 12 April 1906.

<sup>17</sup> Justin C. Vovk (2012) *Imperial Requiem: Four Royal Women and the Fall of the Age of Empires* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse), pp. 181–2; Gerald Noel (1984) *Ena: Spain's English Queen* (London: Constable and Robinson).

territories, and so, at one level, the two nations had much to gain from one another. Also, the German Empire had been the only European nation to openly voice its support of Spain in its war against the USA. Germany had been concerned that the triumphant Americans might have quashed German ambitions for Pacific colonies, and so would have preferred to see the USA lose.<sup>18</sup> However, Spain quickly abandoned pursuit of this alliance, as it would inevitably have raised displeasure from the French and the British, a displeasure which was seen as intrinsically threatening to Spanish interests.<sup>15</sup> Not only did Spain have a shared border with France, but also the high proportion of British ships based in the Mediterranean, with the Gibraltar naval base, meant that out of necessity, Spain needed a relationship with these two powers.

As well as being its neighbour, France was Spain's greatest rival, as they both held a common interest in the acquisition of Morocco as a colony.<sup>20</sup> It was also dangerous for the Spanish to provoke France's displeasure, due to French military and economic superiority, which could easily cross the Spanish border, creating a conflict that Spain could not hope to win. The French were worried that this rivalry might result in the Spanish steadily drifting into the enemy's camp diplomatically. Before 1903, France had feared primarily that this might strengthen Spanish ties with Britain. Once the Entente had been achieved, though, France's main concern was a Spanish–German link.<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, and despite their resentment of outspoken British support for the USA during the 1898 war, the British were seen by the Spanish as more trustworthy than the French.<sup>22</sup> Gibraltar was also a complication to Anglo-Spanish relations, as both sides recognised that Britain would

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<sup>18</sup> German ambitions for a Pacific Empire can be found in Paul M. Kennedy (1980) *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860–1914* (New York: Humanity Books), pp. 177–81, 183–4. On potential disagreements with the USA over said ambitions, see p. 201; see also Balfour, *End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Balfour, *End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 184.

<sup>20</sup> French interest in Morocco can be found in Christopher Andrew (1968) *Theophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale* (London: Macmillan), pp. 86–8, 104–7.

<sup>21</sup> France's relationship with Spain over Morocco up until this point is outlined in Andrew, *Delcassé*, pp. 149–51, 191–4, and also in C. Lowe and M. Dockrill (1972) *Foreign Policies of The Great Powers: The Reluctant Imperialists* (London: Routledge), p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> For an account of US/UK relations during the war, see Kathleen Burk (2007) *Old World, New World, The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown), pp. 411–15.



not yield one of its keys for locking up the world strategically.<sup>23</sup> From the British perspective, even after the Entente, there were concerns about French dominance in Morocco. Consequently, they saw Spain's claim to Morocco as a useful buffer to French power in the Mediterranean.<sup>24</sup> All of this led to a situation where, out of necessity, a series of talks between 1904 and 1907 saw Spain align herself with the Entente Powers.<sup>25</sup> Having a diplomatically amicable relationship with the Entente Powers provided security for her French border and a stake in Morocco, even while she remained distrustful of French ambitions and resentful of the British position, especially over Gibraltar.

### **The Spanish state visit to Britain and the entente dimension**

A key point, therefore, is that the impetus for this visit did not lie in a crisis or issue that fell within what Edward himself would consider as the royal remit to fix. In a sense, the royal marriage had already been a gesture of royal solidarity, since Edward had supported the match as his niece's uncle, if not as the King. The idea of Edward coming to Spain had been tabled by the Spanish King, Alfonso XIII, during his state visit to Edward VII in London in late 1905. While it was a state visit, with Alfonso staying in Buckingham Palace, the Spanish King had embarked on a number of such visits around Europe, visiting its royal families, essentially because he was on the look-out for a likely bride. He found her in Britain – but the state visit by the Spanish King was not, at that point, made much of by the British government, even when he suggested a reciprocal visit by Edward to Spain. The marriage of Princess Ena and Alfonso had taken place in Madrid in 1906, and had been attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales. It had not, however, been an official visit by them: they were simply there in their capacity as cousins and escorts to Princess Henry of Battenberg, the bride's mother.<sup>26</sup>

This created a connection between the Spanish and the British monarchies, but historians have adjudged this to be so unimportant that it is barely mentioned in the histories examining how monarchy shaped

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Porter (1996) *The Lion's Share, A Short History of British Imperialism 1850–1995* (London: Addison Wesley Longman), p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> G.T. Garratt (1939) *Gibraltar and the Mediterranean* (London: Jonathan Cape), p. 168.

<sup>25</sup> Balfour, *End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> Vovk, *Imperial Requiem*, pp. 182–3.

Europe in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> But it is important to this study of British state visits, because the events surrounding the marriage in Madrid added a complexity to the negotiations for a state visit to Spain by Edward VII. Largely ignoring the family link, British politicians evolved the idea of Edward making a state visit as a way of creating a diplomatic opportunity which would contribute to smoothing over the continuing tensions between the Entente and the Spanish. What they clearly had in mind was how successful Edward had been in overcoming the hostility of the Parisian public, especially as they now also accepted that Edward had a general power of pleasing potentially hostile audiences, as he had shown also in Italy and in Hamburg, for instance. But, to the displeased surprise of the British political establishment, the Palace was initially reluctant for the King to undertake this particular state visit. The royal reasoning was that it would not be popular with the British public for the King to visit a niece who had converted to Roman Catholicism, for a start, especially given the ongoing Anglo-Irish tensions which had revived anti-Catholic feelings on the mainland.<sup>28</sup>

Another official rationale put forward for Edward's initial reservations related to the efficiency of the security that would be provided. The Spanish police were considered inadequate when it came to performing protection duties for royals in a capital rife with republican movements. The marriage of Ena to Alfonso had been marred by an assassination attempt on the royal couple. True, the Prince and Princess of Wales had not been targets and had not been in any way threatened. However, the fact that the attack had taken place, and that during the ensuing chaos the heir to the British throne had been left largely unprotected, was sufficient for Edward VII to take a very poor view of Spanish security.<sup>29</sup> Thanks to the letters between Ena and her mother, Edward was well aware of the new queen's continuing unpopularity with the Spanish people. To him,

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar. Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray). This makes only a passing reference to the marriage and its potential diplomatic impact for Anglo-Spanish relations, while talking at length about the actual assassination attempt and its impact on George and Mary's psyches. See pp. 255–7 in particular.

<sup>28</sup> Vovk, *Imperial Requiem*; F. Neal (1988) *Sectarian Violence. The Liverpool Experience 1814–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); E.R. Norman (1968) *Anti-Catholicism in History in Victorian England* (New York: Barnes and Noble); A. O'Day 'Species of Anti-Irish Behaviour 1846–1922' in P. Panayi (ed.) (1996) *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Leicester University Press).

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Rose (2000) *George V* (London: Phoenix Press), p. 68.

this meant that a meeting between uncle and niece and nephew-in-law in Madrid was unlikely to be well received by republican elements amongst the city's inhabitants, and he clearly saw himself as unfitted to the task of winning over those terrorist elements – any more than he hoped to win over the Fenian terrorists threatening Britain's union with Ireland.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this lack of royal cooperation, the British government were still determined on a state visit to Spain. It was their decision to frame the visit within a formal visit by the British fleet to the port of Cadiz. As usual, the King would be on his royal yacht, but this time, he would be accompanying his navy. This was felt to be the best way of guaranteeing the King's safety and persuading him to go. Clearly, the government had accepted that the King's reservations were reasonable and that the potential for a deeply damaging diplomatic incident (think Sarajevo in 1914) was best avoided. Instead, it hoped that the presence of the navy, and the accompanying display in the port, would compensate the Spanish for the King not visiting Madrid itself. Hardinge's dispatch to the King's Private Secretary, Knollys, shows that although the government were enthusiastic about a state visit to Spain, they had accepted the King's reluctance to visit the capital. The government were even prepared to cancel the visit if the Spanish would not accept it in the form of being part of a naval visit to Cadiz. This suggests that, at least in this context, the government were sufficiently convinced of the value of the royal state visit to be prepared to negotiate with the King over the venue, and make the decision to use the fleet – something that Edward himself would have been powerless to initiate.

This time, it was the government and not Edward that was fully in charge of the details of organising the visit. Hardinge informed Knollys: 'I hope the King of Spain will accept the idea of the visit to Cadiz. If he does not, the visit to Madrid will have to be indefinitely postponed as there is no likelihood of any improvement of the Spanish police in the near future.'<sup>31</sup> As Knollys was informed, the initial response from the Spanish King indicated that he was quite happy with the idea of the King coming to Cadiz instead of Madrid:

As our messenger leaves today I will send a few lines, in addition to my telegram, about my interview with King Alfonso yesterday. His

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<sup>30</sup> Carr, *Modern Spain*.

<sup>31</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/51/3, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 11 January 1907.

Majesty received the King's counter proposal of an official visit to Cadiz with evident pleasure. He said 'I know the King and it is just like him'. He quite realised why the King could not well come to Madrid just yet, & he said 'after all, where I go is for the time being the capital, and the King of Norway has been visiting your King at Windsor or Sandringham, which is not London'.<sup>32</sup>

However, the letter also revealed a few concerns that the Spanish were having over the Kaiser's proposed visit.

At the start of this chapter, it was pointed out that there were elements in the Spanish government who felt that closer relations with Germany, rather than Britain, would be in Spain's best interests. Alfonso appears, from these early letters, to have been more in favour of the Anglo-French relationship, as he went on to warn the British government about the dangers of how things would look to the Spanish populace if the Kaiser made a visit to Spain without a counter-visit from the Anglo-French Entente: 'With him [King Alfonso] the great point is that the German Emperor's visit should not stand alone this year. Now it will be counter balanced by King Edward's visit and King Alfonso feels that he will have the necessary backing to enable him to stand up against the Emperor William.'<sup>32</sup> Bunsen's contemporary letter to Edward Grey underlines the value of Edward making a visit to counter the Kaiser's:

King Alfonso's principal reason for desiring a clear manifestation of British support was political. The German Emperor's visit in May or June, if it stood alone, would greatly encourage the anti-French elements in Spain. These are numerous and powerful and the Church conflict in France is likely to develop them still further. But England turns the scale and the King's visit will afford King Alfonso the visible backing which he felt that he wanted.<sup>34</sup>

Plainly, in the aftermath of the successful visits to Italy and France by Edward VII, contemporaries, including those in the British govern-

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<sup>32</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/51/6, Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Lord Knollys, 12 January 1907.

<sup>33</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/51/6, Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Lord Knollys, 12 January 1907.

<sup>34</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO800/77/145, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

ment, accepted the return of the British royal state visit to the European diplomatic scene.

### **The British government and the state visit to Spain**

The trip to Spain suggests that the British government understood that, once again, the actual presence of the British monarch in a foreign nation was being seen as a statement of British goodwill, which meant that, by default, a failure to visit could indicate a disinterest held to be capable of having a detrimental effect on a foreign populace. They were thus determined to make use of the King diplomatically. But the British government had also a wider vision by 1907. They also understood that because most observers had identified Edward's visit to Paris as having been crucial to the Entente talks, he could now be seen as a representation of the Entente as a bloc against the rival nation of Germany, and not just the representative of Britain. The Spanish King, as a third party power, certainly understood this; he made it plain that he saw a state visit by Edward to Spain as a strategy to improve domestic opinions within Spain of the French, not only (or not primarily) the British. This underlines an active consciousness that state visits possessed a symbolic quality, whereby a King could be understood as representing more than his own nation. Essentially, state visits were comprehended by contemporaries as national symbols in a battle of charms trying to woo prospective nations into their favour. This is further underlined by the Spanish consciousness of the fact that the Kaiser's visit there being made so close to Edward's ensured (as had been the case in Italy) that the two visits would be drawn into direct comparison by observers. Both sovereigns, representing their respective nations, would be assessed on the basis of what they appeared to offer to the Spanish people in the shape of the visit.

Despite Alfonso's acquiescence in the British decision to substitute a naval visit to Cadiz for one to Madrid, his government were less than enthusiastic about the avoidance of the capital. Many government members felt that it was a not a proper state visit, something also picked up by Bunsen in his correspondence with Grey: 'I have also spoken privately to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who expressed disappointment, and thought that a naval visit could never be regarded in the same light as the capital.'<sup>35</sup> This represented a clear effort by the Spanish government, if not the King, to suggest to the British government that

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<sup>35</sup>: TNA FO800/77/144, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

either the venue for the trip should be changed, or Edward should engage to make a second trip to Spain, which would be to Madrid, at a time when the security position had improved. Despite this, the British government pressed ahead with their decision that the state visit to Spain should take the form of a naval one, in which Edward would sail into Cadiz with his fleet. This unfortunate decision was probably made on the grounds that the symbolic majesty and might created by the arrival of a British King at the head of the world's most impressive fleet (at least in British eyes) would amount to a symbolic commitment to a formal state visit that would equate to a trip to Madrid.<sup>36</sup> After all, the grand gesture of the visit by the fleet would be enhanced by the presence of the first of the dreadnought class battleships, only launched the previous year.<sup>37</sup> That the government hoped that it would provide the Spanish with a reminder of the importance of Anglo-Spanish relations in the Mediterranean, not to mention the indirect publicity the dreadnought class ship in the fleet would get in the international press reporting on the visit, was also a factor.

### Spanish reactions

The chief critic within Spain of this proposed naval visit was the Spanish Foreign Minister, Senor Perez Caballero. Instead of being impressed by the plans, as the British hoped, Caballero argued that the King's reason for avoiding Madrid would more likely seem to be a slight on the Spanish people. He cited the King's triumphant visit to Paris in 1903 as evidence for this: 'He [Caballero] commented on the confidence placed in the French Police shown by the King's visits to Paris and Biarritz although Paris as well as Madrid has witnessed an anarchist attack on King Alfonso.'<sup>38</sup> He also commented that a naval visit, no matter how grand, could never make up in the eyes of the Spanish people for the state visit that Alfonso had already made to London.<sup>35</sup> On the British side, Bunsen essentially dismissed the Spanish minister's views. While briefly stating, in a few lines, speculation about Edward changing his mind, he added: 'It is of course quite doubtful whether this government will still

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Massie (2007) *Dreadnought. Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Vintage Books), pp. 395–7.

<sup>37</sup> Jan Ruger (2007) *The Great Naval Game. Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 183.

<sup>38</sup> TNA FO800/77/144, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

be in office in April. Most people think it will break up within the next month.<sup>40</sup> Writing to Knollys, Bunsen described Caballero as sulking because of Madrid being passed over, commenting: 'Sr Perez Caballero, with whom I also had a private conversation, was not so well pleased. He professed not to understand the want of confidence in the Spanish Police, and was a little huffy about Madrid been passed over. He hoped he might take it that the proposed visit to Cadiz did not exclude a future visit to Madrid.'<sup>41</sup> Bunsen added that he had told Senor Caballero that the British had good reason to distrust the Spanish police's capabilities, as 'The Minister of the Interior had quite recently made a speech in the Cortes declaring that the present organisation was entirely inadequate, and that Spanish governments were practically disarmed in face of the action of the anarchists.'<sup>42</sup>

In the run-up to the visit, then, the British government were presented with two conflicting views on how Edward making a state visit in the context of a British naval visit would be received in Spain itself. In understanding their final decision, it is worth taking into account Bunsen's belief that the age difference between Alfonso and Caballero may have coloured their views on the matter. Bunsen felt that, being younger, Alfonso had a greater grasp of this new kind of diplomacy: 'In this his Majesty aged 20 has shown a clearer perception of the true state of affairs than his Prime Minister aged 82 and his clever but inexperienced foreign minister.'<sup>43</sup> A few days after the first correspondence on the subject of Perez Caballero, Bunsen mentioned to Grey that he was concerned that Caballero was attempting to sway his King into agreeing to substitute a naval visit for a visit to Madrid, but added the rider that it did not seem to be having any effect, as Alfonso had said nothing to him about the issue.<sup>44</sup> All this makes it plain that the British government were now so committed to the naval format of this state visit that they were not prepared to rethink the plans. Finally, Bunsen spoke sufficiently frankly to Senor Caballero about the British position to silence the Spanish: 'the only sensible course is to accept it in the Spirit which it was offered, as King Alfonso has done'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/51/6, Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Lord Knollys, 12 January 1907.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> TNA FO800/77/144, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

<sup>44</sup> TNA FO800/77/149, de Bunsen to Grey, 19 January 1907.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Certainly, Alfonso continued to be enthusiastic about the visit of the British King (and his uncle-in-law), even though he began to voice a few comments to the effect that it was a pity that the visit would not be to Madrid. The British put this down to the influence of Senor Caballero, rather than to anything more substantial. Alfonso did make one suggestion for amendment, however, to the effect that he would prefer the state visit to take place at Cartagena instead of Cadiz. His reasoning was that 'Cadiz is rather near Tangier, which is full of bad characters, and that possibly, for this reason and also because the King will probably start from Marseilles, Cartagena would be a better place for receiving the King and his fleet.'<sup>46</sup> As it did not affect the naval format, the British government were unconcerned and readily accepted the venue change. Bunsen informed the new Spanish minister, Senor Allendesalazar, of this, adding that the visit would be made 'with the greatest possible state', presumably as a reminder to the Spanish that they were expecting Alfonso to match the British effort.<sup>47</sup>

However, the Spanish were to have a further disappointment when they learned that Edward did not plan to come ashore at Cartagena. Bunsen used a line taken from Caballero about the need to defend Edward to break the news that the British understanding of a naval visit meant that the trip would take place entirely at sea.<sup>48</sup> This time, Bunsen did understand that this news would cause further displeasure in Spain. But for their part, the British remained confident that the vast display of British sea power would impress the Spaniards, who liked display. Bunsen noted: 'Spaniards liked pomp and ceremony, and a display of uniforms.'<sup>49</sup>

Although more enthusiastic about the state visit than Caballero had been, Allendesalazar was definitely unhappy that Edward would not step onto Spanish soil. Bunsen imparted this tactfully, saying that the new Spanish government 'expressed pleasure at the proposed royal visit and... offered [no] criticism except to express disappointment... at the intention of which I informed them, to abstain from any function on shore'.<sup>50</sup> Typically of the British attitude, Bunsen was quite dismissive of the Spanish reception of the proposed plans. He simply noted that 'This

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<sup>46</sup> TNA FO800/77/145, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

<sup>47</sup> TNA FO800/77/153, de Bunsen to Grey, 27 January 1907.

<sup>48</sup> TNA FO800/77/145, de Bunsen to Grey, 12 January 1907.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> TNA FO800/77/153, de Bunsen to Grey, 27 January 1907.



arrangement will very likely give rise to unfavourable comment when the time comes, but that cannot be helped. I have made it quite clear that there can be no landing.<sup>51</sup> But the Spanish government had two motivations for welcoming the prospect of a British state visit. Given that any Spanish regime was judged and criticised by its opponents on its foreign policy successes and failures, the honour of entertaining the British King in Madrid would have served to show republican opponents that Spain was still important on the international stage and, more, that it was on the road to regaining an appropriate international status. The second motivation was related to the state visit to be made to Spain by the Kaiser. Given that the Spanish state had now begun to align itself with the Entente Powers and away from Germany, it had no wish for the British state visit to be poorly received by the Spanish public. The fact that Edward would not be coming to Madrid was bad enough, but the fact that he would not even be landing was a problem for both of the Spanish motivations in welcoming Edward's visit. Instead of confirming Spain's significance, it would suggest that the British King did not see Spain as being important enough to make a landing essential. Further, the format would underline that Edward did not have the confidence in the Spanish infrastructure to protect him if he did – another blow to the integrity as well as the efficiency of the Spanish state machinery.

The level of Spanish government concern was displayed by the excuses that they started to make in the Spanish press. A fudging of the importance of the visit was one perspective they took. *Epoch*, for instance, printed an article informing the Spanish public that the only reason that Edward was not stepping onto Spanish soil was because of the Spanish Queen's ill health and that because of this, the British royals did not consider this to be a full state visit: 'King Edward and Queen Alexandra will not disembark, and all the functions will take place on board the Spanish or British ships of war', but it was not to be considered a reciprocal visit to any of the visits made by Alfonso to Britain when he was wooing his Queen.<sup>52</sup> When informing Grey of this article, Bunsen commented that, although he appreciated Spanish sensitivity on the issue, he was concerned about the way that the Spanish government, by way of excuse, was guaranteeing to the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> TNA FO800/77/171, Translated article from *Epoch*, 1 April 1907.

people that Edward would make a more extensive visit to Madrid the following year:

The Spaniards are sensitive on the point of the avoidance of Madrid, and that of the King not landing at Cartagena. The foreign minister thought he could explain matters without injuring Spanish pride by saying that as King Edward was unfortunately prevented by the Queen of Spain's condition from coming to Madrid this year.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Bunsen's warnings, the British government were still failing to appreciate that the Spanish would not be satisfied by a state visit that fell anything short of the style of visit undertaken at Rome or Paris. Edward himself did not intervene, as he had done over the visit to the Papacy, to insist that the shape of the visit be changed, indicating that this was a state visit in which Edward felt he had no personal interest. He was making it because his government was insisting on it, not because he felt that he could make a difference – or, possibly, that Anglo-Spanish relations were an important enough issue to warrant his involvement in British diplomacy on this front. Given that the Spanish had been part of a European diplomatic landscape where state visits had been a norm for some time, it is understandable that they appreciated the full implications of the format proposed for Edward's visit in a way that the less experienced British did not.<sup>54</sup> The British government were concerned only with what they believed would be its direct diplomatic consequences for them and the Entente, rather than realising the wider complexities of symbolic royal diplomacy. Consequently, the British government simply continued to shrug off Spanish media statements emanating from their government about a future state visit.<sup>55</sup> There was no consideration of any concession whereby Edward would at least land at Cartagena. Again, Edward himself, who was aware of these developments, was content to continue to take a back seat, instead of taking alarm as he had done at Rome.

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<sup>53</sup> TNA FO800/77/173, de Bunsen to Grey, 3 April 1907.

<sup>54</sup> Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>55</sup> TNA FO800/77/178, de Bunsen to Grey, 4 April 1907.

## The government agenda

British government objectives for this visit were directly political: Edward's visit was to facilitate an exchange of notes directly with the Spanish about policy in the Mediterranean. While the pretext used was that Edward was returning the Spanish King's 1905 state visit to Britain, the prime motivation for the British government was not using Edward's symbolic status as head of the British state and representative of the Entente Cordiale. To the British, the exchange of notes would happen between ministers upon the yachts, while the two kings conducted sufficient ceremony on the upper decks to satisfy any diplomatic requirements for a state visit.

