

DEBATE
IN THE
House of Commons
ON
MR. GALLY KNIGHT'S
MOTION FOR THE
PRODUCTION OF CERTAIN UKASES ISSUED
BY THE
Russian Government,
RELATING TO THE
ADMINISTRATION OF POLAND.
JUNE 30TH, 1842.

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Extracted from Mr. Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates," for the  
"Literary Association of the Friends of Poland," &c. &c.

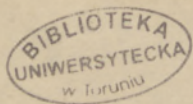
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LONDON:  
PRINTED BY E. DETKENS, BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER, &c.  
15, DEAN STREET, SOHO.

1842.

## DEBATE, &c.

MR. GALLY KNIGHT:—In rising to bring forward the motion, of which I have given notice, I must begin by expressing my regret that the task has not fallen into abler hands than mine. I am fully sensible of my own inadequacy to do justice to so large and important a question; but, having long taken a deep interest in the destinies of Poland, and having, on former occasions, lifted up my voice in her behalf, I could not desert her now; and I throw myself on the indulgence of the House—an indulgence of which I always stand in need. I beg leave also to premise that, in thus coming forward, I take upon myself the whole responsibility of this motion. In this matter I am wholly unconnected with those I usually support; I come forward as an independent Member of this House to perform that part which is dictated to him by his own conscience and his own sense of duty. Neither do I come forward with any wish of keeping



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a sore open—of perpetuating a convenient annoyance ; but rather for the sake of inducing Russia, if it may be, herself to close a sore, which, otherwise, must remain festering to her own great and lasting disadvantage. I stand more in need of the indulgence of the House, because I shall not have it in my power to relieve my discourse with any appeals to the passions, or any pungent denunciations. It is not my intention to heap invectives on a sovereign with whom this country is in alliance ; my object is to assert a right, but not to give offence—to persuade, and not to irritate ; and my belief is, that by adopting this course, I shall not only be acting in the most proper manner, but in that manner which is the most likely to lead to a practical and beneficial result. At the same time I feel persuaded that the sympathy which this House has ever felt for the Polish nation—that nation which at one time was the bulwark of Christendom—which at all times has been remarkable for talent and courage, and no less remarkable, I regret to say, for its great and unmerited misfortunes—will induce this House to listen with interest to any thing which relates to them, however imperfectly the statement may be made by their feeble advocate. I should not here presume to occupy the time of the House with this motion, had the affairs of Poland remained in the same state in which they were when they were last

the subject of discussion ; but, unfortunately, new matter has arisen—new infractions of the treaty of Vienna have taken place ; changes have been made, not only pernicious in themselves, but likely to lead to others of a still more deplorable character. But, in order to make the House more fully aware of the nature and tendency of these changes, and because there are many new members in this House who were not present on former occasions, I must go back to the earlier stages of this sad history, and remind the House, in as few words as I am able, of the expectations which were originally held out to the Polish nation, and of the prospects which, at one time, opened before them. Let us see what they had reason to expect from the Emperor of Russia ; let us see in what light they were regarded by the contracting powers of Europe. With respect to the first, we have the evidence of the letter written by the Emperor Alexander to the celebrated Kosciuszko, dated Paris, March 3, 1814 :—

*“ Paris. March 3, 1814.*

*“ I feel the greatest satisfaction in returning an answer to your letter. The wishes you have most at heart shall be fulfilled. With the aid of the Almighty I hope to accomplish the regeneration of the brave and respected nation to which you belong. I have taken upon myself a solemn engagement to effect this object ; the welfare of Poland has long occupied my thoughts. Political circumstances alone have interfered with the execution of my intentions. Those*



obstacles exist no longer. Two years of a terrible, but glorious, struggle, have swept them away. Yet a little while, and, proceeding in a prudent manner, the Poles will recover their country and their name; and I shall enjoy the pleasure of convincing them, that he whom they thought their enemy, is the person who will crown their hopes——!"

Did not this letter give the Polish nation reason to hope every thing from the kindness of their new protector? With respect to the second consideration, we know that at the Congress of Vienna the question of Poland was considered to be of such vital importance, not only to Poland, but to Europe, that, on account of it, recourse was on the point of being had to arms. I need not remind the House that the absolute restoration of Poland as an independent kingdom was then the object; and, when that project was interrupted by the return of Napoleon from Elba, let us see in what terms the British Plenipotentiary, the late Lord Londonderry, expressed himself, in his note addressed to the Congress in 1814:—

"Without giving up his former opinions on the subject of Poland, he would confine himself to the expression of a wish that the proposition made by Russia on that subject might never lead to any of those evil consequences with respect to the tranquility of the north, or the equilibrium of Europe, which it was his duty to bear in mind; but that, in order to guard against those dangers as much as possible, it was of the utmost importance to lay the foundations of public tranquility in those countries which formerly composed the kingdom

of Poland, upon the liberal basis of consulting their common interests, by giving to all the inhabitants of those countries, however varied might be the form of their government, a system of administration with which they would have reason to be satisfied. It is not by going counter to the usages and institutions which they possessed as a nation, that the happiness of Poland and the tranquility of that important part of Europe can be secured."

After pressing upon the Congress the necessity of preserving the nationality of the Poles, Lord Londonderry goes on to say:—

"That such a course would obtain for the different sovereigns the respect of their Polish subjects, and would dissipate any apprehensions with respect to the liberties of Europe and might be awakened by the union of Poland to the empire of Russia, which was always increasing in power; apprehensions which would cease to be chimerical if, at any time, the military force of the two countries should be wielded by an ambitious and warlike Prince.

These expressions, in the highest degree honourable to the British Plenipotentiary, not only prove that Lord Londonderry considered the Polish question to be an European question—that he considered the preservation of Polish nationality to be of the utmost importance to the tranquility and safety of Europe—but that he frankly informed the Russian government of his opinions in all their bearings, and made Russia fully aware of the jealousy with which she could not fail to be regarded, should any other course but the one he recommended be adopted. About the same time Prince Talleyrand, the French minister,



declared that the views announced by Lord Londonderry, were in exact conformity with those entertained by France. The same sentiments were expressed by Austria and Prussia. And what was the answer of Russia?

“That the justice and liberality of the sentiments of the British Plenipotentiary had afforded the Emperor of Russia the most lively satisfaction, and that a just measure had been taken of the large and enlightened views of his Imperial Majesty. That, by favouring all the measures which were likely to ameliorate the condition of Poland, the Emperor trusted he had afforded a proof of the sincerity of his intentions; that he considered that the attachment of the Poles to the respective Sovereigns under whom they were about to be placed, earned by an equitable regard for the interests which they prized the most, would be the best safeguard of the security of the Sovereigns themselves, and the best guarantee of the repose of Europe.”

Such were the views entertained and the sentiments expressed by the contracting powers, and by Russia herself, with respect to the destinies of the Polish nation, and the important bearing of that question upon the destinies of Europe. The Congress felt and acknowledged that the preservation of the nationality of the Poles was indispensable to the welfare of Europe. In conformity with these sentiments, that portion of the treaty of Vienna which has reference to Poland was drawn up. The principal articles were—

“1. That the Duchy of Warsaw shall be for ever united by its constitution to the Russian empire, under the title of the kingdom

of Poland; that it shall have a distinct administration, a budget, and an army of its own. The Emperor reserves to himself the right of