The failure of the British – government and King – to comprehend the nuances of royal symbolism involved in all state visits is underlined by the comments of Charles Hardinge in his memoirs. He recorded knowing that the Spanish were made a secret offer by the German government regarding a ship construction treaty.<sup>56</sup> Although this offer had been turned down by the Spanish, it had alarmed the French into making the suggestion that the British and themselves should come to some understanding with the Spanish in order to guarantee each other's possessions.<sup>57</sup> Hardinge's comprehension of Edward's visit to Spain around this time was that it was simply a convenient opportunity for the British to pass on the notes prepared by the British government that would form a basis for this agreement.<sup>58</sup> There were other causes for diplomatic concern on the part of the British and the French at the same time. Both had become alarmed about the attempts of a German cable company, Feltern und Guilleaume, to persuade the Spanish to allow them to extend a cable to the Canary Islands, which would eventually lead to a German cable to South America and South Africa.<sup>55</sup> The British were also concerned to settle the issue of Gibraltar, given that the Spanish had constructed mortar batteries overlooking the Rock during the Spanish–American War, ostensibly in case the Americans used Gibraltar as a base for landings for a direct attack on Spain.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>56</sup> Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (1947) *Old Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner), p. 134.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> K.A. Hamilton (1990) *Bertie of Thame, Edwardian Ambassador* (Woodbridge: Boydell), p. 128.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

British had always disbelieved the claim, especially as their construction continued after the conclusion of peace negotiations.<sup>61</sup>

But while the British and French were interested in settling diplomatic differences with Spain, the negotiations were complicated by the tensions and suspicions that existed between all three. From Grey's correspondence, it becomes clear that his predecessor, Lansdowne, had (without authority) voiced thoughts about a potential understanding that could be reached with the Spanish, mainly concerning the security of Gibraltar being assured in exchange for British protection of Spanish islands.<sup>62</sup> This was not official policy, and Grey insisted that the British would not enter into any such proposal without the knowledge and approval of the French government, because of the existence of the Entente Cordiale.<sup>63</sup> The French had requested that any British agreements with Spain must be signed by all three powers as opposed to signing three consecutive separate treaties.<sup>64</sup> In 1906, the level of suspicion between all three was still strong, which complicated negotiations conducted purely by correspondence. The solution seemed to be the creation of a situation in which all three powers could be present at the same time to sign any needed documentation, and the best way to do this seemed to Grey and Bunsen to be the suggested state visit by the British monarch: 'It had doubtless occurred to you that, if anything is to be done a favourable opportunity for clinching the matter would be afforded by the King's visit.' It is a measure of how complicated the negotiations were that this comment was actually made when the change to Cartagena, rather than Cadiz, had already been made.<sup>65</sup>

While the inclusion of the formal exchange of notes was a late addition to the state visit's schedule, some level of using the royal visit to cloak behind-the-scenes British and Entente diplomatic negotiations had been an objective from the start.<sup>66</sup> In an indication that the British government was still failing to appreciate the potential of the royal contribution to successful British diplomacy, when the King requested that, as with Italy and France, Hardinge should accompany him on the visit to take notes, Grey was initially against this.<sup>67</sup> Edward insisted: 'In

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> TNA FO800/77/158, Edward Grey, 9 February 1907.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> TNA FO800/77/162, de Bunsen to Grey, 23 February 1907.

<sup>65</sup> TNA FO800/77/160, de Bunsen to Grey, 23 February 1907.

<sup>66</sup> Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame*, pp. 137–8.

<sup>67</sup> Hardinge's comments upon the Notes as well as the main text of the notes can be found in H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO), vol. 3: p. 18, nos 20 and 21, respectively.

view therefore of the advantages to the King & to the public service of a properly qualified Foreign Office official being present with the Sovereign when paying visits abroad the King insists that on such occasions he should be accompanied either by the Foreign Secretary or by an Under Sec[retar]y of the FO whom His Majesty will himself select.<sup>68</sup> The government backed down, and Hardinge was present at the meeting of the two sovereigns.

### **The virtual visit**

From the British government perspective, the state visit was initially considered to be a success. Travelling on the royal yacht, Edward and Alexandra were warmly received by their Spanish counterparts with lavish – if maritime – splendour. There was, however, relatively little attention paid to the visit by the British press, as no arrangements were made for them to view the spectacle presented by the naval manoeuvres and the elaborate uniforms donned by the two monarchs (King Alfonso in the dress of a British general; Edward in the uniform of his Spanish regiment), or the lavish dresses worn by Alexandra and the Spanish Queen Dowager.<sup>65</sup> One significant departure from the norm that Edward had established on his two previous state visits is of note. Both in informal visits, such as the visit to Hamburg highlighted at the start of the chapter, and in Italy and France, Edward had always prepared his own speeches, and had sometimes even spoken spontaneously without notes. However, upon hearing that the Spanish King would read a speech drafted for him, this time Hardinge wrote the King's speech and sent it back to Grey for approval: 'I hope that you will have approved the speech which I drew up for the King at the State banquet on the Spanish ship. As they gave me a copy of the speech which the King of Spain intended making I thought it safest that our King should read a speech prepared beforehand so that there should be no question later as to what had been said. The Spaniards were quite pleased with it.'<sup>70</sup> This may seem of little consequence, but in fact it shows the beginnings of government control over these royal events. As the Foreign Office now

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<sup>68</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/51/22, Sir Charles Hardinge to Sir Edward Grey, 17 February 1907.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Royal Visit to Spain', *The Times*, 9 April 1907.

<sup>70</sup> Cambridge University Library (henceforth CUL) Hardinge10/214, Hardinge to Grey, 10 April 1907.

saw the Spanish agreement effectively resting upon a successful state visit, they wanted to make sure that everything pointed towards it being a success, which included the King's speech. This was the first step in royal visits moving away from the central character and charm of the monarch as an individual, and into the realms of an official state function that is performed by the sovereign but orchestrated by the government, such as the state opening of Parliament.

However, to British government dismay, although initially pleased with the visit, the Spanish soon began to display a level of dissatisfaction that could, in fact, have been predicted had the British been better aware of the implications of royal state visits. It became plain that the Spanish people felt that the state visit of 1905 by their King to Britain had not yet been repaid by the British King. The British government had been confident that they had a grasp on what was important about a royal visit overseas, and had used Edward's reluctance to visit Madrid to develop the idea of a state visit as a naval trip in which the ceremonial could be done with minimum fuss. The Spanish reaction to Edward's visit to Cartagena, accompanied by the Royal Navy, showed that they were profoundly mistaken. As they had to learn, the absence of the King from Spanish soil had taken the heart and soul out of the visit in terms of the public reaction – and that, the British now learned, was the key part of a state visit.

Further proof of Spanish dissatisfaction is provided by the fact that Alfonso himself approached Edward about the possibility of his returning to Spain in a way that would better satisfy the Spanish popular appetite for a state visit: 'Your Majesty had always spoken very kindly of your desire to visit Madrid if circumstance permitted. His Majesty ventured to think that there was no time like the present.'<sup>71</sup> A measure of the importance attached to royal diplomacy by other European states is visible in Alfonso's attempts to reassure Edward of the measures taken for his security: 'Nothing need to be known of it till a day or two before. Absolute safety could be ensured. There is no Anarchist crime at present in Spain, the Barcelona bombs being a political device not directed against any person in particular. The Government in Office is a strong one & the necessary measures could be quickly taken.'<sup>72</sup> Alfonso's determination is explained by the need for his regime to make a gesture which

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<sup>71</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/32, Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Sir Arthur Davidson, 17 March 1908.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

would assure his subjects that Spain was well regarded by its Entente partners: 'The King feels nothing would so much tend to secure position of monarchy in Spain as a visit from Your Majesty at this time. His Majesty also says that public opinion continues to be very sensitive not regarding Carthagenia visit as being equivalent to a visit to the Capital.'<sup>72</sup> By this time, Edward had a better appreciation of the significance of his membership of the Trade Union of Kings, and his response to Alfonso was genuinely regretful. He explained that although nothing would please him more than coming to Spain for a state visit to Madrid, it would not be possible in 1908, as Edward already had three state visits in place for the following month.<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, Edward at least had learned from the public reaction to the Spanish visit. Certainly, he did not want to be involved in another event which would simply serve to disappoint Spanish feelings. As a result, Edward did not make the offer to meet Alfonso on the Spanish–French border, even though later that same year he (Edward) planned to cross into Spain briefly to visit the Spanish regiment of which he was colonel when he was in the South of France on his usual summer vacation. To have converted this brief visit to Spain into something more formal with an encounter between the two sovereigns would only have created another satellite form of state visit. Edward now realised that this would not be sufficient to meet the need in Spain itself that Alfonso was expressing: 'The King has felt very strongly that if the King of Spain visited him here [in France], or if they met at San Sebastian, it would certainly give rise to political gossip and insinuation, & for that reason he has not encouraged the idea.'<sup>75</sup> It was also added, closing the matter: 'The King hopes therefore that The King of Spain will look on the whole matter from his point of view & will understand why he is unable to meet his wishes and The King will understand The King of Spain not coming here.'<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

Another state visit by Edward to Spain was never achieved, as Edward's health – apart from anything else – did not permit it. But Bunsen did mention in his next dispatch to Grey that the King being in Spain

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/33, Sir Maurice de Bunsen, 17 March 1908.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

'gives great pleasure & satisfaction at Madrid',<sup>77</sup> perhaps suggesting that Edward's being in Spain at all was appreciated by the Spanish. There was a positive result from the naval state visit: Spain became a *de facto* member of the Entente Cordiale as a result of the exchange of notes made at Cartagena. This acted as a buffer to French influence in Morocco, and therefore the Mediterranean, and also reduced German influence in Madrid.<sup>78</sup> However, one of the more serious effects was psychological, which shows the significance of royal diplomacy in this period. The German Kaiser, although always keenly aware of his uncle's perceived actions against him and Germany, used this visit in particular for his first mention of Britain's policy of encirclement, which became close to an obsession in his memoirs.<sup>75</sup> The Kaiser's views were echoed by the German press, who also responded negatively: 'The Mediterranean agreements were portrayed in both the Austrian and the German press as yet another example of a policy designed in London with the purpose of containing and further isolating Germany.'<sup>80</sup>

Edward's unhappiness with the 1907 state visit to Spain is very revealing of how he and the Royal Household saw them at this point. After Spain, the Palace's perspective was that a royal visit should be made in a spirit of continuity with the two earlier successful visits made by Edward VII. The King should display himself as the persona and representation of the British Empire abroad. At one level, in paying his reciprocal visit to the King of Spain in 1907, he had merely engaged in appropriate royal diplomatic courtesies. But while his government – and Edward himself initially – had assumed that a gesture would be sufficient where there were other diplomatic priorities to justify the visit, Edward learned that more was required. Post 1907, the Palace expectation was that any state visit would include what was now seen by them as routine ceremonial for any overseas royal visit. Such events were now seen by the Royal Household as being as straightforward and almost mundane as planning for a regular state occasion such as the state opening of Parliament.

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<sup>77</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/X/22/39, Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Sir Arthur Davidson, 19 March 1908.

<sup>78</sup> See K.A. Hamilton (1977) 'Great Britain and France 1905–1911' in Hinsley, F.H. (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (London: Cambridge University Press), p. 119; an excellent summary of the exchange of notes can be found in Hamilton, 'Great Britain and France', pp. 142–3.

<sup>79</sup> Wilhelm II and Thomas Ybarra (1922) *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888–1918* (London: Harper and Brothers), p. 128.

<sup>80</sup> Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame*, p. 139.



The diplomatic niceties in relation to British foreign policy of the day were not part of the concerns of the Royal Household. The challenges of protocol between heads of state and the appropriate etiquette to be observed were their key concern.

It helped also that from this perspective, Edward himself was personally assured of his own international standing by this time. In terms of the visit to Spain, Edward had not been deeply involved because, from his perspective, there was no particular issue or crisis to be fixed, as had been the case with Italy and France. Thus, although it was an official visit, Edward had not passionately engaged with any particular outcome, which is why he did not resist government requests for particular perspectives to be put across in the pre-prepared speech that they provided for him to deliver. It is what this visit reveals about the attitude of the British government and, in particular, the Foreign Office in Whitehall that marks the most crucial aspect of this visit, and helps to explain why historians have generally seen it as a failure. To an extent it was, in that, even after the negative reactions, the British government still failed to comprehend the need to include the emotional and ceremonial aspects of royal visits. And they should have known better, as the Spanish government had explicitly informed them of their desire for this aspect to be a prominent part of the trip. It also failed because the British government did not foreground the public dimension of the royal contribution to the visit to help the efficiency of the behind-the-scenes negotiations by using the royal presence to flatter their hosts. Instead, they appeared to dismiss them. The British government, for its own foreign policy purposes, hijacked the idea of royal overseas state visits, but did so in a way that failed to engage the King personally. Once it had been decided by the government that Edward VII should visit Spain to represent not just the British monarchy but also the Entente between Britain and France, it would have made far better sense to try to engage Edward's personal interest. The government experimented with making a royal visit a political tool, but did so without understanding what had made Edward's visits to Italy and France successful. Edward himself, however, came to realise that his arrival with his fleet gave the impression that the state visit was not simply a display of ceremonial formalities. He and his courtiers now understood that in the context of a formal royal visit, the smallest of actions, such as the manner of a royal arrival, always had significant and unexpected consequences.

There was one other, unanticipated, consequence of the state visit to Spain. The realisation of the Entente as a three party institution led to a deterioration in Anglo-German relations. This had not been

the intention of either Edward or his government. On the subject of the accusations that his visit to Spain was a cleverly engineered plot to encircle Germany, Edward protested his innocence to the Prince of Wales in a series of letters commenting on how he was 'Innocent and ignorant of the charges'.<sup>81</sup> In the same letter, he also described the visit as a 'Quiet cruise in the Mediterranean & meeting the Kings of Spain and Italy on their coasts'.<sup>82</sup> The failure of the visit as a ceremonial royal occasion enabled Wilhelm to portray the visit as part of a devilish British plot, rather than being a piece of inept British royal diplomacy. This is an important aspect, because it underlines how the manner of the presentation of the King's person reflected Britain and its intentions abroad.

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<sup>81</sup> Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar*, p. 264.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

# 6

## The Diplomatic Margins: State Visits to Scandinavia

### Introduction

The inclusion of a whole chapter on Edward's Scandinavian tours in this volume may be surprising to readers accustomed to thinking of British diplomatic efforts in relation to the Great Powers as being more important than consideration of state visits to nations which were, in terms of their global status, minor powers.<sup>1</sup> Why have these not been included as a footnote or preliminary to another chapter dealing with one of the major flashpoints for British diplomacy in this period, rather like the private visit by Edward to Kiel Week in 1904? While Spain was also a peripheral power in many ways, it was important to British diplomacy because of the coincidence of imperial interests and, above all, because of Gibraltar. As the last chapter also highlighted, it was important because it was a state visit organised not by the King, but by the British government. The state visits to Scandinavia were not linked to any major piece of pre-war British diplomatic policy such as the Entente Cordiale or the Anglo-French agreement with Spain, so they have not drawn the attention of diplomatic historians. There was also no scandal or courtly intrigue linked to the Scandinavian enterprises, and so the interlude has not been of interest to Edward VII's biographers – at most, they simply acknowledge he went there.

The reason for inclusion of this quick succession of visits is because they do, in fact, demonstrate a key shift in attitudes towards Edward VII's diplomatic actions and assessments of the impact of formal royal

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<sup>1</sup> James Joll and Gordon Martel (2007) *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Pearson Education).

tours in ways that materially affected their subsequent development. It is impossible to appreciate the visits to Russia and Germany without an understanding of the importance of these apparently minor state visits. Most scholarship assesses Edward's visits to Germany, Italy and France in terms of the King pursuing a quintessentially Victorian line in his monarchical diplomatic practices.<sup>2</sup> What this chapter reveals is that the Scandinavian tour represents a new development, what may be termed the first example of a 'twentieth-century' style in royal visits. The Scandinavian visits are, therefore, the starting point for an understanding of modern British royal diplomacy. This was where the lessons learned by both the King and his government, in Italy, France and most tellingly in Spain, were put into practice. The Scandinavian visits need to be appreciated as representing a significant step on the transformational path for British royal diplomacy – from pomp with politics into symbolic royal diplomacy.<sup>3</sup>

The downplaying of the significance of the Scandinavian states by historians follows a line of reasoning pursued by many contemporary British politicians, such as Grey, who retrospectively paid little attention to the region in terms of the causation of the Great War.<sup>4</sup> The key event in the region in the early twentieth century was the split between Sweden and Norway, but this created no diplomatic incident, as it was all managed politely between the players involved. The Norwegian 'revolution' against Sweden was essentially conducted through democratic processes, rather than through public uprisings and protests involving destabilising violence.<sup>5</sup>

However, there is one area of the historical literature where Scandinavia did play an important role in European diplomatic relations of the

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<sup>2</sup> An examination of Paulmann's assessments of how royal diplomacy worked, in terms of the marriage between pomp and politics, fits nicely with the usual understanding of Edward VII's practices. See Paulmann Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime Und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh).

<sup>3</sup> The full transition would be perfected by George V and become a hallmark of the Windsor dynasty in world diplomacy.

<sup>4</sup> Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1925) *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916*, 2 vols (London: Hodder and Stoughton), 2: p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> For further detailed consideration, see Karen Larsen (1948) *A History of Norway* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen (2005) *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814–1914* (London: Pearson Education); Patrick Salmon (1997) *Scandinavia and the Great Powers 1890–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

time: looking at the relations between the European monarchs, notably Edward VII and the Kaiser. Brook Shepherd's work, in particular, puts a real emphasis on this aspect. For him, the competition between the King and the Kaiser over finding an appropriate figure for the new Norwegian throne in 1905 was something that exacerbated Wilhelm's hostility towards Edward VII.<sup>6</sup> Dispassionately, Wilhelm II could be said to have had the moral high ground on this question: his choice of candidate was, undoubtedly, the more logical choice. Edward's candidate was a sentimental and a very British interests-orientated choice. This was one of the few times when the Wilhelm–Edward dislike had a real impact on the diplomatic map of Europe, because it did ensure the establishment of a pro-British European monarch in Norway. But, as this chapter will show, there are problems in arguing that a period of tension in the private relationship between these two monarchs was something which then had the power to shape official diplomacy and foreign policy. The point is made again that their personal dislike was largely a personal affair.

Edward VII's 1908 Scandinavian tour included state visits to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Inspiring them, a direct line can be drawn between the Swedish–Norwegian constitutional 'crisis' of 1905 and the subsequent visits to affirm British interests in the region. These interests stemmed from Britain's relationship with its greatest nineteenth-century imperial rival, Russia, whose power (especially naval power) the British were consistently keen to keep in check, especially after Russia's occupation of Finland in 1809.<sup>7</sup> True, Russia had left this formerly Swedish territory (at least by Russian standards) fairly autonomous within the Empire.<sup>8</sup> However, events within Russia and shifts in Russian policy at the end of the nineteenth century had seen the Tsarist government making increasing attempts to crack down on that autonomy in order to bring it more strongly under central control from St Petersburg.<sup>9</sup> As Dominic Lieven reflects, 'Real trouble with Finland began when Petersburg imposed its own military conscription system on the Finns and sought to unify the Russian and Finnish armies.'<sup>10</sup> The Russian rationale behind this move was the fact that they needed troops for their Far Eastern

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1975) *Uncle of Europe* (London: Collins).

<sup>7</sup> This resulted in its becoming the Grand Duchy of Finland.

<sup>8</sup> Its autonomous status dated from the 1860s, when it had been permitted its own Parliament and its own currency (the mark or *markka*).

<sup>9</sup> A good outline of Russian policy in Finland can be found in Dominic Lieven (1993) *Nicholas II, Emperor of All the Russias* (London: BCA), pp. 86–7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

ambitions, but the brutality with which they cracked down on any opposition from the Finnish created alarm within the Baltic region. It was feared that Russia was once again planning a further expansion into Europe.<sup>11</sup> It was also assumed that this threat would become more real if Russia was thwarted in its eastern expansion – something which would largely happen as a result of British actions there.

### **The Swedish feel neglected by Britain**

From his base in the British Legation in Sweden, Sir Stephen Leech wrote about Swedish feelings towards Russia to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne: 'I gathered that Sweden had been deeply impressed by events in Finland and Russian policy there, and felt that if the result of the war (Russo-Jap) was to check Russian expansion in the Far East she could somehow return to expansion in the West at the expense of Scandinavia.'<sup>12</sup> In a second letter, Leech also reported that the Swedes were concerned that the British did not consider them to be important enough to worry about, even when they were under threat from Russia. For the Swedes, this attitude manifested itself in the ministers that the British appointed: 'He (the Swedish Minister) asked why England always seemed to look upon Sweden as of so little importance, and either send very old ministers here at the end of their career or those who were about to retire.'<sup>13</sup> This apparent neglect on the part of the British was substantially because the British saw no prospect of the Swedes aligning themselves with Russia. Leech attempted to shift this complacency in a third letter to Lansdowne, when he warned that the Swedish were, in fact, looking for alliances to protect themselves from external threats. 'There is', Leech observed, 'evidently some idea of Sweden, Norway and Denmark coming together in some way or another with a view to protecting themselves in the future.'<sup>14</sup>

The reason why Sweden was feeling so vulnerable in the early years of the twentieth century was because of the constitutional crisis that concluded with the ending of its constitutional union with Norway, in place since 1814. That union had initially been the result of a British diplomatic agreement by which the British had agreed 'To secure an

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<sup>11</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO800/122/48, Leech to Lansdowne, 26 August 1904.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> FO800/122/49, Leech to Lansdowne, 26 August 1904.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

alliance with Sweden, promising subsidiaries and support for the transfer of Norway from Denmark to Sweden in return for Swedish military action against the French in North Germany'.<sup>15</sup> With continuing international approval, the union had continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. The two nations had shared a monarch, but Norway had maintained many of its rights as a separate sovereign state. During the nineteenth century, however, the economic development of the two states had been very different. Norwegian trade, especially its merchant shipping, developed at a far faster pace than in Sweden. This meant it had increasingly different foreign policy objectives, yet its Foreign Ministry was completely in the hands of a Swedish King. While it was theoretically possible for both Norwegians and Swedes to become civil servants in the government (including the Foreign Ministry), the reality was that the national flavour of the government and civil service was essentially Swedish.<sup>16</sup> Leading Norwegians increasingly resented the fact that Norway's interests were not represented separately from those of Sweden in international conferences. This was underlined for them by the fact that their flag, and the symbolism it encapsulated, was also not publicly displayed at such events.<sup>17</sup>

Both nations were initially fearful of making too much of the dispute. Sweden, in particular, was, despite its many threats to do so, reluctant to use military action to put down unrest in Norway. It feared, for one thing, that Russia might use the dispute as a pretext for the occupation of Norway in the guise of peacekeeping.<sup>18</sup> But despite this, the rise of Norwegian nationalism towards the end of the century meant that the end of the arrangement was obviously in sight from at least the 1890s. However, when it came to what outsiders saw as an abrupt end in 1905, it was the speed with which it disintegrated that caused the most surprise in Europe when the situation came to a head in March 1905.

## **The Swedish/Norwegian split and its aftermath**

The Norwegians had prepared a Bill that foresaw the possibility of a separate Norwegian consular service that would operate separately from the

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<sup>15</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Larsen, *Norway*, pp. 485–6.

<sup>17</sup> This created a situation akin to the display of the English flag of St George at the UN to represent the whole UK.

<sup>18</sup> Larsen, *Norway*, p. 488.

Swedish one as a way of increasing Norway's own standing abroad. This idea was accompanied by articles being published in the foreign media, and circulated in foreign capitals, to gain international support for the Norwegian cause. London, in particular, showed a great sympathy for the Norwegian claims.<sup>15</sup> Despite a high level of foreign support, King Oscar of Sweden rejected the Bill by way of royal veto. This provoked a Norwegian vote of no confidence in him as monarch, which, to all practical intents and purposes, ended the union. As Larsen has commented, 'Oscar II had therefore ceased to be King of Norway, and thereby the union, which had existed by virtue of a common monarch, had come to an end.'<sup>20</sup>

The events of 1905 left Sweden significantly weaker, financially and politically, when compared with a year earlier. It was also an affront to Sweden's sense of self-esteem as a nation that it also had to watch Norway's political future, namely, its choice of a future king, being placed in the international arena as the courts of Europe brought forward their own candidates for the post. The original and most likely candidate for the job was a Bernadotte prince. This made sense to the Norwegian government and to many in the Swedish camp. It would have been a gesture indicating that they were not rejecting King Oscar personally; that they felt no personal ill-will towards him, and that this dissolution of the union was created solely by a desire to shape their own destiny. A king from the House of Bernadotte also meant that Norwegian links with Sweden would remain strong.

This prospect pleased many of the conservative states in Europe, in particular Russia and Germany, which felt it to be an acceptably suitable change to the status quo. However, when the idea was put to the popular vote, it was not met with much enthusiasm in Norway. The idea of a Bernadotte king seemed more appealing to watching nations than to the inhabitants of both Norway and Sweden, and so an alternative strategy had to be developed. Thinking dynastically, an alternative candidate would be a prince of Denmark. Rennell Rodd, in the Stockholm Legation, recalled King Edward being sounded out on this issue: 'His Majesty was invited for a Prince of his own house to be King of Norway.'<sup>21</sup> This enquiry put Edward at the centre of the international discussion, and his suggestion was a man who was already his

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>21</sup> Sir James Rennell Rodd (1925) *Social and Diplomatic Memories 1902–1919*, 3 vols (London: Edward Arnold), 3: p. 61.



son-in-law: Prince Charles (Carl) of Denmark.<sup>22</sup> Even without his father-in-law's endorsement, Prince Charles was, as a prince of Denmark, an obvious candidate. The idea of his becoming their monarch proved to be popularly acceptable to the Norwegians. While the Swedish government was less keen on the choice, because of the potential for stronger ties between Norway and Denmark, it had little power to block the Norwegian popular choice.

Essentially, the Swedes were worried that if the Danes and the Norwegians became too close diplomatically, Sweden would find itself isolated in the face of Russia.<sup>23</sup> The Danes, for their part, insisted that they were not interfering for their own interests but were merely acting to avoid a Norwegian republic. 'The Danish Government considered a Republic almost inevitable, and, according to Beliby Alston<sup>24</sup> of the Foreign Office, were in favour of sending Prince Charles to avoid one.'<sup>25</sup> But there was also the issue of Britain's apparent 'interference' in the matter. Edward's involvement deepened when the candidate himself stated that he would only take on the position of king if he had Edward's approval along with that of the King of Denmark. As Leech informed Lansdowne, 'G Charles has accepted, provided he has the approval of the King of Denmark and the King of England.'<sup>26</sup> In the same letter, Leech enquired whether it could be useful if Edward were to ask the Swedish monarch why they were taking so long to respond to the candidacy – he could be justified in doing so, given that the man was also his son-in-law. Also, it might better resolve the crisis caused by Sweden's reluctance to move on the candidacy, given that the question would be coming from Great Britain, which could be identified as an independent onlooker, rather than coming from Denmark on behalf of one of its own royals: 'King of Denmark is away, moreover at present Sweden is not over pleased with Denmark in some respects – such an enquiry would be far more influential coming from the K of England.'<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The details of Edward's relationship with Prince Charles/Carl can be found in Georgina Battiscombe (1969) *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable), p. 200.

<sup>23</sup> TNA FO800/122/72, Leech to Lansdowne, 2 June 1905.

<sup>24</sup> Assistant Clerk of the Foreign Office at the time of this quotation. His previous post had been Acting 3rd Secretary in the Diplomatic Service, 3rd British Legation Copenhagen.

<sup>25</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO), 8: document 82, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> TNA FO800/122/77, Leech to Knollys, 30 June 1905.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

## Edward's involvement in the affair

In fact, Edward's response, which came via Knollys, was effectively to state that he did not want to take a position on the candidacy publicly. Interestingly, given the extent to which some in his government felt that Edward was prone to acting too much on his own initiative, he said that he felt this would be diplomatically inappropriate: 'The King is not much inclined to say anything to the King or the Crown Prince of Sweden about Crown Prince Charles of Denmark's candidature for the throne of Norway.'<sup>22</sup> Edward was certainly aware of the need to propitiate Sweden at this juncture. Two months earlier, in his birthday honours, he had given the Crown Prince of Sweden the Order of Garter as a sign of friendship: 'The King has desired me to let Mr Balfour know that he thinks the Crown Prince of Sweden should have the Garter.'<sup>23</sup> While this was Edward taking a diplomatic initiative, he was also informing his government (and implicitly seeking their approval). Overall, it shows that Edward's understanding of the symbolic nature of royal diplomacy had advanced. He now perceived that a gesture of this nature could materially help the negotiations he was indirectly involved in. As such, it marks a further level in Edward's own comprehension of the impact of royal symbolism. He had made no gesture of a similar nature in Spain – though there was also a family link – and the repercussions of that visit were still lingering. In some ways, the gesture to the Crown Prince of Sweden suggests that Edward may have learned important personal lessons from the 'failed' Spanish trip.

Equally, Edward was showing himself willing to consult his government when developing his own diplomatic responses. In confirming his stance on his son-in-law's candidacy, he first elicited the 'official' position of his government before responding formally to Leech. In this letter, he confirmed that neither he nor the British government were willing to intervene officially: 'King Edward has stated that HM and the Queen would be glad to see Prince Charles and Princess Maud accept, if King Christian allows it. This was of course known to the British government, however King Edward did not wish in any way to interfere or to be officially associated with the matter, and the question must be treated as a Danish one.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> TNA FO800/122/84, British Legation, Copenhagen to Leech, 3 July 1905.

<sup>23</sup> British Library (henceforth BL) Add 49684/174, Knollys to Sanders, 31 May 1905.

<sup>30</sup> Lansdowne Papers/ FO800/122/88, Letter to Leech, 4 July 1905.

This provides an interesting insight into the way in which Edward was, in fact, perfectly prepared to operate as a royal diplomat. While Edward was officially distancing himself from the matter, privately he was actually encouraging his son-in-law to make himself King of Norway, even without the constitutional formalities of an election if the Swedish continued maintaining the delay. As Lee has pointed out, 'Edward VII repeatedly encouraged his son in law to proceed to Norway without a formal election.'<sup>31</sup> This showed that by this time, two separate aspects to Edward's royal diplomacy had developed. Publicly, he was prepared to consult with his government and adopt a stance in line with their thinking. Privately, he was still prepared to interfere where he could use family networks to do so without alerting his government. It was at this point that the Kaiser became involved in the matter, almost certainly in a mood of irritation at what he would have seen as a prime example of his uncle's 'arch-plotting'. Because Wilhelm also had a family connection, he would have known (if indirectly) exactly what Edward was up to privately and behind the scenes. Wilhelm had always been a supporter of a Bernadotte prince, but he also had other reasons to oppose the candidacy of Prince Charles/Carl.

The Kaiser had become, by this point, obsessed with what he liked to refer to as 'the encirclement of Germany'. The Spanish trip, despite its failure as a state visit, had convinced him that Edward had a core political ambition to obstruct German development in a way that was very personal, as he mentioned in his later memoirs.<sup>32</sup> It is fair to assume that it was in reaction to his uncle's supposedly anti-German policy that Wilhelm was motivated to write to the King of Sweden to express his support for Swedish opposition to Prince Charles' candidacy. When this equally private interference by Wilhelm became known in Britain, Edward was, ironically, angry at the temerity of his nephew doing pretty much what Edward himself was doing: taking advantage of the private network of royal connections to press a particular viewpoint. Edward's position was that he had officially maintained a neutral position on the whole issue, and yet Wilhelm was accusing Britain of favouring Norway in the matter: 'I fear the King will be perfectly furious with the German Emperor.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Larsen, *Norway*, p. 494; with further evidence of Edward's approval of his son-in-law as a candidate in Sydney Lee (1927) *King Edward VII. A Biography*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan), 2: pp. 316–18.

<sup>32</sup> Wilhelm II and Thomas Ybarra (1922) *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888–1918* (London: Harper and Brothers), p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> TNA FO800/122/109, Johnstone to Lansdowne, 23 July 1905.

Wilhelm justified his interference by letting it be known, publicly, that he was not advocating that a German prince should become the Norwegian monarch, but that he was opposed to Norway coming under British control via its choice of king:

The Emperor did not wish to be mixed up in the affairs of Norway and had no intention of offering them a German Prince. If a Prince of the House of Bernadotte was excluded it was natural a Danish Prince should be chosen – either Prince Waldermerer or Prince Charles, now Prince Charles has married an English Princess – was almost an Englishman himself and would be under the influence of England.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, Prince Charles was elected by the people of Norway to be their king, and he assumed the throne as King Haakon on 18 November 1905.

This left behind a feeling in Sweden that Wilhelm was right: that Britain had shown a significant preference for Norway and Denmark in the region. While there is no evidence to suggest that the Swedish government accepted the Kaiser's interpretation that British policy was rooted in a determination to encircle Germany, the Swedes did feel unfairly treated by the British.<sup>35</sup> But this was as much a continuation of their earlier feeling of being neglected by Britain as a reaction to the Kaiser's view of the reasons for their endorsement of Prince Charles for the Norwegian throne.

### Anglo-Swedish relations post 1905

In terms of the post-1905 diplomatic position in the Baltic, Britain's initial position was that there were no grounds for concern. Locally, although the Swedish and Norwegians possessed a treaty of neutrality, there was still tension between them, and this had an impact on Sweden's own diplomatic agenda. The resolution to this lay in an initiative taken by the Swedish monarchy. In seeking a diplomatic way forward, King Oscar's strategy was to resort to the tradition of royal diplomacy to resolve the tensions in the region. In line with the approach highlighted by Paulmann, his assumption was that a royal gesture could be used to improve relations between the two now separated states: 'The Crown Prince of Sweden immediately went to Copenhagen to be the first to congratulate the new king.'<sup>36</sup> This

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<sup>34</sup> FO800/122/112, Johnstone to Lansdowne, 23 July 1905.

<sup>35</sup> Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories*, p. 68.

underlines that the position of the Swedes was that royal diplomacy had a real impact, and that they took such gestures very seriously as a means to improve broader diplomatic relations. This needs to be appreciated as the framework to the context in which Edward VII's state visits to these three Scandinavian countries must be understood.

The perspective of many international onlookers was that it was the British who benefitted most from this turn of events in Scandinavia. As one American article commented, 'although the canal at Kiel<sup>37</sup> may serve a great purpose, the natural entrance and outlet to and from the North Sea and the Baltic lies between Denmark and Sweden with Norway looming up large on the horizon. A family alliance with Great Britain is no doubt a great protection.'<sup>38</sup> This illustrates how diplomatically important the Scandinavian countries were to Britain, and why the British would be reluctant to see their positive diplomatic relationship with Sweden damaged. While the relationship between the two royal families served to strengthen ties between Britain and Norway, it had, concomitantly, weakened the ties with Sweden. This cooling could potentially have undermined established British determination to keep Russia's presence in the Baltic to a minimum, as it left space for Sweden to become more friendly with its Russian neighbour.<sup>35</sup> And it could also be argued that thanks to the construction of the Kiel Canal, the British could no longer rely on dynastic links with Denmark to reduce the German presence in the Baltic. The reality was that with the German fleet able to bypass the Danish-dominated straits into the Baltic, Britain genuinely needed to strengthen, not weaken, its ties with all the Scandinavian nations, especially Sweden.

Even so, Grey was not particularly concerned about the state of Anglo-Swedish diplomatic relations.<sup>40</sup> However, while Grey was stating that the importance of these relations was trivial in the broad scheme of

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<sup>37</sup> The international implications of the Kiel Canal are discussed throughout Peter Padfield (2005) *The Great Naval Race, Anglo-German Naval Rivalry 1900–1914* (Edinburgh: Birlinn), with p. 133 dealing with its widening for larger ships, something which created the most concern for Britain.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Dissolution of the Union of Norway and Sweden', *American Journal of International Law*, April 1907, 1(2), p. 444.

<sup>39</sup> Alan Sweet, 'The Baltic in British Diplomacy before the War', *Historical Journal*, September 1970, 13(3), p. 452.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14; D.W. Sweet, 'Great Britain and Germany 1905–1911' in F.H. Hinsley (ed.) (1977) *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 224.

things,<sup>41</sup> Edward VII was busy planning a royal visit to the region, as he was personally eager to maintain Britain's relationships there and believed that a gesture by him could make a difference. Initially, this was planned by Edward on the basis of a series of royal visits that were ostensibly family visits. Due to the royal marriages of the last half century, the British royal family had long-standing links via Queen Alexandra, a Danish princess, to Denmark, which now included Norway.<sup>42</sup> It was substantially because of the links with Denmark that Grey became involved in reshaping the nature of Edward's planned royal tour of the region. Thanks to the political dimensions to Britain's close relationship with Denmark, in December 1907 Grey became concerned about suspicions that still continued between the three Scandinavian nations. He was informed by the Danes about ongoing negotiations between Russia, Germany and Sweden, which he realised would not be in British interests.<sup>43</sup> The main concern for the British was to restrict the Russians' influence in the Baltic. Traditionally, Britain had relied on Germany's support in this, because Germany had shared Britain's distrust of Russia, and also on Sweden's support, due to its fear of an expanding Russia.

### **The King's initial plans for a Scandinavian visit**

This new information about the development of a new relationship between these three presented Britain with a significant problem, and Grey realised that the key to resolving it in Britain's interest lay with the Swedes. But the long-standing consciousness of Britain's neglect of its relationship with Sweden, combined with the more recent conviction that the British favoured Denmark and Norway over Sweden, stood in the way of any resolution.<sup>44</sup> In early 1907, then, there was a real fear in Whitehall that the Swedish were now looking to Russia as their 'Great Power ally' instead. The formal diplomatic agreements covering the North Sea, including the Baltic, were also not going well for Britain,

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<sup>41</sup> Although it must be added that Grey had a habit of playing down events after they happened, which one can clearly see when one compares his language in his memoirs with his contemporary letters.

<sup>42</sup> Details of her heritage and what it meant diplomatically with her marriage to the Prince of Wales can be found in Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, chapters 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>43</sup> TNA FO800/45, Johnstone to Grey, 17 December 1907.

<sup>44</sup> Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, p. 59.

thanks to the poor state of relations with Germany; something that the King was informed of in early 1908.<sup>45</sup>

This information coincided with the plans being made by the King for his visit to Scandinavia – plans which included a possible visit to Sweden. Edward was actively in discussions with the new King of Sweden, Gustav V, about this when his Foreign Office alerted him to the danger of Germany and Russia coming together in the Baltic, with Swedish compliance. This implied nothing less than the exclusion of British political influence and naval power from the Baltic. Acting in concert, the two continental powers could dominate the Danish Straits and close them to the Royal Navy at will. Practically speaking, and despite the close family ties between the respective monarchs, the Scandinavian states would be wholly under the influence of Germany and Russia. British naval mastery outside the Baltic might even be outflanked by a Russian or German naval presence on the Norwegian coast, while the Royal Navy would be firmly kept out of the Baltic itself.<sup>46</sup>

As a result of the diplomatic manoeuvrings surrounding the North Sea and Baltic accords, Sweden found itself in the position of being between two rival blocks, creating a diplomatic situation in which the Swedish could link their interests with either block, excluding or including the British in the Baltic. Finally, the British realised that if they were to maintain their presence in this region, they would have to cultivate, instead of neglecting, the Swedes to prevent them feeling that, for instance, stronger ties with the Russians would be a more efficient way to preserve their independent sovereignty. Clearly, the British needed to rethink their Scandinavian diplomatic practices if they were to keep the Baltic open to their fleet. This would mean assuaging the resentment in Sweden at the presumed favouritism shown to Norway. Some in the Swedish government went so far as to label Britain as Norway's *de facto* protector.<sup>47</sup>

But, though there was a consciousness of the need to assuage Sweden's feelings of neglect, and though Edward himself was aware of this, it is interesting to note that neither the British government nor the Palace took the initiative in offering to visit Sweden. Instead, the invitation came from the Swedish end. In early 1908, Edward was planning a visit

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<sup>45</sup> Bodleian Library Oxford (henceforth BOD) MS Asquith 5/6, Asquith to Edward VII, February 1908.

<sup>46</sup> Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, p. 55; Sweet, 'The Baltic in British Diplomacy before the War', p. 466.

<sup>47</sup> Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, p. 58.

to his in-laws in Copenhagen and then to his son-in-law in Christiania as part of his summer tours that year. For Edward to visit both countries during the summer was not a new development; this time, however, the visits would take the form of an official state visit. Upon hearing that King Edward would be in the region, King Gustaf suggested to the British Legation in Sweden that perhaps Edward could also come to Sweden, stressing that it would greatly improve relations between the two nations. It is important to emphasise that the Legation wrote directly to the Palace, and not the Foreign Office. It was Knollys who was told that 'If however the King is willing to come to Stockholm this would be greatly appreciated and I am sure at the present time the visit would do a great deal of good.'<sup>48</sup>

This suggests that British diplomats in various embassies and legations still did not see a royal tour as a diplomatic gesture of interest to the Foreign Office, even after the successes that a visit had achieved in Paris in 1903. They did not point out directly to Grey the reality that Edward's visit to Norway would certainly have worsened Anglo-Swedish diplomatic relations by confirming Swedish beliefs in Britain's Norwegian preference. Edward's own preference for visiting the two states where he had family relations is understandable at one level, but it shows, even on his part, a lack of understanding of the importance of consistency in making royal gestures. It seems, in an overall survey of Edward's royal diplomacy, strange that he did not think about including Sweden in his original tour programme when, at the same time, the Swedes, from the King down, so clearly perceived the benefit to Anglo-Swedish relations of a visit by Edward to their country. But it underlines that Edward himself was not much of a diplomatic strategist, and needed to have the causes and consequences of actions pointed out to him. He had been aware, because of approaches made to him, of the importance of making a visit to the Vatican, and had insisted on its inclusion. Thanks to the instruction about Britain's diplomatic isolation and the need to end this which his political advisors had imparted, he appreciated the importance of the Entente Cordiale. But neither Grey nor Campbell-Bannerman had stressed to Edward that the Swedes needed to be appeased in order for the Anglo-Swedish diplomatic relationship to survive. He only became aware of this when directly approached, via Knollys, by the Legation.

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<sup>48</sup> BOD MS.DON.C.186.9, British Legation Stockholm to Knollys, 2 February 1908.



From the perspective of those in Sweden wishing to preserve the Anglo-Swedish relationship (substantially because of the entrenched fear of Russia), the most important thing to turn Swedish public opinion in favour of that strategy would be a gesture by the British to convince them that Britain did not have an unfair preference for Norway. It was for this reason that they also urged that any visit by Edward to Sweden should be made before he went on to visit Norway: 'That if possible a visit here before the visit to Norway would be what King Gustaf would prefer'.<sup>49</sup> This emphasises the importance of gestures within royal diplomacy. Effectively, Gustaf's message was that, quite simply, by visiting Sweden before its former partner, Swedish resentments would be significantly assuaged. If Sweden had its royal visit before its neighbours, this would be seen as granting Sweden appropriate prestige. But the British government failed to appreciate the nuances involved. Hardinge, for instance, argued that visiting Sweden must be a lower priority than the planned visit to Norway: 'There is no reason at all why the King should pay a visit to the King of Sweden except as a matter of courtesy when passing through Swedish territory'.<sup>50</sup>

The Swedes continued to urge not only the visit, but also that it should be as high-profile as possible. They were even prepared to make an exception to the formal mourning period for the death of King Oscar to promote this in an appropriately lavish manner, as befitting a royal visit from the King of a Great Power friend: 'that, if His Majesty should decide to come here under such very exceptional circumstances, while passing through Swedish territory, he would not wish his mourning to stand in the way of his showing His Majesty all the attention he could show'.<sup>51</sup> Convinced by these appeals from a fellow member of the Trade Union of Kings, Edward agreed to go to Sweden as part of his tour. He must have appreciated that the suspension of court mourning was a very substantial gesture being made in his direction by the new Swedish King, and decided to respond appropriately. He agreed to visit Sweden after his visit to Denmark, but before his visit to Norway. This met with a very positive response from the Swedes, especially the King himself:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/52/107, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 7 February 1908.

<sup>51</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/52/113, Sir Rennell Rodd to Lord Knollys, 12 February 1908.

'King Gustaf regards it under the circumstances as a most exceptional act of Kindness on the part of his majesty.'<sup>52</sup>

One local British diplomat, Rennell Rodd, added a cynical personal interpretation of the reasons for Sweden's gratefulness. He was convinced that it probably stemmed from fear of Russia: 'The attitude of Russia on the Baltic question has produced feeling of grave apprehension and depression here.'<sup>53</sup> In line with such cynicism, there was not universal support for the Swedish visit from the British government. Edward was, for instance, cautioned that such a visit might not be advisable, due to the recent royal assassination in Lisbon, where the King and Crown Prince of Portugal had both been killed.<sup>54</sup> Those opposed either to the whole visit, or to its coming before the visit to Norway, may well have remembered Edward's fears for his personal safety over the Spanish state visit and hoped that he would change his mind. Instead, the security concerns around royal visits were simply tightened, because – unlike with Spain – Edward now appreciated the point and purpose of the visit to Sweden and its potential for making a positive impact on his country's diplomatic position.

Rodd's letter did conclude on a positive note, stating his view that the visit would therefore be very influential in improving Anglo-Swedish relations: 'The compliment conveyed to this country by his majesty in paying a first visit here, would probably materially assist in putting public opinion right.'<sup>55</sup> This highlights the importance of such visits, as do the views expressed by Hardinge in a letter to Knollys of 14 March 1908. He wrote: 'I have said that it would in Grey's and my opinion be a great pity if the King's visit to Stockholm were to fall through since our relations with Sweden are now on the mend and it is very desirable that this improvement should be maintained. In this the King can help better than anybody else. I fear that the King will be annoyed at his plans being upset, but I hope that it may be possible to arrange something.'<sup>56</sup> The fact that the letter insisted that it was Edward, in his royal persona, who was best suited to resolve this issue underlines the new emphasis that European states were now placing on the resumption of royal diplomacy by the British.

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<sup>52</sup> MS.DON.C.186.9, Rennell Rodd to Knollys, 11 February 1908.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar, Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray, 2006), p. 265.

<sup>55</sup> BOD MS.DON.C.186.9, Rennell Rodd to Knollys, 11 February 1908.

<sup>56</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/25, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 14 March 1908.

## Edward announces he will visit Sweden first

With agreement in Britain on the issue of a visit to Sweden, Edward (rather than the Foreign Office) officially informed those in Stockholm that he would be visiting them before he came to Norway: 'I had a letter from the King last night in which he asked me to inform Nansen<sup>57</sup> and Herbert<sup>58</sup> of his change of plans in going to Stockholm before Christiania, and this I have done.'<sup>59</sup> However, within the Foreign Office itself, Hardinge at least had now changed his opinion about the value of the King's going to Sweden. Ten days after his dismissal of the visit, he wrote to Knollys: 'I am very glad to hear that the King has arranged to go to Stockholm, as from our point of view it is the most important of the three visits.'<sup>60</sup> This was certainly the view of those in the Legation.<sup>61</sup>

This information highlights several key points about Edwardian royal tours at this point, seven years into Edward's nine-year reign. The monarchies of mainland Europe unequivocally saw them as a necessity, because of their ability to create a positive popular feeling towards a useful diplomatic partner. All that was needed, as their experiences since the nineteenth century underlined, was a well-orchestrated visit where the monarch was visible, especially to the local media.<sup>62</sup> The British government, lacking this wider European experience of royal diplomacy in the last forty years of Victoria's reign, had developed a taste for diplomacy that was purely managed by governments. Despite previous experiences with the impact of Edward VII's royal diplomacy, their attitude to the idea of his visit to Sweden underlines that they had still not properly grasped the simple impact that a royal visit could have. The tour the British government had originally envisaged would have been a disaster for Britain because of the omission of Sweden. While British politicians finally accepted its usefulness, this was not until first the Swedes, and then the King, had insisted on its value.

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<sup>57</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian ambassador to London.

<sup>58</sup> Sir Arthur J. Herbert, G.C.V.O., British Minister to Norway.

<sup>59</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/34, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 19 March 1908.

<sup>60</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/30, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 17 March 1908.

<sup>61</sup> Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories*, p. 89.

<sup>62</sup> Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

## The aftermath of the visit

In retrospect, Edward's visit to Scandinavia was a great success. All the visits followed the usual format, with the King being greeted by the Kings of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, along with state banquets and various publicly staged entertainments, including a visit to the theatre on the second nights of these visits.<sup>63</sup> Two key events cemented the importance of these royal visits in terms of their impact on international diplomacy. One mainstream, but right-leaning, Danish newspaper, *The National Tidende*, praised Edward's visit to Denmark. Its laudatory rhetoric located this visit as yet another demonstration of the importance of the personal relationship between the British and Danish royal houses to the enduring friendship between the two nations, and a testament paid by the British to the significance of Denmark on the international diplomatic landscape:

Today is an occasion of festivity and rejoicing for the Danish people. From all circles of society will be extended a hearty 'Welcome' to Their Majesties King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra of Great Britain and Ireland. In every quarter which Their Britannic Majesties may visit during their stay in Denmark they will be afforded an opportunity of assuring themselves of the heartiness of the feelings with which our nation regards them personally, and the free and capable people whose exalted representatives they are.<sup>64</sup>

It is true that the radical Danish press was less enthusiastic about the diplomatic significance of the visit, stressing that it had no connection to any of the current international agreements that were occurring at the time:

It is rightly said that the visit has no connection with either the Baltic or the North Sea Agreements, or with Denmark's position between the two seas and the powers who have the military control of them. The visit raises no question, not does it seek to lay stress on any wish. Not even the close relationship between the Royal Houses of the

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<sup>63</sup> 'The King in Denmark', *The Times*, 22 April 1908; 'The King in Sweden', *The Times*, 28 April 1908; 'The King in Scandinavia', *The Times*, 30 April 1908.

<sup>64</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/52A, Article from Danish Paper 'Nationaltidende', 21 April 1908.

north and that of England need be brought forward as a motive for this journey.<sup>65</sup>

While this suggests that thinking in the radical element in Danish politics was more in line with that of the British government, it does also suggest that these radical organs of the press were still broadly positive about royal diplomacy as a phenomenon. If nothing else, comment on them (to praise or criticise) helped to sell newspapers.

From Denmark, which Edward was familiar with thanks to his regular private family visits there over the forty-odd years of his marriage, the royal party moved on to Sweden. It is important to note that it was unusual for Queen Alexandra to accompany Edward any further than Denmark when the royal couple left Britain for any summer visits. The tradition had become that the royal couple would both go to Copenhagen, where the Queen would remain with her family, while the King moved on with his royal tour. This meant that Alexandra had a polite excuse for not accompanying the King on his visits to his German relatives or to the spa towns he also now favoured. The fact that, on this occasion, Edward was to be accompanied by his Queen was carefully planned, since for her to have visited Denmark and then Norway to see her daughter, and not to have gone to Sweden, could have undermined the positive impact of Edward's presence there. Instead, her presence could be seen by the Swedish as an additional honour, given that she did not normally go on either private or state visits with her husband unless it was to her own family.<sup>66</sup> A note from Rodd to Grey reflecting on the Swedish visit emphasised that the official despatch 'at length' informing the Foreign Secretary of 'what a success the King's visit has been' was not just a formality: it was also Rodd's own opinion.<sup>67</sup> He informed Grey that 'The King has said the right thing to everybody.'<sup>68</sup> Once again, the King's talent for charming foreign dignitaries was a major factor in this exercise in royal diplomacy.<sup>69</sup> Once again,

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<sup>65</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/51, Article from Danish Paper 'Politiken', 21 April 1908.

<sup>66</sup> Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*. Alexandra's deafness led to an increasing disinclination to make such diplomatic efforts; and Edward was clearly happy to enjoy the greater freedom of being unaccompanied by his wife and rarely sought to persuade her otherwise.

<sup>67</sup> TNA FO 800/78/51, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 29 April 1908.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Details of whom the King met with in Sweden, along with background information, can be found at RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/62–63.

the local press was generally enthusiastic: the *Aftenosten* commented that 'King Edward's speech at the state banquet not only strengthened his world wide renown as a wise and tactful man, it showed us more. It showed us the ruler of the British Empire as a warm hearted man who has all the pleasure of a strong personality.'

This high praise of the King's abilities is, however, not the true measure of the importance of this visit. Its core significance lies in the fact that before it, the Swedes had considered themselves to be rated, in Britain's eyes, as a second-rank power; and that consequently they could not count on British support in the face of, for instance, Russian expansionism. Reinforcing this belief was the fact that, as well as the low quality of diplomat habitually occupying the Legation, they had had no particular reassurance from the British government that went beyond usual diplomatic rhetoric; combined with the fact that while Edward was regularly in the region, visiting nearby Denmark and Germany, he had yet to pay them any visit. However, the following article displays how this view had changed after Edward's state visit to the country:

During an interview I had with M. Lindman, the Prime Minister, His Excellency expressed his satisfaction at the successful visit of the King and Queen. Their Majesties had won the hearts of all during their short stay. With regard to the North Sea and Baltic Agreements, M. Lindman said they might be considered satisfactory. Their great importance as factors making for the preservation of peace would be universally recognised. It was a special cause for satisfaction, that the Scandinavian States had joined in the negotiations of a footing of complete equality with the Great Powers.<sup>70</sup>

Rodd's letter to Grey rather patronisingly agreed with the final point: 'It [the visit] had done them [the Baltic nations] good naturally in reinstating their self-esteem.'<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

This underlines that one aspect Edward comprehended, when it came to royal diplomacy, was that state visits to other European powers could

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<sup>70</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/52, Extract from Telegram to *Verdens Gang* from Stockholm, 28 April 1908.

<sup>71</sup> TNA FO800/78/51, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 29 April 1908.

be made without a clear diplomatic imperative, simply to display the diplomatic importance of such states to Britain. For Edward, at least, the lesson of Spain had been learned. Nothing of any policy significance occurred, and Edward VII himself made no major speech, as he had done in France or (arguably) in Spain. The state visits to the Scandinavian nations, especially Sweden, were purely ceremonial, characterised by splendidly visible ritual and the actual presence of the King onshore: something which could be lavishly covered by the local and the international (including the British) press. Everyone in the host nations saw the King. Interestingly, the impact on the British media, at least in terms of the politically significant titles such as *The Times*, was subdued. It was informative, rather than enthusiastic, and had little impact on the leaders, correspondence and opinion columns. It was left up to the less heavyweight tabloid titles like the *Daily Express* or the illustrated papers like *London Illustrated News* to depict the royal visits overseas, something which contrasts interestingly with the serious as well as favourable discussion of Edward's state visits in the European press. Does this perhaps give some insight into why British politicians were slower to recognise the positive diplomatic advantages of such tours?

The most significant thing about the tour to Scandinavia is the clear evidence it provides that a royal trip could have a political impact simply because the trip was delivered in a way that satisfied the host nation. Having not originally planned to go to Sweden at all, when Edward did yield to his fellow monarch's requests and go, he did so in a way that suggests he thoroughly appreciated the significance of small gestures which could be interpreted as having a greater significance than they actually had. Edward agreed to go to Sweden first, before visiting Norway. This turned out to be a hugely valuable gesture: witness the ending of Sweden's overtures towards Russia. The Swedes no longer felt isolated and overlooked, because Edward VII came to them even before visiting his own daughter in Norway. It also leaves open to question how far, in accepting that the visit would consist only of a ceremonial dimension, the British government had learned lessons from the unfortunate state visit to Spain. This will be explored further in relation to the visit to Russia, which followed on, pretty seamlessly, from the Scandinavian state visits.

One thing that this chapter has also underlined is the hidden diplomatic significance revealed through paying attention to royal visits as aspects of the overall diplomatic landscape. British diplomacy was more than the manifestation of state-originated foreign policy carried out by civil servants and diplomats. Here, Edward was deployed (or deployed

himself) as a diplomatic tool of the British state. This enabled Sweden, without any change in the formal foreign policy of either nation, to view itself as being of real importance to the British. Sweden was no longer a premier European power, and the loss of Norway in 1905 had further damaged Swedish self-esteem, but, insofar as royal diplomatic protocols went, they were being honoured at the same level and with the same serious ceremonials as nations such as France. In fact, the presence of Queen Alexandra meant that they could consider themselves as having enjoyed a higher level of royal ceremonial than had been offered to France or Italy.<sup>72</sup> Sweden could even pride itself that its neighbour, Germany, had not yet enjoyed such a visit. The Scandinavian state visits, notably the one to Sweden, represented a watershed in the development of royal trips, because they involved a foreign power asking for a visit to help rectify a domestic political issue, without any issue of a family relationship being involved. This showed an appreciation by fellow European monarchs, related or not, that British royal diplomacy was once more a factor on the European scene.

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<sup>72</sup> She had been on the royal yacht on the visit to Spain, but had not been visible to the Spanish public either.



# 7

## Dealing with the Great Bear: Edward VII's Visit to Russia

### Introduction

In the aftermath of the development of the Entente Cordiale, and other international developments, the British government was modifying its foreign policy in the direction of a new entente with the Tsarist state. For most of the nineteenth century, Russia had been seen as the greatest threat to Britain's imperial interests. In the post-'splendid isolation' diplomatic world with which this volume is concerned, Britain had been reconsidering its imperial over-stretch, and as a result, during 1907, Britain and Russia came to a series of diplomatic agreements. This took the shape of a substantial number of individual treaties dealing with a range of aspects of Anglo-Russian imperial tensions in regions stretching from Afghanistan to Persia. Effectively, it was the ending of the Great Game. The resulting Anglo-Russian Entente, similar to that Britain had with France and Spain, was more to do with a lessening of tension than with formal treaties, however. In this particular process, there seemed to be neither a role nor a need for royal diplomacy. The Anglo-Russian Entente was achieved without a state visit. However, in its aftermath, a state visit was made in 1908 by Edward VII to Russia, followed by a 1909 return formal visit by the Tsar to Britain. These visits are significant, especially the former, because of the further insight given into the pomp and ceremonial aspects of royal diplomacy.

Emphasis has been placed on the appreciation that Edward VII had shown, in the first seven years of his reign, of the ceremonial aspects of his encounters with his fellow royals. However, this cannot be taken too far. In Germany, he was consistently irritated by his nephew's insistence on rituals and protocol, and the public dimension in which these were

performed and reported via the German media.<sup>1</sup> He had been happier with the management of his state visits to France, and also to Italy and – most recently – to Scandinavia. When visiting France, Edward had been the only monarch involved, since France had become a republic. In Italy, as in Scandinavia, there was no long tradition of courtly formalities associated with ancient rituals and long-entrenched ceremonial court practices. While splendour had been appreciated, there had not been particular expectations of ostentatious display of royal status and privilege as being essential to the success of a royal visit.

The Italian visit had required ceremony, but there was no tradition to draw on, and thus it was a matter of creating (or inventing) new forms of ceremony to suit the delicate balance required to accompany a visit between a Protestant King and the Roman Catholic Pope within a wider state visit to a newly powerful but originally minor European ruling house (that of Savoy). While the Spanish visit would have required elaborate ceremonial and a careful consideration of the niceties had that visit been to Madrid itself, Edward VII had avoided this by staying aboard his yacht. Aboard his own royal vessel, he had been in charge of the ceremonial possible within the confined spaces of a yacht. However, the visit to the Romanov court involved a visit to a monarchy which enjoyed a sustained tradition of ceremonial practices governing monarch-to-monarch encounters dating back at least to Peter the Great.

## The Anglo-Russian entente

The Foreign Secretary from 1905, Sir Edward Grey, was responsible for advancing the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian Entente. Although the decision to pursue an agreement with Russia had actually been made as early as 1903, the negotiations were put on hold during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>2</sup> It seems possible that Edward himself may have sought to

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<sup>1</sup> If there is a monarchy which does conform to Hobsbawm's invention of tradition concept, it is the German monarchy post 1871. See, for example, John Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart (eds) (1982) *Kaiser Wilhelm II, New Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John Röhl (1999) *The Kaiser and his Court: Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John Röhl (2004) *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy, 1888–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, negotiations with Russia over issues to do with Britain's imperial tensions had to be suspended.

use his influence to urge the cause of peace on both Russia and Japan.<sup>3</sup> However, this author has yet to see any documents to support the idea that this supposed intervention amounted to more than a conventionally expressed desire for peace between two nations which Britain valued diplomatically. As part of the background to the interchange of state visits with Russia, the autocratic position that the Romanov rulers had enjoyed into the early twentieth century was being challenged internally. After the events of 1905, although the Tsar retained power, to keep it he was forced to call an elected *duma*, though this development actually increased Russia's internal difficulties rather than resolving them.<sup>4</sup> Thus, just as a post-Boer War Britain had seen the need to end its diplomatic isolation, a post-1905 Russia also was in a mood to re-evaluate its diplomatic situation, especially as it was now financially and militarily weaker and unable to carry out its previous foreign policy in the same manner.<sup>5</sup> For an over-stretched imperial Britain, as Grey realised, this provided the opportunity to resolve its outstanding issues with its former arch-rival.

During the course of the Russo-Japanese War, Lansdowne had gone so far as to request that the King write to the Tsar, to express his government's desire to open formal negotiations as soon as the war had reached its conclusion. Lansdowne had done this because he had recognised that, as a committed autocrat, the Tsar would only accept an invitation to negotiate from another king and not from a minister acting on his behalf. Edward had dutifully, and under advisement, written the following letter to his nephew. Despite the family connection, Edward had employed high diplomatic language, reminiscent of the rhetorical court language that Nicholas would be used to when discussing such matters. Edward had written:

My earnest desire, which I am convinced you will share, is that at the conclusion of the war, our two countries may come to a satisfactory conclusion regarding many difficult matters between us, and that a lasting agreement may be arrived at, similar to the one which we have lately concluded with France.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond A. Esthus (1981) 'Nicholas II and the Russo-Japanese War', *Russian Review* 40(4), pp. 396–411.

<sup>4</sup> Dominic Lieven (1993) *Nicholas II, Emperor of All the Russias* (London: BCA), p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Neilson (1995) *Britain and the Last Tsar, British Policy and Russia 1894–1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

<sup>6</sup> Oxford Bodleian Library (henceforth BOD) MS.DON.C.186, Edward VII to Nicholas II, 12 May 1904.

It is in marked contrast to letters between the two in the Royal Archives, which are couched in personal and affectionate terms, as one would expect between an uncle and nephew on good terms with each other. The importance of this distinction is that it underlines that, from the start, Edward knew when to use a formal approach and when to address Nicholas personally. This had been an occasion for the former. But after these opening diplomatic gambits, Edward had not been consulted over the shape of the agreements, apart from the customary notification in Cabinet minutes.

This lack of willingness by the British government to involve the King is interesting, given that the issue of Anglo-Russian relations was complicated by the efforts of Germany, through the Kaiser, to promote better Russo-German relations. For instance, Hardinge was keen to see Anglo-Russian negotiations because of his awareness of the Kaiser's meetings with both the Russian Imperial Minister, Alexander Isvolsky, and the Tsar.<sup>7</sup> Equally, though one of the first issues to be raised by the Russian side was to do with Persia, Edward was not foregrounded by the British. The Russian Foreign Minister enquired whether the British would be willing to undertake a joint expedition with Russia. This was a tricky area diplomatically, partly due to the proximity of Persia to India. Another complication was that when a similar arrangement to that being proposed for Persia had been made in China, the Russians had refused to leave. However, by the time Grey had become Foreign Secretary, he faced an alternative where Russia might have colluded with Germany, instead of Britain, to intervene in Persia. This would have both isolated Britain in the region and had wider implications for any Anglo-Russian entente.<sup>8</sup>

However, while Grey was engaging in these negotiations without requesting any input from the King, Edward VII took the initiative in becoming involved. As he was aware, British public opinion of Russia was nearing another low point, thanks to the way in which the British press had been covering the repressions of Tsarist Russia, especially after 1905.<sup>9</sup> Showing an understanding of how popular public opinion could

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<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Stieve (1926) *Isvolsky and the World War* (London: George Allen and Unwin), p. 11; George Monger (1976) *The End of Isolation. British Foreign Policy 1900–1907* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> British Library (henceforth BL) Add41218, Grey to Campbell Bannerman, 13 September 1906.

<sup>9</sup> See Lieven, *Nicholas II*.

affect government affairs, Edward went via his chosen Foreign Office confidant, Hardinge, to advise Campbell-Bannerman of his concerns:

The King fears that the false impression on Russian public opinion may endanger the good relations between the two countries, and impede the delicate diplomatic negotiations now in progress. His majesty thinks that some steps should be taken to dissociate publicly the Government from the demonstration.<sup>10</sup>

This clearly demonstrates that Edward was fully aware of Russian diplomatic sensitivities and the danger that negotiations might be called off by the Russians if they felt that the British government was anti-Russian because of its failure to tackle what they could easily interpret as an attack on Russia. Edward urged his Prime Minister to assure the Russians that such demonstrations of hostility were not a reflection of the British populace in general, but only of a small and radical minority. It underlines that Edward was well aware of the details of British diplomacy, and had his own methods of keeping himself informed, which did not simply rely on information passed to him by his ministers. As a result, Edward felt competent to advise his own government when he felt that they were missing a diplomatic trick.

### **Edward decides not to visit Russia**

Edward also had his own opinions on what was happening in other European nations, including Russia. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution in Russia, the new political landscape there was proving difficult for British diplomats to negotiate. Grey complained that he had no idea who he was supposed to be negotiating with when working to advance Anglo-Russian diplomatic issues.<sup>11</sup> As he commented wryly to the Prime Minister, 'It is impossible to know now what party or group will receive ... [letters] ... as they are all in chaos.'<sup>12</sup> At this stage, there was an attempt by his government to persuade the King to undertake a state visit – an attempt almost certainly inspired by recollections of the impact of the 1903 visit of King Edward to Paris. The personnel of the British government might have changed, but the memory had not faded

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<sup>10</sup> BL Add 41218/89, Hardinge to Campbell-Bannerman, 5 October 1906.

<sup>11</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 160.

<sup>12</sup> BL Add 41218/87, Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 6 October 1906.

of how the presence and charm of the King had helped to win over the minds of many hostile Frenchmen. This had also not been lost on the Russians. Consequently, supporters of an Anglo-Russian Entente from both sides approached Edward individually to try to persuade him into a state visit to Russia in order to show goodwill and British commitment: Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, and Grey, his Foreign Secretary. Interestingly, their suggestions of a state visit were not well received by the King himself, despite his interest in the cause of improving Anglo-Russian relations. What Edward understood was that while it might have a positive effect in Russia, the impact of such a visit in Britain would be very much the opposite. Though he had been annoyed about the Tsar's refusal to apologise for the sinking of British ships at Dogger Bank in 1904, as part of the Russo-Japanese War, the real issue for Edward was British popular hostility to the Tsar's treatment of dissidents in Russia, as encapsulated by his treatment of the new *duma*. By visiting an entirely unapologetic Tsar, Edward would be in danger of being understood by his own subjects to be condoning monarchical tyranny. It is a measure of the lack of confidence between the King and his government at this point that instead of pointing this out, he resorted to giving another, official excuse for what he insisted was the impossibility of a visit: that it would upset the German Kaiser, who had been complaining for some time about the lack of state visits to Germany.<sup>13</sup> But the transparency of this excuse is shown by the fact that when Edward became convinced that a state visit to Russia could be organised without consequences for his own standing with the British public, he had no problem with going there without arranging a visit to Germany.

Edward was clearly very conscious by this time of his own self-image in the context of the royal diplomatic landscape. After the triumph of the Entente Cordiale with France, he had gained a reputation with the European, not just the British, public as a man who built alliances. He had no intention of endangering this, especially in the aftermath of his apparent 'failure' in Spain.<sup>14</sup> Edward's view was that for all his closeness to his nephew, and for all his support of the broad idea of settling tensions with Russia, the differences between the two countries were too vast for a successful diplomatic outcome at this point. Consequently, he wished to avoid being associated with it, in a way that suggests just how

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<sup>13</sup> Sidney Lee (1927) *Edward VII. A Biography* (New York: Macmillan), p. 565.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

complicated Edward's own attitude towards royal diplomacy was by this time. According to Lee, 'He was doubtful... whether the meeting would be successful, in which case, as Hardinge pointed out, the King's name and his visit would be connected with a failure.'<sup>15</sup>

Had Grey received a positive answer from Edward, he could almost certainly have persuaded Campbell-Bannerman and the rest of the Cabinet to accept a state visit to Russia by the King. However, neither Grey nor any other British politician tried to make Edward change his mind. Instead, the British government fell back on the same tactic they were to use in Spain when the King proved difficult: they offered to send a British naval squadron to Russia as a diplomatic gesture. This offer was turned down by the Tsar. Tellingly, Nicholas did not respond directly to the government but, instead, to his uncle. The Tsar told the King: 'To have to receive foreign guests when one's country is in a state of acute unrest is more than painful and inappropriate.'<sup>16</sup> Nicholas effectively rescued Edward from a stand-off with his own government through this reaction, and in the period before the eventual signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, a state visit by Edward did not reappear on the government agenda.

### **The second attempt at a visit**

It was only in the aftermath of the conclusion of Britain's agreement with Russia, on 31 August 1907, that the issue of Edward visiting Russia once again came to the fore. The reality was that despite coming to an agreement, the British as a whole remained deeply suspicious of Russian foreign policy and the overall stability of the Tsarist regime.<sup>17</sup> At some point, Edward had made at least an implicit promise to his nephew that, when the situation permitted, he would make a state visit to Russia. One to celebrate an already achieved diplomatic milestone was intrinsically less sensitive than one to facilitate such a development. Also, Edward's reputation for diplomacy in his country's interest suffered a blow in 1908, which put pressure on him to restore his standing as the best public face for Britain's diplomacy.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 565.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, *Edward VII*, p. 565.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, the opposing views of Hardinge and Esher on the likelihood of the success of the Entente: The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO800/341/4, Hardinge to Nicolson, 7 January 1908; Churchill Archives Centre (henceforth CAC) ESHR 5/26, Maleson to Esher, 19 March 1908.

In early 1908, his Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, had resigned due to ill health and Asquith had been appointed his successor. When this transition occurred, Edward was himself out of the country – officially on holiday in Biarritz, on his yacht. He refused to return to Britain to accept Campbell-Bannerman's resignation formally and then oversee the political process of succession by Asquith, including the required formality of having Asquith kiss the King's hand as his new Prime Minister. Normally, such constitutional niceties took place at Buckingham Palace, though Windsor Castle or the Palace of Holyrood would also have been an acceptable venue. This aspect of constitutional ceremonial was considered so essential that in the end, Asquith had to travel to Biarritz to find the King in order to go through this ceremonial performance. Several biographers of both the King and his new Prime Minister, as well as the memoirs of those closest to the two men, comment on this episode.<sup>14</sup> They all agree that Edward's absence in Biarritz was not a demonstration of royal laziness and self-indulgence by the King. It was a matter of his health.

By 1908 the King had horrific breathing difficulties, and the trip was on doctor's orders. But as Edward's illness was kept a secret from his subjects, in order to allay popular fears at a time of international tension, the conclusion reached by his subjects was that the King's refusal to return to Britain to perform his duties was for unworthy reasons, such as a return of the supposed laziness and hedonism which had been part of his identity when Prince of Wales.<sup>15</sup> Radical and moderate elements of the British press attacked the King directly, asking why British taxpayers were paying for a King who would not even carry out his basic constitutional duty. Esher commented on this in his journal: 'The papers, or rather some of them have been for the first time in his reign, attacking the King for dereliction of duty. It was a mistake on his part not to break away from his Biarritz set, and return immediately he knew of CB's resignation. However, it will blow over.'<sup>16</sup> Edward learned from this that, in the eyes of his country's press, ill health was unlikely to be considered a good excuse for any further attempts by Edward to claim he was too

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<sup>14</sup> Most prominent among Edward's biographers on this are Sidney Lee and Christopher Hibbert, but see also Sir Frederick Ponsonby (1951) *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode).

<sup>15</sup> A full account of Edward's exact medical condition and the extent of the public's knowledge of it can be found in 'The death of King Edward', *British Medical Journal*, 14 May 1910, 2576, pp. 1183–6.

<sup>16</sup> CAC ESHR/2/11/110, Esher Journal, 15 April 1908.



unwell to undertake royal duties on behalf of his country. It was also an irony that the media titles which had been most critical of Tsarist policy, and would have most strongly decried a visit by Edward to Russia, were those which, in the public lifetime of this episode, were the most vocal in attacking Edward for his dereliction of duty.

This provides the background to Edward's now being prepared to entertain the idea of a state visit to Russia. His government had been discussing the matter as early as February, however, with the British ambassador to Russia, Arthur Nicolson, taking a lead and so emphasising the diplomatic dimensions to the event. As with Spain, the issue of royal security was at the forefront of all of these conversations and correspondence. There had, after all, been a number of high-profile assassinations in Russia recently and Edward, as a king and a relative of the Tsar, was thought to be a prime target. Hardinge explained to Nicolson that the prospect of the visit must be kept as secret as possible and that none of the arrangements must be made public until the last possible minute, to reduce the chances of any radical parties in Russia having time to plot Edward's assassination.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the idea of once again using the royal yacht was raised early, despite the perception of how poorly the virtual state visit to Spain had gone.

Hardinge told Knollys that he liked the idea of a yacht visit, which suggests that Edward was also happy to consider a strategy which would mean that he did not have to set foot on mainland Russia: 'I think', he said, 'a yacht visit to Reval is very desirable, but I do not like at all the idea of a visit to Peterhof.'<sup>22</sup> Hardinge disliked the idea of a visit to the spectacular royal palace at Peterhof because of the proximity of the Port of Peterhof to St Petersburg itself. This had the potential to raise questions about why Edward did not go from there to the capital: 'If the King went to Peterhof I do not see how he could avoid going to St Petersburg without incurring the imputation of being afraid.'<sup>23</sup> The idea that the Tsar would (unlike the King of Spain) be genuinely happy to organise a virtual visit came via the British Embassy in St Petersburg, rather than from within Britain. It was in Hardinge's discussions with O'Beirne, one of the Embassy staff, that the latter 'expressed the opinion that the Emperor would welcome the idea of a yacht visit to Reval as involving

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<sup>21</sup> TNA FO800/341/25, Hardinge to Nicolson, 19 February 1908.

<sup>22</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/52/118, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 16 February 1908.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

no risk and requiring no extravagant measures of precaution'.<sup>24</sup> From the government's point of view, what was important for the British public was seeing lots of pictures of King and Tsar together in the press, pictures which could just as easily be taken from the safety of a yacht as onshore. The other factor that led the government to agree to another shipboard state visit was its eagerness to avoid state visits having any political significance that they could not control. If the King had gone to St Petersburg, he might have been used as a political tool to shore up the credibility of the Russian government.

However, even as details of the possible location of the visit were being discussed, problems within Russia were beginning to make the prospect of the visit seem impossible. Riots in Finland (uncomfortably close to Reval) had just been brutally repressed by the Russian government, for a start.<sup>25</sup> At the British end, Grey was concerned that if the situation in Russia got out of hand, the visit would become impossible because, once again, the King's presence could be taken as a sign that the King, and through him the British government, was condoning the repressive policies of the Tsarist government. The issue was how this would be perceived in Britain, rather than in Russia, where press censorship was still powerful. Grey told Nicolson:

I am anxious about the reports that reactionary policy may get the upper hand in Russia. If Finland is badly treated, or if there are more 'pogroms', public opinion here will be very adversely affected, and make it quite impossible for the King to arrange a meeting with the Tsar, (a meeting which I should like, but which I hardly dare suggest while the prospects of Russian internal policy are so ominous).<sup>26</sup>

The Anglo-Russian Entente was fraught with political difficulties for the British government, as well as for Edward himself.<sup>27</sup>

However, the Russian government remained enthusiastic about a state visit by the British King, and constantly enquired about it through official government channels. They were disheartened when they got no response. This is almost certainly why the Russians resorted to a version

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Brems (1971) 'Great-Power Tension and Economic Evolution in Finland since 1809', *Journal of Economic Issues*, 5(4), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> TNA FO800/341/31, Grey to Nicolson, 24 February 1908.

<sup>27</sup> Zara S. Steiner (1986) *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898–1914* (London: Ashfield Press).

of monarch-to-monarch contact – this time it was not the Tsar enquiring of the King what was going on, however. Instead, the Tsar's deputy, in the shape of his ambassador to the Court of St James, Benckendorff, approached the heir to the throne, George. The British government were irritated at this side-stepping of what they saw as the usual diplomatic protocols. Hardinge complained to Nicolson: 'Benckendorff has been very tiresome here about the idea of the King's visit to Russia. Apparently he has been fretting that the subject has not been mentioned of late. He consequently got hold of the Prince of Wales and asked him to ask the King to pay the Emperor a visit.'<sup>28</sup>

However, the extent to which the Tsar was directly involved in this approach is debatable, especially since Benckendorff himself was pushing the idea that Edward should come to Peterhof, while the Tsar seemed quite content with a Reval meeting. This reflects the disorganised nature of the Tsarist regime, as well as the uneasiness over such contacts with the British. But the uncertainties of March passed, and on 13 April, the British government was satisfied that events in Russia were sufficiently calm for it to be possible for the visit to take place without arousing too much ire in the British press. But in moving the possibility of the state visit forward, it was now Edward himself who was taking the initiative and urging the visit on the government, and not the other way around. In a crucial letter, Hardinge informed Nicolson that the Russians were still keen on the idea, and added that he had insisted to Grey that the visit must take place soon, if it were to go ahead.<sup>29</sup> This letter displays the extent to which Edward was now at the forefront of organising the details of the visit, and also that – as on previous occasions when he had done this – he was reserving to himself a final say on those details: 'But nothing could possibly be settled until the King returns in May.'<sup>30</sup>

The Tsar himself had been out of Russia, which meant that there were grounds for anticipating that many of the domestic issues that Edward had been careful not to associate himself with would have cooled down in Nicholas' absence, resulting in a lower possibility that the visit would be associated with any Russian political difficulties: 'There is no prospect of any attack upon the Duma and Finland will probably be quiet until the elections in the Autumn.'<sup>31</sup> However, if Edward wanted to meet with the

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<sup>28</sup> TNA FO800/341/48, Hardinge to Nicolson, 3 March 1908.

<sup>29</sup> TNA FO800/341/75, Hardinge to Nicolson, 13 April 1908.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Tsar in the secure location of Reval, the two men would have to coincide as Nicholas returned from his own naval tour in the Russian royal yacht. Leaving the visit until Nicholas had returned to the capital would have raised questions as to why Edward did not visit the Emperor there: 'The visit has to be done sometime soon as if it does not take place at Reval it may have to take place later at St P.'<sup>32</sup> Tellingly, the letter concluded by stating that although all the diplomatic negotiations for the entente were already in place, a royal visit was still crucial to any sustained Anglo-Russian Entente: 'The visit of the King is necessary to cement the friendships.'<sup>33</sup> Timing and location now seemed right for the British end (King and government) but from the government side, Grey suggested that the Tsar be asked unofficially what he thought of the British plans before the visit was officially proposed, to spare the embarrassment of the visit being rejected. Even so, Grey sought Edward's agreement for this strategy rather than going ahead independently, underlining the extent to which the King was by now taking the lead with this visit: 'If the King approves, I will send a telegram to Beirne instructing him to ascertain through Isvolsky whether it would be agreeable to the Czar if the King proposed to visit him at Reval.'<sup>34</sup>

Grey also suggested that the matter needed to be sorted out quickly before any further developments in Russia could happen after the Tsar's return there which could hinder the visit: 'I am suggesting this preliminary step in order to save time, as the King would probably like to send a letter to the Czar by next week's messenger.'<sup>35</sup> This provides a good example of how the British institution of monarchy in the twentieth century operated in conjunction with the executive. The final communication between sovereigns was understood by government as representing the last step in negotiations, placing any visit on an official basis, with government ministers such as Grey having previously undertaken the finer diplomatic points of the negotiations, including ensuring via ministers that the fellow sovereign was responsive to a formal visit. Bolstering such an understanding of how the diplomatic formalities worked, in the case of the Russian visit, Knollys told Grey: 'The King quite approves of you sending a telegram to O'Beirne to instruct him to ascertain if it would be agreeable to the Russian Emperor that HM would

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> TNA FO800/103/107, Grey to Knollys, 6 May 1908.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

visit him at Reval, arriving there on 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> June, and the King adds the sooner this is done the better.<sup>36</sup> However, as the previous chapters have shown, along with the discussions earlier in this chapter, the realities of monarch-to-monarch contact in the context of framing a political negotiation between ministers was more complex. Edward, when he was interested in a visit, took as much control as he could, and was certainly prepared to bypass his ministers and have direct contact either with British Embassy staff whom he knew and liked, such as Rennell Rodd and Bertie, or with the monarch in question, especially as this could be done via private family correspondence. This is why the use of the Royal Archives has been so important to this study.

Once the date and location of the visit had been confirmed, the Palace began to finalise details, with Edward's security within Russia remaining the top priority for all those involved, as is evident from the following. It was decided that the proposed visit would be kept as secret as possible until the last possible moment so that no extreme groups would have sufficient planning time to use the visit as an opportunity to assassinate the King. Hardinge in particular made sure that the proposed visit did not become drawing-room gossip, threatening that if the prospect of the visit became too well known it would be called off. He told Knollys: 'I quite agree that both Fisher<sup>37</sup> & Benckendorff were very officious but I frightened the latter by saying that if the visit became prematurely the subject of discussion it would certainly never take place.'<sup>38</sup>

## **The visit is announced to the commons**

It was not until June that Grey announced the visit to the House of Commons. He had expected a great deal of opposition from both sides of the House, and his speech must be understood as defensive from the start. He claimed that the visit 'should have an effect beneficial on the relations between the two countries'.<sup>35</sup> Grey added:

Objection is taken on the ground that so long as the internal affairs of Russia do not have the approval of those who object, Russia should

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<sup>36</sup> TNA FO800/103/108, Knollys to Grey, 8 May 1908.

<sup>37</sup> Admiral John (Jackie) Fisher, First Sea Lord.

<sup>38</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/41, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 31 March 1908.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Grey (1931) *Speeches on Foreign Affairs 1904–1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin), p. 93.

be kept at arm's-length 'boycotted' I think was the term which has been used this afternoon and that there should be neither visit nor Convention. The consequences of such a policy as that must be disastrous to both countries. Do you suppose that if you adopt a policy of that kind, a policy of standing aloof, and refusing to discuss or recognise the Russian government at all, until you are satisfied with the condition of its internal affairs, do you suppose you can order events to stand still while you are doing that?<sup>40</sup>

However, as Grey later wrote to Knollys,

The debate about the visit was less disagreeable than was expected. O'Grady and Keir Hardie both spoke with good feeling as far as the King personally was concerned, and not only accepted but emphasised the statement that the government was responsible: which is in accordance both with constitutional practise and with the facts of the case.<sup>41</sup>

Where Grey did encounter strong opposition from the House, however, was over the announcement that the King did not wish to take a Cabinet minister and preferred to take only Hardinge with him. This, the House felt, was inappropriate for such an important meeting – a demonstration that politicians more widely (but especially those on the left) were not happy to leave royal diplomacy entirely unsupervised.

This was an issue that had been raised by opposition politicians and back-benchers in relation to previous state visits, but the level of opposition this time was so high that the government had to take particular note of it. As Hardinge wrote to Knollys on 30 May,

I hear that the question of my going with the King was brought before the Cabinet two days ago, & I believe by Carrington. Grey took the line that the King does not want to take a Cabinet Minister, & that the old idea that a Cabinet Minister should be present at interviews between the King & foreign Sovereigns or ministers is absurd & out of date.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4.

<sup>41</sup> TNA FO800/103/111, Grey to Knollys, 4 June 1908; Keir Hardie was leader of the Labour Party 1906–1908 and MP for Merthyr Tydfil; James O'Grady was Labour MP for Leeds East.

<sup>42</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/95, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 30 May 1908.

The debate was not confined to formal parliamentary debates and Cabinet discussions, but entered wider conversations about British diplomacy and best practice. One of Edward's leading courtiers, Lord Esher, recorded in his diary for 30 May that he had had conversed on the matter with the leader of the opposition, Balfour, who was certainly unhappy with the idea that the King would not be accompanied by a senior politician rather than just a senior civil servant: 'I discussed with him [Balfour] the King's Russian visit. He sees the constitutional impropriety of the King meeting with Isvolsky and Stolypin unaccompanied by Grey. He thought of writing privately to Grey before the debate on Thursday.'<sup>43</sup> This entry clearly illustrates the fact that for British politicians, the key objection to the King taking only Hardinge to Russia was not fear that Edward might say something inappropriate to the Tsar, but, rather, that the Tsar would be accompanied by his equivalents to the senior elected officials in the British government: the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.

There was almost certainly concern that reports of the meetings in the British media would be highly critical of the fact that a man labelled a despot in the British press was still accompanied by 'elected' advisors, while the constitutional King of Great Britain went with only a civil servant, and no elected politicians in his entourage. One could say that this gives an insight into how seriously the British government took exchanges between sovereigns when they were understood simply on that basis, rather than as state visits. However, when it became public knowledge that the King would also be meeting foreign politicians, they did become alarmed. It is a measure of the extent to which Edward was ultimately in charge of the dimensions of state visits up to this point that, despite such widely expressed concerns from his government, Edward was able to get his way. Hardinge told Knollys: 'I told Grey this morning of the King's wish that he should make it quite clear in his speech on Thursday that in going to Reval, His Majesty is acting on the advice and by the wish of his Ministers.'<sup>44</sup>

## **Edward VII and the Rothschilds**

With this in mind, Edward's reaction to a petition from his friends the Rothschilds is extremely informative. The King was certainly prepared

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<sup>43</sup> CAC ESHR 2/11/132, Esher Journal, 30 May 1908.

<sup>44</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/96, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Knollys, 2 June 1908.

to 'meddle', or intervene to ensure a particular diplomatic outcome, during his state visits – especially when he believed his political advisors in the government were pursuing a mistaken course. He had demonstrated this in Italy, when he insisted on overriding the government's wishes and going ahead with plans to visit Leo XIII. However, whenever he had taken such initiatives on his own account, he had done so with the good of his country in mind and believed that he was working constitutionally in so doing, such as when he had refused to speak politics with the Kaiser on his visits to Germany in 1901 without being duly briefed by his government. The Rothschilds were long-standing personal friends, as he had been at Cambridge with the three brothers, Nathaniel, Alfred and Leopold.<sup>45</sup> His good relationship with them there had been sustained afterwards: 'The Prince shot (and danced) with the family, themselves frequent guests at Sandringham.'<sup>46</sup> The exact nature of the relationship has been much debated by historians working on Victorian and Edwardian elites. Some, such as Allfrey, have suggested that in the drawing rooms of Tring, and when as Prince of Wales he had been excluded by his mother from formal involvement in affairs of state, Edward would instead sound out the Rothschilds for advice on political matters. Hibbert, however, insists that the friendship was only social, and that even before he came to the throne, Edward had never trusted them with any political matters.<sup>47</sup> This is not, of course, to say that the Rothschilds did not hope that their connection with him would have positive results for them, and that they could at least claim to have an informal and personal relationship with the King.

In general terms, it had long been the aim of the Rothschild family to use their influence to help the advancement of Jews wherever possible. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they were concerned about the position of Jews in Russia. Government policy there was clearly anti-Semitic, with an objective of ridding Russia of what politicians and elites saw as a radical Jewish influence disturbing the wider Russian populace. It was assumed by the Rothschilds, and another contemporary, Israel Friedlaender, that this treatment of the Jews was fuelled as much by anti-Semitic attitudes as it was by genuine fear of an uprising. Even the Tsar himself, who,

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<sup>45</sup> Anthony Allfrey (1991) *Edward VII and His Jewish Court* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII. The Last Victorian King* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).



despite his repressive regime, genuinely wanted the best for his people, was known not to be favourably disposed towards his Jewish subjects.<sup>48</sup> Leaders amongst Russian Jewry regularly appealed to any important friends they had in foreign countries, and this included the Rothschilds, who constituted the most significant elite Jewish family in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

Upon hearing that Edward was going to Russia, the Rothschild brothers took it upon themselves to write to the King to appeal to him to intervene with the Tsar on behalf of his Jewish subjects, but it was a formal and not a personal letter: 'We have ventured to write to Your Majesty on this subject, as we know the goodness of Your Majesty's heart.'<sup>50</sup> It was Hardinge who replied, not Knollys, in terms that both distanced the King from the appeal to his good nature and placed it back in the arena of British government policy. Hardinge's response was: '... in view of M Stolypin's assurance in this sense, the King did not consider desirable that anything further should be said on the subject at present, until at least it is seen whether the intentions of the Prime Minister are carried into effect.'<sup>51</sup> It underlines the extent to which, in areas of policy that did not involve the nuances and niceties of royal ceremonial and appropriate conduct by one monarch to another, Edward was consistently ready to act in line with his government's foreign policies. As here, the only clearly political discussions that he was willing to enter into with a foreign sovereign or minister were those approved and drafted by his government. He plainly demonstrated to the Rothschilds that he was not prepared to take advantage of his position as sovereign to accomplish private objectives.

In terms of royal niceties, the Romanov court was the most traditional and, therefore, ceremony-orientated of Europe's courts.<sup>52</sup> Edward's own court, therefore, involved itself in even more elaborate planning than usual to ensure that they could match the expectations of detailed ceremony that would await them at Reval, despite the fact that the

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<sup>48</sup> S.M. Dubnow (1920) *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. From the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 3 vols (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America). Vol III: *From the Accession of Nicholas II, until the Present Day*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Niall Ferguson (2000) *The House of Rothschild. The World's Banker 1849–1998* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 251.

<sup>50</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/98, Lord Rothschild, Leopold de Rothschild, and Alfred de Rothschild to King Edward VII, 3 June 1908.

<sup>51</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/53/105, Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Rothschild, 13 June 1908.

<sup>52</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*.

encounters would – as in Spain – be on board ship. Appropriately, it was the Russians who set the agenda, as when Isvolsky sent a schedule to O’Beirne outlining the details of the King’s visit:

*Mardi, le 27 Mai/9 Juin arrivée de Leurs Majestés Britanniques. Lorsque le ‘Victoria and Albert’ aura jeté l’ancre Sa Majesté L’Empereur se rendra à bord pour souhaiter la bienvenue au Roi et la Reine. Sa Majesté sera accompagné par le Minstre de la Cour, l’aide-de-camp general attaché à la Personne du Roi, l’aide-de-camp du service et le chef de pavillon de Sa Majesté l’Empereur.<sup>53</sup>*

A second, undated, schedule is also in the same file in the Royal Archives, which outlines those expected to be present at various receptions, ‘The following will be present at this reception [which was held on the Emperor’s yacht]: M. Stolypine, M. Iswolsky, Admiral Dikoff, Minister of Marine ...’<sup>54</sup> This typed schedule also included details of when to wear morning and full dress at the various receptions on the yachts, of which an example is: ‘At one o’clock, luncheon will be served on board the “Polar Star”. Undress Uniform & Morning dress.’<sup>55</sup>

It is a measure of Edward’s appreciation of the importance of these details to the success of a state visit that he took a detailed personal interest in this aspect of appropriate dress – something, it could be said, that he did on all occasions.<sup>56</sup> Certainly for this visit, the King paid extra attention to the matter, not just for himself but also for his entourage. Arthur Davidson, his Assistant Private Secretary, sent out letters on the King’s behalf: ‘The King says with regard to Dress, you will of course bring all your Uniforms &c. for the Yacht, blue serge suit for day time and Dining jacket for evening.’<sup>57</sup> This material clearly illustrates the careful planning that went into every aspect of the royal visit, right down to the small details of dress which completed the whole ceremony, including the knotty matter of decorations. Edward knew that it would be expected that decorations would be awarded to members of the Tsar’s suite as tokens

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<sup>53</sup> RA PPTO/PP/EVII/MAIN/C/26220, Alexander Isvolsky to Hugh O’Beirne, 18/31 May 1908.

<sup>54</sup> RA PPTO/PP/EVII/MAIN/C/26220, undated.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Philip Magnus (1964) *King Edward the Seventh* (London: John Murray), p. 364.

<sup>57</sup> RA PPTO/PP/EVII/C/26220, Sir Arthur Davidson to Sir Arthur Nicolson, 22 May 1908.

of friendship, and he knew also that a failure to bestow the appropriate decoration would not be a matter of simple personal disappointment. It could, potentially, lead to a diplomatic coldness at the very least, as those who failed to receive such a token would consider themselves insulted. This explains the private letter that Davidson drafted to O'Beirne: 'The King has desired me to write to you privately on the subject of decorations, before the Meeting at Reval takes place, as it may prevent any misunderstanding or possible disappointment.'<sup>58</sup> He consequently requested a full list of those who would be travelling with the Tsar: 'It would be as well therefore, to obtain a rough list beforehand of those Officers on whom it is suggested The King should bestow decorations.'<sup>59</sup>

The fact that it was the ambassador who responded to Davidson suggests that the Embassy also appreciated how important this aspect was, reassuring Davidson that 'I will enquire at the F.O. tomorrow whether they have received a list of those who will accompany the Emperor & Empress to Reval.'<sup>60</sup> Davidson also received a letter from O'Beirne that day which included such a list, but also encouraging the former to talk with the Russian ambassador in London for advice on any potential additions to the list: 'The Russian Ambassador would I am sure make useful suggestions.'<sup>61</sup>

## Edward VII at Reval

Despite all the concerns surrounding the visit regarding security for the King and how the timing of the visit would affect perceptions of the King as endorsing a brutal regime – which could potentially have been presented to the public via the British media – the actual visit went off very pleasantly. Hardinge recalled that the visit had the atmosphere of a friendly family outing at sea, with Alexandra there as well as Edward: 'There was no disguising the fact that the Emperor and Empress were extraordinarily happy in the company of their uncle and aunt, and the visit had largely a family character.'<sup>62</sup> This is reflected in the wealth of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> RA PPTO/PP/EVII/C/26220, Sir Arthur Nicolson to Sir Arthur Davidson, 26 May 1908.

<sup>61</sup> RA PPTO/PP/EVII/C/26220, Hugh O'Beirne to Sir Arthur Davidson, 26 May 1908.

<sup>62</sup> Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (1947) *Old Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner), p. 155.

photographs taken on this visit that show the King and Tsar standing on their yachts, which can be found in the majority of publications written about either Edward VII or Nicholas II.

However, one initiative taken by Edward did create a rift between himself and his Prime Minister which was to have longer-term implications for the future management of state visits, ensuring that never again would a British monarch be permitted to go abroad on a state visit without an accompanying Foreign Secretary or deputy. The issue related to Edward's sense of what was appropriate between monarchs in terms of gestures that could affirm friendship accompanying diplomatic initiatives such as the Anglo-Russian Entente. During the initial stages of the visit, decorations had been given out by the King to members of the Tsar's entourage, as had been already agreed. But then, at lunch that day, Edward informed Hardinge via a note that he felt the cordial atmosphere would be greatly improved if he were to make Nicholas an admiral of the British Fleet. Hardinge agreed that this would be a wonderful gesture.<sup>6c</sup> It was Hardinge's endorsement that created the problem, because he was not an elected politician. As a civil servant, convention was that he should have consulted his superiors, notably the Foreign Secretary, as appointments such as making a foreign monarch an admiral were considered to be political decisions. Even if Hardinge's own timetable of events is accepted, there was certainly time for Hardinge to have alerted Grey telegraphically to the King's proposal and got either a holding response or an endorsement that it was in line with established Anglo-Russian policy. He did not. That evening, the King made good on his own suggestion and made the Tsar an admiral of the Fleet; the Tsar was so pleased that he reciprocated, making Edward an admiral of the Russian Fleet.

To all those on the yacht, this made a fitting end to what was considered to be a very successful state visit. However, when the party returned home to London, Asquith, Grey and the Cabinet were not happy. Asquith complained that it would not be possible for the title to be taken away from the Tsar without damaging Anglo-Russian relations, perhaps permanently. Additionally, Asquith thought that although the King bestowed titles on foreign royalty, it was constitutionally improper for Edward to grant titles on whomever he liked and when he liked. Hardinge recalled: 'On my return to England I was informed by Mr Asquith, the Prime Minister, that the action of the King in appointing an Admiral of the Fleet off his own back was unconstitutional and that the consent of the Prime Minister

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<sup>6c</sup> Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy*, p. 156.

should have been obtained in the first instance.<sup>64</sup> Asquith's concern lay in the fact that the King's action could have been interpreted as an act of approval by the British government or a sign of preference of one head of state over another. It forced the government to accept that state visits by the monarch did have a political dimension, which meant that it was inappropriate for them to be undertaken without senior elected politicians as part of the entourage. In the situation where Edward had found himself, the King could only have sounded out one person's opinion on the matter. His reliance had been on Hardinge's acting constitutionally (which he did not). However, had Edward been accompanied by Grey or his deputy, the potential crisis could have been avoided.

Edward had certainly been unaware that he had created a crisis – the implication is that his reliance was on Hardinge to liaise with his government at home, as Ponsonby had done in 1903 when the critical issue of the Papal visit had arisen while Edward had been in Lisbon. Attempting to defuse the tension between the King and his Prime Minister, Knollys drafted an apologetic letter to Asquith, which explained the incident from the King's perspective:

He never thought of proposing that the Emperor of Russia should be appointed an Admiral of the Fleet until the idea suddenly struck him at Reval, that he was totally unaware of the Constitutional Point or else he certainly would not have said anything to the Emperor without having first consulted you and Mr McKenna.<sup>65</sup>

Despite this apology, King and Prime Minister were on bad terms for the last 21 months of the King's reign. Ironically, Edward's gesture had a positive effect on the Tsar, who left the meeting assured of British friendship.<sup>66</sup> Equally, there is a high probability that if Grey had been consulted, he would have endorsed the King's action.

The visit to Russia was not merely a symbolic meeting of sovereigns in order to court public favour in the wake of the signing of the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907. Placed in a broader political and diplomatic context, it underlines the contribution made by such visits, because of

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>65</sup> BOD MS Asquith 1/22, Knollys to Asquith, 15 June 1908. It is interesting that Knollys, on behalf of Edward VII, made no attempt to blame Hardinge, who had been consulted, for the blunder.

<sup>66</sup> Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar. Three Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) p. 271.

the ways in which it enabled British and Russian political ambitions and also had wider implications for royal diplomacy throughout Europe. For example, Hardinge had a series of meetings with Isvolsky on the Macedonian Question during the visit.<sup>67</sup> This was beneficial to the British, as they had been diplomatically isolated in this region for almost a decade due to the Austro-Russian agreement and French hostility. However, because by January 1908 Russia and Austria's relationship in the area had broken down, the British were able to take advantage of the situation, replacing Austria as Russia's chief partner in the region.<sup>68</sup> This was, then, also a meeting of British diplomats with Russian ministers, under the umbrella of a meeting between two sovereigns to celebrate the 1907 agreement. It also took advantage of anti-Austrian sentiment in the Russian press, which was at an all-time high – as, indeed, it was in the British press.<sup>69</sup>

### Hostile reactions to the visit in Europe

However, public opinion in central Europe was quite hostile to the Reval meeting, particularly in Austria, as opposed to Germany. Interestingly, Wilhelm had a more sophisticated understanding of Russian policy, as the following excerpt from a letter from the Kaiser to the Tsar reveals:

Recently we have been represented as resenting and showing uneasiness about your agreement with England concerning central Asia. The same rumours are circulated about the visit Uncle Bertie paid to you at Reval. All nonsense! We understand perfectly that Russia for the present must avoid getting into a conflict with Great Britain, and for this reason she is bent on smoothing away actual points of controversy.<sup>70</sup>

This suggests that Wilhelm II may have been personally upset with 'Uncle Bertie' over his actions, but also that – as with other episodes discussed in previous chapters – any personal upset did not translate

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<sup>67</sup> M.B. Cooper (1964) 'British Policy in the Balkans 1908–09', *The Historical Journal*, 7(2), p. 262.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>70</sup> Isaac Don Levine (1920) *The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited), p. 223.

into an impact on the politico-diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany at this point.

The Austro-Hungarians, on the other hand, saw the whole event as an attempt on the part of the British to seduce the Russians from under their noses at a time when their own relationship with their eastern neighbour was at a low. Kaiser Franz Joseph was particularly incensed by what he saw as a political move by Edward VII against Austria-Hungary.<sup>71</sup> Russia and Austria-Hungary had, since 1897, shared an agreement over the Balkans, which, Cooper argues, the Austrian politicians felt that the British were actively trying to steal from them.<sup>72</sup> This provided an interesting consequence of the visit, as up until this point Franz Joseph had been a keen supporter of British policy and Edward VII, even during the Boer war.<sup>73</sup> However, after the Reval visit his government's policy became particularly critical of British intentions, to the point where the two sovereigns ceased to be on cordial terms.<sup>74</sup>

Hardinge's own view of the visit was that 'The King's visit to Reval might be consecrated by the announcement of the complete agreement of England and Russia upon the scheme of reforms to be adopted in Macedonia.'<sup>75</sup> The three autocrats who headed Germany, Austria and Turkey saw a visit by the British head of state as a symbol of the British government making official moves towards Russia to solidify their friendship. They were also aware that members of the two nations' Foreign Offices would be holding negotiations while the visits took place. Hardinge's own secret dispatch on the progress of the visit seems to solidify this view: 'I cannot help thinking that this direct exchange of views between the two Foreign Offices will be beneficial and facilitate the solution of most of our pending questions',<sup>76</sup> perhaps also implying that meeting like this was a more effective way of conducting diplomacy.

## Assessing the visit

This was the first set of state visits in which the British government openly took issue with a dimension of the Palace's arrangement of a state

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<sup>71</sup> Hibbert, *Edward VII*.

<sup>72</sup> Cooper, 'British Policy in the Balkans', p. 259.

<sup>73</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO). Vol. 1, no. 318, p. 256.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 830; see also Hibbert, *Edward VII*.

<sup>75</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, Vol. 5, no. 195, p. 238.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

visit. Because the visit did not have a headline political purpose, with the Anglo-Russian accords already in place, Edward VII planned only to take a small entourage, in terms of the rank and number of officials accompanying him. Thus, Hardinge, as a Permanent Under-Secretary, was seen by Edward VII as an appropriate choice. However, even before the royal party set off for Russia, questions were asked of the Foreign Secretary about the appropriateness of this relatively low-level demonstration of British political interests. This is not to say that the visit was without a political usefulness. The visit would provide the government with an opportunity to undertake some behind-the-scenes tidying-up of the diplomatic negotiations of the previous year. Almost certainly, one reason why Hardinge had seemed to Grey a sensible choice was the former's knowledge of Persia, as well as Russia, given that it was Persia that was the key concern in that tidying-up.

The visit itself raised more issues, because of Hardinge's endorsement of the King's decision to make the Tsar an admiral of the British fleet. While at one level the King had consulted a political advisor and not just acted independently, as a Permanent Under-Secretary, Hardinge was not, strictly speaking, in a position to pronounce upon policy without consulting his elected superiors. The questioning of both the King and Hardinge on their return to London is something which further clarified both the importance of a state royal visit and the importance of that visit being politically, as well as ritually, managed.

Here, this chapter has discussed other contributing evidence that attests to a new understanding of the significance of royal diplomacy, in terms of its potential power, which spread beyond the Palace and the government. The petitioning by the Rothschilds for Edward VII to take on a persuasive role in improving the position of Jews in Russia could, at one level, be seen as being broadly in British interests, because it could diminish a refugee problem that was heightening anti-Semitism in Britain. Certainly, this was how it was presented by the Rothschilds. Equally, the petitioning of the King by the Trades Union movement to refuse the return visit on the grounds of the poor treatment of workers in Russia could similarly have been seen as being in line with a popular criticism of Russia in Britain, rather than being an expression of popular interest. But, at another level, it was a signal to politicians that this understanding was another dimension of a royal state visit which had to be carefully managed. True, Edward VII rejected both petitions, but the fact that they were made sounded alarm bells for Asquith and Grey. After the trip to Russia, all future royal visits would be much more carefully stage-managed by the government, and it became normal for



the Foreign Secretary to accompany the monarch.<sup>77</sup> This suggests very strongly that the government had learned lessons (if not precisely the same ones as the Palace), and that the Palace also appreciated the political significance of what a royal visit could achieve. It also indicates that government did now fully understand that royal state visits were an important diplomatic tool of use to politicians.

This was, in terms of ceremonial, the most spectacular of Edward VII's visits, and again, it is important to reflect on the impact of this aspect of royal diplomacy when estimating both lessons learned and the significance of such visits to diplomatic relations between Britain and her European neighbours more generally. As the chapter has shown, Edward VII prepared with huge care for this visit. His own sense of royal dignity ensured that he understood how important ceremonial and ritual would be on a visit to the Romanov court. He understood that this visit would be the greatest test of British royal diplomacy, because every nuance of his behaviour, in public and private, would be scrutinised by Russians with a highly critical sense of appropriate royal behaviour. Edward VII passed the test of the Russian visit with flying colours. The Romanov court, and so political Russia as well, were more than pleased with the visit, including Edward VII's inspired decision to make the Tsar an admiral. It must be said that it was in Russia that Edward VII revealed the true extent of his powers as a royal diplomat. During the return visit, royal ceremonial remained a key factor. This time, however, it was George, the Prince of Wales, who took the lead. But this was not because Edward VII did not think ceremonial was important when a royal visit to Britain took place: it was, rather, a reflection of his own failing health by 1909. It is ironic that, just as Edward VII achieved the apex of royal diplomacy, his health should begin to let him down – something which will be explored in the context of his final visit to Germany, discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>77</sup> While Grey did not accompany Edward VII on his final visit, as the next chapter underlines, the visit was Grey's own idea, and it was Grey, not Edward VII, who decided that the Foreign Secretary should not go.

# 8

## ‘The Most Powerful and Influential Diplomat of His Day’: Edward VII’s Final State Visits

### Introduction

In 1909 Edward made his final foreign visit, which also happened to be his first full state visit to Germany, and received his last from a senior European royal, in the person of the Tsar. The visit to Germany took place in February, between his own 1908 visit to Russia and the Tsar’s return state visit to Britain in August 1909, which will also be discussed in this chapter. The background to both is the failing health of the King and, in spite of this, his continuing commitment to royal diplomacy. This requires a reassessment of the state visit to Germany, often wrongly described as a ‘failure’ because in later assessments of it the emphasis has been placed on his poor health, rather than on what he achieved during that visit.<sup>1</sup>

The 1909 trip was his first formal state visit to Germany, though this was not always realised by contemporaries, given the insistence of the Kaiser on publicising Edward’s private visits there. But, despite the pomp that Wilhelm II had imposed on any occasions when they met, they had not partaken of the publicly visible nature of a full-scale state royal visit. Essentially, the King had never been accompanied by British elected politicians along with his courtiers. In understanding why there had

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‘Germany’, German Correspondent, *The Times*, 10 January 1909.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth remembering that the memories of Princess Daisy of Pless, so regularly cited by Edward’s biographers, were not published until after the Great War; the contemporary newspaper and other media reports of Edward’s visit, certainly in the British press, suggest the need for a very different reading of the visit.

been no move by Edward to convert one of his regular visits to Germany into a state visit, as had happened with the Scandinavian trips, the point is that Edward VII himself did not feel the need to make such a state visit. The imperatives that had accompanied his other state visits did not exist. Edward VII was well aware that his nephew was personally furious at the lack of such a visit, which he felt to be an insult to him and to the German state. As Edward knew very well, there were no political moves envisaged by his government to develop any form of diplomatic Anglo-German entente which could be enhanced by a royal state visit. However, although in the period up to 1908 at least, the British felt no need to appease the Kaiser, there was a change of heart which led to a state visit being carried out despite Edward's failing health – something which underlines how important both state visits themselves and the Anglo-German relationship had become by 1909, and also how significant active royal diplomacy – as performed by Edward – now was in the eyes of his politicians. In poor health he might be: he was still considered – in the words of the title of this chapter – a powerful and influential diplomatic figure.

What is interesting is that this was a visit that was urged on the King by his government. Edward's agreement to undertake the visit, despite his poor health, is an indication of the importance that he placed upon the Trade Union of Kings. This is at odds with the usual interpretation of the visit, and requires a reassessment of how it was viewed at the time. One reason why historians have interpreted the visit as being 'disappointing' is because several of the key public events which had enabled previous state visits to be successful were supposedly absent. Certainly, Edward was too unwell to make the same imposing figure at any public ceremonials as he had in previous visits. Equally, for the same reason, opportunities to have the type of encounter with ordinary Germans in which he could exercise his personal charm, as he had during his visit to Paris, were few. But if there was only one key incident when the Edward of 1903 was glimpsed (when he met the Berlin Merchants' Guild), it was still significant. He successfully won them over from their previous hostility to Anglo-German cooperation: something which will have had wider implications for attitudes in the merchant class in Germany towards Britain.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> F. McDonough (2007) *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations 1905–1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

In agreeing to go, Edward had gone in a positive spirit, despite his poor health. He felt sorry for the Kaiser, who was having difficulties with his own government, and consented to go at least partly as a sign of monarchical solidarity. Paradoxically, though, ever-present throughout the visit to Germany was the ghost of the gesture of monarchical solidarity that Edward had made during the Russian visit. As a result of this, Asquith had decided to exert greater control over the King's future actions in the field of diplomacy: something which underlines the sense that had by now developed amongst British politicians of just how important and influential royal diplomacy could be.

Initially, Asquith attempted to develop a soft influence over the King by admitting him to a higher level of confidence about British policy, sending him reports of Cabinet meetings to which even his colleagues were not allowed access. These were carefully edited so as to interest the King and inform him in ways that were intended to convince him of the importance of certain policy lines, so that the King would not feel impelled to act on his own initiative. This suggests that Asquith did not realise that the King was, in policy terms, generally very ready to act constitutionally. In these briefings, foreign and military discussions were detailed at greater length than questions of domestic social policy.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the Prime Minister's efforts, Edward never warmed to him, feeling that he was 'Much more of a new man than Campbell-Bannerman'.<sup>4</sup>

### Appeasing the Kaiser

Edward's 1909 visit to Germany revealed many differences in attitude towards state visits between King and Prime Minister, with the former trying to retain a degree of autonomy over aspects he felt pertained properly to the sovereign and his dignity when abroad, while the latter sought to exercise further Parliamentary control, now that the full extent of what could be achieved at these visits was beginning to be realised. One of the areas where Asquith wanted to shift the focus of British policy was towards Germany, partly because of developments there. The Kaiser was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, caused at least partly by his bitter disappointment at what he saw as the failure of his personal diplomacy. He had, in the last few years, watched Russia enter into an entente with Britain, creating the so-called Triple Entente

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<sup>3</sup> Roy Jenkins (1964) *Asquith* (London: Collins), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

in 1907, and in that same year, witnessed his uncle travelling to Spain and the following year to the Nordic countries.

All this had created a sense of diplomatic unity between these nations and Britain. As a result, in 1908, he began to express his sense of the deliberate encirclement of Germany by his uncle.<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm felt that one clear 'proof' of his belief that his uncle was actively working against Germany was the fact that while Edward had paid official state visits to nearly all the courts of Europe, and even to the republican government of France, he had never come formally to Berlin. However, the British government began to be alarmed by the potential for an unwanted escalation of tension between the two powers. To resolve this, the idea that the King should make the gesture of undertaking the much-desired state visit to Germany began to coalesce in the minds of the Cabinet. Grey mentioned the potential significance of such a visit for a lessening of tension in a letter to Bertie:

I also mentioned to Cambon that I thought the King ought to visit Berlin next year. The German Emperor had wished it to be this year, but we had put it off. As, however, the Germans had a fixed idea that all the King's visits were made for the purpose of ringing Germany in, it was desirable that he should make one visit, which could not be so construed and might counteract the impression.<sup>6</sup>

This is the background to Grey's beginning to enquire whether the King was willing to go to Germany, to improve German impressions of Britain by improving German opinion of the King.

Edward's immediate response was to reject the idea when it was first raised in 1908. He wrote back explaining that there was no time for a visit that year due to his other commitments, a decision that was seconded by Asquith. One can understand Edward's position in feeling that he had spent sufficient time in Berlin, due to the fact that he had visited Germany almost every year of his reign on a private basis, had seen the Kaiser on nearly all these visits, and had also made a formal trip in

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<sup>5</sup> *The Times* regularly referred to this 'obsession in the imperial mind'; see, for instance, 'The German Emperor and Strategic Problems', *The Times*, 6 January 1909. It was an issue to which he returned after Germany's defeat and his abdication; see Wilhelm II and Thomas Ybarra (1922) *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888–1918* (London: Harper and Brothers).

<sup>6</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO) Vol. 6, no. 106, p. 168.

1906.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Wilhelm took offence and protested that 'It was a personal insult that his repeated offers of friendship had been rebuffed.'<sup>8</sup> The Kaiser apparently believed that relations were so bad between him and Britain that the British media had deliberately taken to publishing the wrong impression of him to exacerbate the tension between the states, out of jealousy of German success.

### **The *Daily Telegraph* affair and its aftermath**

The Kaiser made a bold gesture to rectify what he saw as a false impression of Germany and its intentions in Britain by giving a frank interview to the *Daily Telegraph*, then a widely read but not establishment title. His aim was to appeal directly to a mass reading audience in a way that would let the British people see his positive feelings towards their country and frustrate the politicians he blamed for anti-German sentiments. Wilhelm apparently believed that the interview might have 'the effect of bringing about a change in the tone of some of the English newspapers'.<sup>9</sup> However, the outcome of its publication was entirely counterproductive for this strategy; it had a negative effect not only on the British view of him, but also on his reputation for strategic sense internationally. Wilhelm had sat for a recorded conversation with his British friend, Colonel Stuart-Wortley, to discuss his views on international matters. For the most part he had remained sensible, but the interview also included a number of emotional outbursts, which the edited version of the interview that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* made the most of, in order to present him in an unfavourable light. For instance, he made various claims, such that he had dreamed up battle plans for the South African war which were not used. This was intended to demonstrate a pro-British attitude, but was not perceived by the British as Wilhelm had intended: 'His comments, designed to improve Anglo-German relations, created more amusement than anything else in Britain.'<sup>10</sup>

What was wrong with the interview from the Kaiser's perspective was that it was not published in its entirety. Only snippets were used, the problem being that the sections that were used were chosen to magnify

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1975) *Uncle of Europe* (London: Collins), pp. 258–61.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew S. Seligmann and Roderick McLean (2000) *Germany from Reich to Republic 1871–1918* (London: Macmillan), p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

his more 'entertaining' comments, and what was excluded were many of his more sober moments. Grey and the Cabinet understood that what was published was not the full transcript, as Grey explained to the new ambassador to Berlin, Goschen: 'The article was not the whole record.'<sup>11</sup> Blame for this and the consequent demonisation of the Kaiser cannot be laid exclusively at the door of the *Daily Telegraph*, as both Bülow and the German Foreign Office saw a transcript of the intended publication and approved it, leading to Bülow's fall from power.

While the British readership found the article entertaining, the German people were furious, as they felt that they had been humiliated again by their leader on the world stage and that the British in particular were laughing at them. Grey understood that if the German people felt this way it would be very bad for Anglo-German relations, and moved quickly to halt any further use of the interview by the British press. He explained to Goschen: 'I felt that further publication could only do harm.'<sup>12</sup> The appearance of the *Daily Telegraph* interview had produced so strong and decided a reaction against Britain in Germany that he felt it was 'evidently the desire of the German people that the utterances of the Emperor should not be received publicly or be taken as the authorised expression of German feeling, that I consider any further publication would be regarded as unfriendly'.<sup>13</sup>

One clear consequence of Grey's concern was his decision to return to pressing the King to undertake a state visit to Berlin, something which also demonstrates that the Foreign Secretary at least had begun to appreciate that a royal state visit made at a judicious point could be a very positive tool in the British diplomatic armoury. In the aftermath of the *Daily Telegraph* affair, a high-profile state visit would constitute an olive branch offered to Germany, to soothe the insult of the perceived mockery of its emperor by the British press.

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<sup>11</sup> The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO800/61/306, Grey to Goschen, 18 December 1908. Wilhelm had indeed done this: he had been in contact with his grandmother, Victoria, to pass on these ideas – though it is unlikely that the *Daily Telegraph* was aware of this, or even interested.

<sup>12</sup> Alternatives to the narrative on the *Daily Telegraph* interview from Seligmann and McLean can be found in Christopher Clark (2000) *Kaiser Wilhelm II* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited), pp. 172–7; Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar, Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray), pp. 276–9.

<sup>13</sup> TNA FO800/61/306, Grey to Goschen, 18 December 1908.

Edward's agreement to a state visit was positive this time. While in 1906 he had not seen the urgency of making such a gesture to his nephew, this time he did, and was deeply sympathetic to him. On hearing the news that a state visit by his uncle was being proposed, the Kaiser was openly delighted, as is underlined by his enthusiastic letter to his cousin, the Tsar of Russia, informing him of his uncle's intentions on 18 August 1908: 'He [Edward VII] intends on visiting Berlin officially with Aunt Alix next year, date to be fixed.'<sup>14</sup> However, there was a complication in that the visit's timing was dependent upon the King's health, quite as much as on the demands made on him by other matters of domestic and foreign policy. It is a measure of Edward's genuine devotion to diplomacy performed in his country's interests, and his firm conviction that royal diplomacy made an active contribution, that he was determined to undertake the visit. This is underlined by his joking remark that his nation needed him to go even if he were at death's door.<sup>15</sup>

This uncertainty about when his health would permit him to undertake the demands of a full state visit, performed in the public view at all points, given the Kaiser's known predilection for elaborate ceremonial, explains why there was relatively short notice given for the state visit. Edward will have known that Wilhelm was so experienced in managing such visits that he would need very little notice, and so he could afford to wait until he was reasonably sure that he would be well enough to go. In writing to him to express 'my very best wishes for a happy new year', he informed the Kaiser that 'we hope that it will be possible for us to make to you our proposed visit in the second week of February'.<sup>16</sup> He also wrote to Grey on 5 January, informing him officially that he had written to the Kaiser about the possibility of going to Berlin in February and that the invitation had been accepted. This underlines that, though the monarch could now expect any visit to be supervised, in political terms, by a senior elected politician, it was still very much up to the King to decide the timing and ceremonial details of any state visit.

## Organisational tensions

News of the forthcoming state visit appeared quite widely in the British press on 5 January, including the detail that the visit would take place in

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<sup>14</sup> Isaac Don Levine (1920) *The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited), p. 221.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> TNA FO800/103/145, Edward VII to Wilhelm II, 1 January 1909.



February.<sup>17</sup> It was generally approved of in the press coverage as something which might demonstrate to Germany that Britain was 'perfectly willing to stand in the best and friendliest relations with Germany, as an equal among equals'.<sup>18</sup> Grey and Asquith had already agreed in August 1908 to the idea of a state visit to Berlin being made by the King, but both were somewhat taken aback to learn – both officially and in the press – that he had set the date without seeking their prior approval of the timing. However, the niceties of diplomatic protocol meant that once the invitation had been sent and accepted, these elected politicians knew that they could do nothing about that timing, because to attempt to do so would be bad for British prestige.

This emphasises that Edward was still insistent on maintaining personal control over those aspects of royal diplomacy which he considered quintessentially 'royal' and not part of the wider constitutional agreement. If he would never have arranged to go to Berlin on a formal state visit without consultation with his government, he considered the details of the timing, as well as other ceremonial aspects without policy implications, to be within his remit. There were no ongoing treaty negotiations to consider, for instance, and so no direct need to consult the Foreign Office on progress there when making a judgement about when to go. In making all of the preliminary arrangements himself, he sent a firm message to his government that while he was responsive to their requests, he still maintained supremacy over the ceremonial protocols. This assertion of royal privilege came at a time when relations between King and Cabinet were still rather frosty in the aftermath of the Russian state visit. It is this, quite as much as a dislike of the state visit per se, that explains the absence of the friendly exchange of notes between the Palace and Whitehall that usually accompanied the arrangements for a state visit overseas. This time only the bare bones of information were outlined. Grey simply passed on to Goschen, in a very matter-of-fact way, the information that negotiations on the visit between the King and the Kaiser had been successfully concluded: 'I am commanded by the King to let you know that HM has proposed to the Emperor that he and the Queen shall visit Berlin during the second week of February, and the Emperor has welcomed HM's suggestion.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It was picked up from the German media, where the Kaiser had undoubtedly let the news leak out in advance. See 'King's Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 5 January 1909.

<sup>18</sup> 'The King's Visit to Germany', Editorial, *The Times*, 6 January 1909.

<sup>19</sup> TNA FO800/61/309, Grey to Goschen, 5 January 1909.

This unspoken tension arguably coloured the whole visit; the King seemed more possessive of the details, and the Cabinet, in response, took a more forensic and detached approach to the whole affair, instead of working together to achieve the amelioration of Anglo-German tensions that was the object of both sides in Britain. Asquith responded unhelpfully to Edward's missive informing his ministers that he had agreed with the Kaiser that the desired state visit would take place in Berlin in February. The Prime Minister pointed out that it might be difficult for the King to go to Berlin at that date, as he had the important duty of the state opening of Parliament to perform. Asquith insisted this could not be missed, and sent his letter without including the date that the ceremony would be held, probably deliberately, as traditionally it was held on the same day each year. In response, Knollys wrote to Asquith asking, if an exact day could not be given, that the Prime Minister would at least provide a three-day window which the ceremony might take place:

The King is much obliged to you for the information which you have sent him respecting the date of the opening of Parliament in Feb. It will be necessary for him to let the German Emperor know the date of HM & the Queen's state visit to Berlin, and therefore hopes Mr Asquith will acquaint him, as soon as it is in his power to do so, as to the day or about the day, of which the new session will commence. It would I think be sufficient to tell the King what would be the latest day.<sup>20</sup>

As this letter indicates, Asquith knew that the King had to tell the Kaiser on what day he would be coming to Germany. He was not, of course, withholding the information in order to cause an incident with Germany, but instead just long enough to display his displeasure to the King.

The response to Asquith concluded with a subtle warning from the Palace in the shape of the reminder that the state opening of Parliament normally happened at the same time of the month each year, implying that Edward might use this information to settle finally on a date for the visit without awaiting any confirmation from the Prime Minister: 'HM presumes the Cabinet would wish the King to open Parliament as normal, but if he were obliged to settle on a date for the Berlin visit, he would be unable to change it.'<sup>21</sup> But it is equally a mark of the sense of

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<sup>20</sup> Oxford Bodleian Library (henceforth BOD) MS Asquith/1/84/, Knollys to Asquith, 28 November 1908.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

constitutional proprieties possessed by the Palace that, when nearly five days had passed and the date was still not forthcoming, Knollys took the initiative in writing to Asquith's Private Secretary, Vaughan Nash. The attempt to break the stalemate and restore easy relations between the Palace and Whitehall was soothingly expressed: 'Ask Mr Asquith if he is able to open Parliament about the date before.'<sup>22</sup> Knollys added that as the visit had been proposed for February by the King to the Kaiser, he had to go during this month, but confirmed that nothing further could be done until they heard something from Berlin: 'Nothing more is said to him (Asquith) until we hear something from Berlin or the FO.'<sup>23</sup> The coolness continued, however, and it was four days after this letter that Asquith wrote to the King giving a date for the ceremony. He employed a somewhat sarcastic tone in doing so: 'The most reasonable date suggested provisionally for the opening of next session is February 16<sup>th</sup>, which Mr Asquith understands would suit your Majesty's convenience.'<sup>24</sup> Yet, despite their apparent antagonism and point-scoring, both men recognised the importance of the state visit to Germany, and the King plainly wished to maintain as good a relationship as possible with his ministers.

Once the date of the state opening was settled, Edward was able formally to propose a date to the Kaiser, and with that settled, he set about organising the members of his entourage as well as the necessary ceremonial details. It might be thought that when Edward expressed his intention of again taking Hardinge as minister in attendance, his ministers might have reacted unfavourably to the suggestion, given that the reverberations of the Reval incident were still being felt. In fact, neither Asquith nor Grey objected. Grey's letter to Bertie showed that he, at least, was actively in favour of Hardinge accompanying the King: 'I think Charles Hardinge will also go with the King, so that if Bagdad Railway comes up it can be referred to him.'<sup>25</sup> But what this lack of concern over Hardinge's presence in the royal entourage demonstrates is that it was not just the King who believed he had a right to make certain decisions as long as there were no overt policy implications to them which might alter the situation. Both Asquith and Grey clearly felt that that the decision about the members of his entourage was one

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<sup>22</sup> MS Asquith 1/91, Knollys to Nash, 3 December 1908.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> TNA CAB 41/31, Asquith to Edward VII, 9 December 1908.

<sup>25</sup> H. Gooch and G.P. Temperley (1927) *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 10 vols (London: HMSO). Vol. 6, no. 143, p. 227.

for the King. On this occasion, they probably also understood that since Edward was unlikely to back down on the question of taking Hardinge, an early acquiescence would make it easier for them to work with the King in areas where they could assert their point of view more successfully. Esher commented in a way that underlines this: 'He [Knollys] says that the King's visit to Berlin is now fixed. The King wants to take Crewe and Hardinge. He is not friendly just now to Grey or Asquith or Haldane or indeed any of his ministers.'<sup>26</sup>

### The King in Berlin

The British press widely reported the departure of the King and Queen and their suites for Berlin on 8 February 1909. It is telling of the importance being placed on the visit by the British side that the Queen was included in the royal party. On previous visits to Germany by her husband, which had included several private moments between the King and the Kaiser, she had generally stayed outside Germany, because of her known hostility to the Prussian royal family thanks to the Schleswig-Holstein affair. This time, though, she put aside her personal feelings because her royal duty required her to do so, as the Kaiser would undoubtedly have resented the absence of his aunt by marriage, especially given her presence during the Scandinavian and Russian state visits.

In Germany, the entire state visit had been designed by Wilhelm as a big public spectacle, which could be widely reported (and illustrated) in the mass media.<sup>27</sup> Hardinge recalled that 'During the three days' visit of the King and Queen to Berlin there were endless Court functions, each of increasing splendour', something which does not suggest that he saw the visit as disappointing.<sup>28</sup> Court balls, ballets and dinners were all given in honour of the visiting British royals, in ways that underlined the resources of the German capital and the power of the Kaiser to command such spectacles. Knowledge of the primacy of the ceremonial dimension to the visit provides one possible explanation for Asquith's

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<sup>26</sup> Churchill Archives Centre (henceforth CAC) ESHR/2/12/Esher, Journal Entry, 6 January 1909.

<sup>27</sup> The only brief political chat which did occur was an apparent exchange with the Kaiser, although its validity is questionable due to the Kaiser's tendency to fabricate exchanges with his uncle post event; Brook-Shepherd, *Uncle of Europe*, p. 345.

<sup>28</sup> Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (1947) *Old Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner), p. 173.

lack of concern about his royal master's ability to make any diplomatically embarrassing gesture. It was effectively impossible for the King to have any sustained private time alone with the Kaiser where either could get up to mischief and discuss politics, given that Wilhelm's prime concern was to demonstrate to his people and to Europe more widely, and with as much pomp and ceremony as he could manage, that he was entertaining not only his uncle but also the British King-Emperor. *The Times* commented on the Kaiser's desire to enable the British press 'to give as complete an account as possible' of the visit, which included representatives from a range of titles being conducted over the royal apartments which the King and Queen were to occupy.<sup>25</sup>

On arrival, according to the British press coverage of the event, the crowds were 'cordial' and 'respectful', rather than wildly enthusiastic. However, the auguries were positive as the King, 'looking the picture of health', embraced his nephew at the lavishly decorated railway station.<sup>30</sup> This public gesture of the symbolic warmth between the two men was widely reported, as was the 'look of unmistakeable pleasure' on the Kaiser's face as he introduced the King to a range of figures assembled on the station platform to meet him, before he escorted his uncle on the usual elaborate ceremonial parade through Berlin.<sup>31</sup>

Again underlining contemporary assessments of the positive impact of the visit, Hardinge recalled that the King gave several speeches during the trip which won over many people who were critical of the British government. An account of the speech given by Edward (dressed in the uniform of a Prussian general, in a subtle compliment to his hosts) to the Berlin Merchants Guild reveals how effectively the King's charm won over these important figures in Germany, men who had been the most critical of British policy and tariffs, 'The most useful function in which the King took part was a reception by the Municipal Authorities at the Rath Haus. He met there the leading merchants and business men of Berlin, who hated him by name but whom he captivated by his charm and cordial manner.'<sup>32</sup> Speaking in German, Edward commented that it was always his 'great pleasure' to be in Berlin, and at the conclusion he was greeted with 'a great burst of cheering', according to *The Times*, amongst others.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 'The Royal Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 9 February 1909.

<sup>30</sup> 'The Royal Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 10 February 1909.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy*, p. 173

<sup>33</sup> 'The Royal Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 11 February 1909.

## The King's health

In terms of the reportage of the King's health, the British (and European) press noted that the King was suffering from a 'slight cold', which – amongst other things – involved the cancellation of his visit to Potsdam on a cold and rainy February day. But no other contemporary mention was made of the issue in either the direct reports or the press retrospectives.<sup>34</sup> In private, Edward was clearly struggling to an extent, but the seriousness of this is largely derived from retrospective memories and using the benefit of hindsight to stress how ill, behind the public face he put on, the King actually was. In his 1951 memoir, Ponsonby noted that 'The King, however was not well, as he was suffering from a bronchial chill, with the result that he was always tired and anxious to get everything over as quickly as possible' – but what this also stresses is that Edward was intent on achieving his public duties.<sup>35</sup> The usual presentation of the King's health concentrates on a brief incident during a dinner given to the Kaiser and hosted by Edward at the British Embassy on the final evening of his visit. Reportedly, the King passed out briefly, leaving those around him to worry initially that he had had a heart attack. Ponsonby recalled: 'The King was wearing a Prussian uniform and while sitting on a sofa talking to Princess Pless<sup>36</sup> I noticed that he suddenly fell backwards with his eyes closed, and I thought he had had a stroke.'<sup>37</sup> Melodramatically, and quotably, Daisy of Pless later wrote that she recorded in her diary that she thought the King's life had come to an end: 'I thought: my God, he is dying; oh! Why not in his own country?'<sup>38</sup> However, the reality was less dramatic. The King quickly came to, and the medical assessment was that it had been a bronchial attack of the type that Edward was known occasionally to suffer from, thanks to his excessive smoking and otherwise indulgent lifestyle.

Rather than focusing on Ponsonby and Princess Daisy, greater attention needs to be paid to the contemporary press coverage and to the reaction of the ambassador. Goschen quickly dispatched a letter to Grey, insisting that the Foreign Secretary should not be concerned, because

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<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, 'The Royal Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 13 February 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Sir Frederick Ponsonby (1951) *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode), p. 256.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Theresa Olivia; née Cornwallis-West.

<sup>37</sup> Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy*, p. 174.

<sup>38</sup> Daisy of Pless (1950) *Private Dairies of Daisy of Pless* (London: John Murray), p. 211.

the King was well again: 'In case you should hear any exaggerated report about the King being unwell.'<sup>39</sup> He added that, afterwards, the King continued his tour of the city, seemingly unaffected by the incident. He agreed that there had been a later incident at the Town Hall, where British officials had noticed that the King had found himself short of breath when climbing a staircase: 'The only unavoidable drawback being a rather long and steep staircase, which was not very good for his majesty.'<sup>40</sup> But this was not new: Edward had long found such things challenging. Knollys also sought to ensure that there was no need for alarm because, he insisted, such attacks had become quite common, and it was simply unfortunate that it had happened in a relatively public setting where a noted gossip like Princess Daisy had witnessed it and would be likely to recount the tale with elaborations: 'I may tell you confidently that he has on more than one occasion had an attack and always after luncheon.'<sup>41</sup>

In the press, the visit was formally hailed on all sides as a success. The French, German and Austrian newspapers – as *The Times* took care to report – were generally relieved that tensions between Britain and Germany were likely to have been lessened by this resoundingly positive event.<sup>42</sup> The German papers praised the King's positive and friendly attitude, as well as the contribution to the visit made by the Queen. They appreciated the awards he had handed out to various personages, his complimentary gesture of appearing in various Prussian uniforms throughout his visit (the Kaiser reciprocated by wearing British ones), and his evident familiarity with the German culture and language.<sup>43</sup>

This positive coverage provides unequivocal evidence of how important such visits were now considered to be: the British monarchy was now in line with other European rulers in making use of pomp to amplify their politics. It also shows that, contrary to retrospective assessments and the limitations placed on the visit by the King's poor state of health, it was considered a success at the time. The extensive media interest ensured that attention was paid primarily to the symbolism of the King's actions

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<sup>39</sup> TNA FO800/61/313, Goschen to Grey, 10 February 1909.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> TNA FO800/103/157, Knollys to Tynell, 11 February 1909. It is worth noting that Princess Daisy had a book to sell when she committed her memory to print.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Royal Visit to Berlin', *The Times*, 10 February 1909; 11 February 1909; 12 February 1909; 13 February 1909.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 13 February 1909.

at public events and ceremonies, and that these framed interpretations of any accompanying political arrangements going on behind the scenes between career diplomats and politicians. The programme laid down by the Kaiser attests to his sense of the importance of his uncle's state visit to Berlin. His longer experience of managing these visits means that his delight in it, after it was completed, should be taken far more seriously than the retrospectives suggesting that it was, in some way, a failure and that the King was perceived simply as a sick old man. Instead, the Kaiser relished demonstrating to his people that he was an important enough ruler for his uncle, the British King-Emperor, to pay him a state visit.

Further challenging the established perspective of the state visit to Germany as a 'failure', it is worth noting that Edward returned from Berlin in a very positive mood, despite his failing health. If it was his last official appearance abroad, it was not the last time that Edward engaged actively in formal state diplomacy in the interests of his country or showed an appreciation of the importance of royal diplomacy that led him to insist on its importance to the government. However, the Berlin visit also marks the transition point when Whitehall began consciously to realise that the most effective style of royal visit was one that was visibly and publicly ceremonial, and that this served to improve the representation of Britain abroad through the publicity generated in the recipient country. This begins to explain the official endorsement for the transition of state visits into the collaboratively well-planned, ceremony-centred institution that they became after this visit, when Palace and government worked together to manage state visits, as they did more effectively with the Tsar's visit to Britain.

### **Planning a visit from the Tsar**

In the months after his return to Britain, Edward seized the opportunity provided by contemporary estimations of the success of the Berlin visit to promote an immediate reciprocal state visit to Britain by the Tsar. Hitherto, state visits to Britain in Edward's reign have not formed a major part of the study. A number of them occurred, but those during Edward's reign were not innovative, unlike Edward's visits overseas. They did not introduce any substantive new elements beyond those noted in the first chapter as emerging during the nineteenth century, and they were not associated with developments in British foreign policy in the same way as Edward's state visits overseas. But it is important to note this one state visit to Britain, because it underlines the ways in which active British royal diplomacy had been advanced by Edward.



The return state visit of the Tsar was also unique amongst those Edwardian state visits to Britain in that Nicholas came to the Isle of Wight, not to Windsor or London, and yet, unlike the state visit by Louis-Philippe to Victoria in 1844, it was fully publicised. This time, the majority of the ceremonial public events were hosted by the Prince of Wales, rather than the King, in an interesting parallel to the way in which Edward, in the final years of his mother's reign, had stood in for her when her failing health had prevented her from such engagements.<sup>44</sup> However, unlike Victoria, who had substantially withdrawn from active engagement with public royal diplomacy, Edward remained central when planning the details of the visit by the Tsar, especially when it became apparent that it was not going to follow the 'normal' pattern of state visits to Britain by foreign sovereigns or heads of state, because of a need to stage-manage the public dimensions of the visit to maintain the fiction of its accessibility while protecting the Tsar from potential hostility from radical and immigrant elements in Britain.<sup>45</sup>

It is a measure of the importance to both governments of the new Anglo-Russian Entente that discussions about a return state visit began as soon as the King returned home in 1908 from Russia, and before the finalisation of the details of the 1909 trip to Germany. It was proving more difficult than politicians on either side had hoped to follow up the Entente, and the state visit was welcomed in terms of providing a context in which better Anglo-Russian relations could be advanced further. Having committed himself to this cause through his state visit to Reval, Edward then continued to involve himself in the matter, rather than leaving it up to his government. Instead, he regularly made points to Asquith and Grey, as the following comment underlines: 'With respect to the more important point, that of the Dardanelles, the King is afraid that some hope is given to Russia that England and the other powers might grant the natural aspirations of Russia on this question.'<sup>46</sup> Edward added that he felt that 'after the Russian Convention with England of a year ago, we are bound, if we wish to retain her friendship, to give way on this important point'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A similar parallel has been emerging since 2013, as Prince Charles has taken on more of the ceremonial royal duties his mother had previously undertaken.

<sup>45</sup> London, the usual venue, was home both to active trade unionists and to many Russian exiles.

<sup>46</sup> BOD MS Asquith 1/52, Edward VII to Asquith, 13 October 1908.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

Subsequently, Knollys told Asquith: 'He [Edward] is very glad that you [Asquith] and Grey, together with Haldane and McKenna, concur in thinking that the existing restrictions as regards to the Dardanelles are of no strategic value.'<sup>48</sup> When this was not carried out to the King's satisfaction, he complained that his government was showing weakness, something which he confessed to Lord Esher: 'I sat next to the King at dinner and although conversation was general, he managed to talk very freely to me about Fisher to whom he is perfectly loyal, and about the PM whom he accuses of weakness, and the ministers, whom he mistrusts.'<sup>49</sup> It is a marker of the ongoing emphasis that Edward placed on the positive impact of royal diplomacy that he took the initiative in promoting a return state visit by the Tsar as the best way of improving Anglo-Russian relations, rather than leaving it up to the politicians. Conscious of what he saw as his success in Reval, the King rapidly sounded out Grey about his government's reaction to promoting the return visit speedily.

One of Edward's motivations for this move may have been his belief that much of the British hostility to Russia was directed at the regime there, and a conviction that his subjects did not realise that the Tsar himself was an agreeable man. This, he hoped, could be displayed to the British people if Nicholas promptly made a state visit to Britain. Grey wrote back to the King, via Knollys, with a warm response to the idea, but with the caveat that

If things were going very badly in Russia: if, for example, the Duma was abolished, there would be great outcry here. But the Russian Government, are behaving very well just now, especially as regards Persia. The Emperor is personally responsible for this friendly attitude, which we wish to encourage, and it would be most unwise to discourage him by cancelling a visit.<sup>50</sup>

Grey seems to have been the originator of the idea that the visit should also be informal and relaxed, rather than one simply characterised by its public pomp and ceremony. He suggested making use of the excuse that, visiting in August, the Tsar wanted to view the Royal Regatta as the official reasoning for moving the location of the state visit to Cowes on the Isle of Wight. This made sense, because Nicholas was already a

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<sup>48</sup> BOD MS Asquith 1/54, Knollys to Asquith, 14 October 1908.

<sup>49</sup> CAC ESHR 2/12, Journal Entry, 14 May 1909.

<sup>50</sup> TNA FO800/103/135, Grey to Knollys, 26 November 1908.

familiar figure at Cowes and so would himself be inclined to be at ease there and show his most agreeable side. Edward agreed, probably for the same reasons as his Foreign Secretary.

Ostensibly, also, the location was chosen for reasons of providing security for the Emperor and protecting him from the insult that could result from the sort of radical anti-Russian demonstration that he could well have been subjected to if he went officially to London.<sup>51</sup> Edward is likely to have seen the sense of this, particularly after his own experience of hostile crowds in Paris in 1903 and knowing that his nephew was ill-equipped to 'work the crowds' in the way that he had been able to do. A further precaution proposed by Grey was that nothing should be formally announced until the visit was about to take place, to lessen the chances of any groups organising themselves to go to Cowes: 'A visit in this way would, I hope, be agreeable to the King, and it would be less formal and get rid of all questions about a Guildhall banquet or opportunities for untoward demonstrations.'<sup>52</sup>

What is interesting about this was that it was supposed to be a state visit to show the British public how agreeable the man was, yet the Tsar was being kept away from people as much as possible to prevent him from being insulted in any way. This is explained, from the perspective of the government, by their clear realisation that they had an ally in the Tsar, if not in his ministers, and they did not want to lose that support by exposing him to the hostility of the British public. A letter from Hardinge to the British ambassador to Russia provides a demonstration of the practical goodwill that the Tsar was willing to show to Britain. The Tsar had, it seems, shared with Nicholson a series of letters from the German Emperor suggesting an international intervention against Britain in the Boer War.<sup>53</sup> This show of pro-British goodwill from Nicholas had impressed Hardinge and helped maintain the view amongst the British government that the Tsar was a friend whom Britain needed to keep: 'I have always had a great faith in his good intentions, and have felt confident that, once an agreement with Russia was concluded, he would do all in his power to see it was faithfully kept.'<sup>54</sup>

When the visit was announced, shortly after the King's return to Britain from Germany (and after a brief trip to the Mediterranean to

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Cambridge University Library (henceforth CUL) Hardinge 13/277, Hardinge to Nicholson, 11 November 1908.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

recover his health), Hardinge wrote to Nicolson outlining the King's intentions and saying that in all probability there were going to be protests in Parliament, but that these would be so small that they could be ignored. Essentially, they would be the same minority who objected to the Reval visit:

The King is also very anxious that the Emperor should come to Cowes. There are a small section in Parliament who will try to make themselves disagreeable over the Emperor's visit; but they have to be ignored in the same manner as they were on the occasion of the visit to Reval.<sup>55</sup>

Hardinge informed Nicolson: 'The King tells me that he wrote to the Emperor from Malta, and received a most friendly reply by telegraph, announcing the Emperor's intention of coming to Cowes at the end of July. We can, therefore, regard this visit as absolutely settled.'<sup>56</sup> A copy of the Tsar's acceptance of his invitation was also sent to Grey. The letter read: 'My wife and I are looking forward with the greatest pleasure to our visit to Cowes. As you proposed it, we hope to arrive on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August for the beginning of the Regatta week.'<sup>57</sup>

### **The Tsar's visit and domestic opposition**

The visit now had to be discussed in the Commons, where it was expected there would be some severe opposition. Edward interested himself to the extent of receiving regular reports on how the debate over the visit was prospering from Herbert Gladstone, who reported that, 'Had it not been for the very firm line taken by the Government, the result of the division might have been different.'<sup>58</sup> This suggests that the Cabinet had come to an agreement that the state visit would be a positive thing for both Anglo-Russian relations and Britain's position in Europe. Gladstone's report highlighted that 'A remarkable speech was made by Mr J. M. Robertson, Liberal member for Tyneside and one of the very ablest men in the House of Commons. He strongly supported Sir E Grey declaring

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<sup>55</sup> CUL Hardinge 17/342, Hardinge to Nicolson, 10 May 1909.

<sup>56</sup> TNA FO800/342, Hardinge to Nicolson, 25 May 1909.

<sup>57</sup> TNA FO800/103/204, Knollys to Grey, 29 May 1909.

<sup>58</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/R/39/60, Herbert Gladstone to King Edward VII, 22 July 1909.

that to insult the Tsar was to insult the Russian nation.<sup>55</sup> In the end, although more Liberal Party members than they expected voted against the visit, the proposal was approved: 'The division list this morning shows that more Liberals than Mr Gladstone thought voted yesterday in disapproval of the official visit of the Tsar. They numbered 19.'<sup>61</sup> Grey admitted to Knollys: 'It is I fear impossible to make any impression upon the extreme men who oppose the Czar's visit.'<sup>61</sup>

Underlining the extent to which the British public, as well as their elected representatives, now took an interest in royal diplomacy, there was widespread comment in the press on the matter. The Tsarist government's anti-trade union policies caused outcry amongst workers in other parts of the world, and so, when it became known that the Tsar would be coming to Britain on an official, rather than a private family, visit, there was an influx of petitions of protest by various public bodies sent to the King. Interestingly, this underlines the extent to which Edward was determined to act constitutionally, and not to be seen to bypass his government and deal directly with his subjects on matters of policy. Diplomacy was one thing: official government strategy another, and such petitions spoke very directly to the latter. Consequently, the response of the Palace was to return them to senders with instructions on how to appropriately submit such petitions:

Lord Knollys gave directions that all such letters or Resolutions were to be returned to the senders with the following words:-

'The Private Secretary presents his compliments to \_\_\_\_\_ and begs to return the enclosed Address, as Resolutions from Public Bodies can only be submitted to His Majesty through the Home Secretary.'<sup>62</sup>

The document emphasised that the Home Secretary was, likewise, receiving a large number of protests about the visit, and enquired whether he could adopt the course of not replying to them. In the end, Arthur Davidson acted on Edward's instructions: 'On July 12<sup>th</sup>, after nearly 130 Resolutions had been returned to their Senders, Sir Arthur Davidson gave

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/R/39/61, Herbert Gladstone to King Edward VII, 23 July 1909.

<sup>61</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/55/50, Sir Edward Grey to Lord Knollys, 25 July 1909.

<sup>62</sup> RA PPTO/PP/QV/ADD/PP3/39, Major Frederick Ponsonby, 12 September 1909.

instructions that by His Majesty's commands, any further Resolutions are not to be returned but kept in the Office and not acknowledged.<sup>63</sup>

The level of protest made it plain to both the King and the government that the decision to mimic the Reval visit by hosting the Tsar on the Isle of Wight was wise.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting that the concerns of the British about the Tsar's safety were not mirrored by the Russians, who appeared very nonchalant about the matter, perhaps because of the regularity of attempts on the lives of Russian rulers. The King was informed that

Attention was called to some violent articles which have recently appeared in a socialist newspaper called 'Justice' and which might be assumed as incitements to the assassination of the Tsar on his approaching visit. Sir Edward Grey stated that no representations on the subject have been made as yet to him by the Russian Ambassador, it was seemed wiser for the moment not to take proceedings which would only leave increased sobriety for the anxious matter.<sup>65</sup>

This only enhanced Edward's determination to play an active role in ensuring that the visit went well, in order to underline his wish to demonstrate to Nicholas that the majority of the British people meant him no ill-will. Edward consequently came up with the idea that the Mayor of London, representing the people of London, should come to Cowes and give an address to the Tsar, especially as this would also create the impression of a state visit to the capital:

In view of the agitation that is going on in certain quarters against the Emperor of Russia's visit, the King thinks it would be a very good thing if the Lord Mayor were to come to Cowes with an address of welcome. He concludes that Sir Edward Grey will speak to the Russian Ambassador on the subject.<sup>66</sup>

Edward understood how the symbolism of an apparently small ceremonial act could shape public impressions of the outcome of a visit, as had happened to him most recently in Berlin.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> BOD MS Asquith 5/124, Asquith to Edward VII, 16 June 1909.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> TNA FO800/103/225, Knollys to Tynell, 24 June 1909.

## The state visit at Cowes

The state visit itself went off very well, taking the form of a relaxed family visit, despite its serious political undertones and the public ceremonial demonstrations of both British and Russian sea power. 'My general impression, which was shared, I believe, by the Russians, was that the visit was a great success in every way, that the arrangements left nothing to be desired, and that the magnificent display of our naval power will not soon be forgotten',<sup>67</sup> according to Wallace's report. The highlight was the Royal Navy's lavish display of British sea power staged in the Solent. It was certainly hugely enjoyed by the Tsar and by the King and Prince of Wales, all together in their elaborate uniforms and honours to witness the spectacle from the decks of the Victoria and Albert. The royal interchange at the subsequent displays of fireworks and other public events marking the formal aspects of the visit was led by the Prince of Wales, leaving Edward on board the royal yacht. In the background, their respective ministers took the opportunity to discuss political matters with each other and the sovereigns present. Grey, in particular, was pleased that the state visit provided him with an opportunity to talk with the Tsar directly about Russia's intentions in Persia: 'The Emperor told me that he was so anxious for good relations with us that, in order to promote them, he would have been ready to agree to the withdrawal of the Russian officers from Persia, had it not been for the fact that they would surely have been replaced by officers of another nationality.'<sup>68</sup>

British ministers saw a clear advantage in these state visits by foreign royalty to Britain: the opportunity to speak to foreign leaders directly, without the usual formal channels. Neilson agrees: 'While all eyes were on the exchange of royal pleasantries at Cowes in early August, the focus of Anglo-Russian relations was moving out of the Balkans and into Persia and Mesopotamia.'<sup>65</sup> It was clearly understood in that way by *The Times* in its editorial comment on the visit, noting that such state visits confirmed the 'cordial relations' between participating states by promoting opportunities for enhancing the personal interactions of rulers under the public gaze.<sup>64</sup> This editorial comment also contextualises one

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<sup>67</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/W/55/53, Sir Donald Wallace to Lord Knollys, 7 August 1909.

<sup>68</sup> TNA FO800/73/270, Grey to Benckendorff, 12 August 1909.

<sup>65</sup> Keith Nielson (1995) *Britain and the Last Tsar, British Policy and Russia, 1894–1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 308.

<sup>64</sup> 'The Tsar's Visit', Editorial, *The Times*, 2 August 1909.

of the twentieth century's most famous photographs, which appears in many works on the European royal families at this period.<sup>71</sup> It was taken to symbolise the family unity that underpinned the visit. It depicts Tsar Nicholas II and George V, then still Prince of Wales, standing arm in arm in matching uniforms, and no picture sums up the political situation of Europe as well as this one. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's goal of establishing a positive role for royal diplomacy via family unity across Europe's courts was here supposedly complete. However, the image was not made widely available to a public audience until it was published in Harold Nicolson's 1952 biography of George V, and this underlines the fact that, by Edward's day, royal diplomacy had moved on. It was neither desirable nor useful to display such family amities to a public audience: instead, the reliance had to be on public formalities, performed in front of the widest possible audience.

This is, then, an interesting and even a touching family photograph, but not one intended for propaganda use. The men are informally posed and informally attired, without any contextualising symbols signifying a meeting involving pomp or ceremony, implying that it was a purely private image.<sup>72</sup> This does not, of course, mean that the photograph was not a carefully orchestrated scene of the two men together or that it was not a well-known image amongst the royal family, but simply that it was kept out of the wider public domain until Nicolson's text gave it a significance it had never had previously. It is better understood as a private image for family consumption, given the reality that the main concern of both the British royal family and the government was to stage-manage the family encounters to avoid any public impression of too close a sympathy between the British royals and a man who had personally – or, at best, whose government had – a brutal reputation in Britain. Public ceremonial and symbolic gestures that related to the status of the Tsar and the King were desirable: a photograph emphasising the personal connections between the Tsar and the Prince of Wales was not. It would have had a negative symbolism at the time, as its publication could have provided an unhelpful reminder to the British public of the intimate family ties between their own royals and the Tsarist regime.

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<sup>71</sup> It is, for instance, the cover image for Ann Morrow (2006) *Cousins Divided. George V and Nicholas II* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing).

<sup>72</sup> While their dress is broadly nautical, it is not naval uniform – rather, it is yachting gear such as any Edwardian yachtsman of good social standing would wear.



The probable reason for its delayed appearance in the public domain was the wish to avoid making such an impression on the popular mind.

Since the planning of the Tsar's visit had paid much attention to how the public would react to his being in the UK, it is important to gauge the press reaction to how the Tsar was received. The majority of the papers devoted themselves to discussing the various decorations awarded and worn, the lavish displays of flags and bunting, and the elaborate speeches that were made by figures including the Lord Mayor of London, transported down for the occasion as the representative of the capital city. *The Times* reported the following statement that the Tsar had made upon leaving the UK: 'It is the Emperor's firm desire and belief that this all too brief visit can only bear the happiest of fruit in promoting the friendliest feelings between the Governments and people of the two countries.'<sup>72</sup> This statement in the press emphasised the importance of the visit for the country's good diplomatically, as it was important to be on good terms with Russia. It reinforced the point that Grey had argued in the Commons months before, that state visits were useful as a way of promoting Britain's foreign relations and were not in any way aimed as a reaction to or comment on the internal policies of foreign governments. It was fortunate for the royal family and the British Cabinet that the British media mainly seemed to endorse this perspective as opposed to emphasising the character of the Russian government.

Finally, Edward's delegation of ceremonial duties apart from witnessing the naval review was not a marker signifying that such engagements were of less significance when it was a case of a state visit *to* Britain taking place. Rather, it was a practical solution to a problem created by Edward's failing health by the summer of 1909. As this last semi-public engagement in active royal diplomacy by Edward underlines, state visits to Britain were as carefully and intricately planned, and made as conscious a use of symbolism in their ceremonial aspects, as state visits overseas.

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<sup>72</sup> 'The Tsar at Cowes', *The Times*, 6 August 1909.

# Epilogue: After Edward

On 6 May 1910, Edward VII died at Buckingham Palace. Although he had been in poor health for the majority of his reign, he had rapidly declined since his trip to Berlin, despite being determined to work until the end. As the last chapter has shown, he did his best to manage – at least through his heir – the elaborate expectations of the return state visit by Nicholas II to Britain. By the time of his death, Edward had earned himself the reputation of being a peacemaker and one of Europe’s premier travelling sovereigns – all of which attests to the fact that contemporaries identified him, as a sovereign, as a leading royal diplomat.

The extent to which Edward had successfully revived British royal diplomacy as an active contributor to the management of Britain’s overseas relations is underlined by the fact that even though his heir, George V, was a very different man from his father, he continued – and developed – the tradition of royal diplomacy started by his father. In personal terms, he has been judged unfavourably against his father: George lacked Edward’s majestic presence, the ability to deliver grand speeches and to make witty conversation with those he met on his overseas state visits.<sup>1</sup> For many at the time, these were the very ingredients that had made the late King’s foreign visits successful. But what Edward had done was create a context in which the individual personality of the monarch mattered less than the symbolism of the presence of the British sovereign on such formal occasions. The formulaic nature of a state visit helped, but what was also crucial was Edward’s very conscious respect for the constitutional niceties of his position. It was this that had made his impetus to revive the formal state visit overseas successful.

Edward had come to the throne already convinced of the power of a symbolic gesture made by a sovereign to other sovereigns, not just on fellow members of the Trade Union of Kings but also on their subjects (and his own). When Disraeli had feared that the princely states in India would react badly to the British initiative to depose the Maharajah of

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Rose (2000) *King George V* (London: Phoenix Press); Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar, Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray).

Baroda in 1874, he had urged on his royal mistress the importance of the Prince of Wales visiting British India and the princely states as a gesture of reassurance. The then Prince of Wales had gone, and had thoroughly enjoyed himself – but he had also learned the lesson that a symbolic gesture could have a real and positive political impact when performed by a monarch.<sup>2</sup> As King, therefore, he had consciously planned to revive the format of the state visit overseas – though possibly not as immediately as his nephew, Wilhelm II, had tried to force on him.

In 1910, the reality was that, while neither George V nor his elected government seemed immediately enthusiastic about carrying on Edward VII's active overseas royal diplomacy, events meant that it was necessary to continue with them. If home and empire pressures meant that George V did not undertake a state visit to Europe immediately, he did make state visits both within his own realm and to his empire. The public importance of state visits by British monarchs, in terms of increasing popular support for the monarchy, was so well understood and valued that both Victoria and Edward had carried out what were labelled 'state visits' to cities within their own kingdom. George V and his consort carried on that tradition, and, in addition, expanded it to the Empire in a way that Edward might have done, had he been younger and in better health.

Certainly, George V consciously appreciated what his father had done for Britain through his state visits in Europe, as he said to Lord Esher. However, he felt that it was his priority to utilise the format of the state visit for the benefit of Britain's imperial interests.<sup>3</sup> This is a key reason for George's absence from the European state visit circuit until 1913, along with the constitutional crisis over the House of Lords, when George understandably felt that, as King, he should not be absent from his kingdom until its final resolution.

Although the Delhi Durbar, the height of imperial pomp and glory, is generally characterised as an imperial occasion rather than a state visit, in fact it actually partook far more of the public nature of a state visit in terms of its symbolism, and the impact that it had. It is, therefore, best understood in that way, because the Durbar encapsulated the role of the monarch as a symbol more completely than any previous visit had done

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 133–8.

<sup>3</sup> Esher, Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher (1934) *Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher*, 4 vols (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson), vol. 3, p. 51.

in his father's reign. Unlike his father, brought up to be King, George's upbringing had been as second in line, and he had had to learn the lessons of sovereignty as an adult. His understanding of the symbolic nature of both kingship and royal diplomacy was conscious, rather than visceral. In Delhi, it was not lost on the King, or those in attendance, that to observers of all ranks and types, George the man was invisible; all they could see was the dome above his head.<sup>4</sup>

Edward VII's overseas state visits represented a significant stepping stone in the evolution of the British version of the modern state visit by the monarch. By the start of the twentieth century, the British monarchy had developed into a core symbol of the British nation. What Edward did was apply the use of that symbol on the international stage. The wider importance of this book is that it encourages a revisiting of European diplomacy in the years before 1914, in ways that permit a subtle revision of how the role of royal diplomacy contributed to the wider diplomatic landscape. For Britain, one crucial aspect of royal diplomacy at work through state visits overseas was – as the return visit of the Tsar to Britain in 1909 also underlines – that popular opinion could not be ignored. Where British foreign policy and diplomacy had the capacity to outrage popular opinion, thanks to entrenched cultural stereotypes or recent events, royal diplomacy could be an emollient force that enabled gestures of amity to be made without the need for formal agreements which might have been more difficult to make acceptable. One of the crucial aspects of the modern performance of state visits by European monarchs, including Edward VII, was that, thanks to widespread media coverage, they appeared to be transparent in ways that signalled an 'advance' which was fitting for a new 'democratic' age. In reality, the state visits of most European monarchs were generally conducted within the 'old diplomatic' system, and the transparency was largely illusory. In the case of Edward VII's royal diplomacy, the realities of constitutional monarchy meant that the traditional conduct of diplomacy was in the hands of elected politicians. What the formal presence of the British monarch amounted to was a discreet but still public announcement that something diplomatically significant had taken place, or was about to take place.

Edward did not have the same expectations of policy achievement as his fellow members of the Trade Union of Kings, especially the Kaiser and the Tsar. But, while very conscious of his role as a constitutional

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<sup>4</sup> Rose *George V*, pp. 132–5.

monarch and the need to work within those boundaries, being guided by his elected ministers on policy decisions, he did insist that as King, he was the one who needed to be in charge of management of the public ceremonial aspects of a state visit, and the private nuances that underpinned them. On this front, he was not answerable either to his ministers or to Parliament, and saw no need to be so. Certainly, his ministers did not encourage him to feel differently, as they showed so little understanding themselves of the nuances involved in demonstrating the power of royal symbolism – witness the one ‘failed’ state visit of his reign, to Spain. For historians of Britain and British diplomacy, what makes Edward’s visits worthy of study is the fact that they were the test lab for subsequent royal state visits in ways that more actively involved elected ministers understanding and appreciating the asset of the royal state visit. But it was the reign of Edward VII that set in motion the transformation of the style of visit from something very Victorian to the more modern visits, public and accessible, symbolic and reportable, of a kind recognisable today.

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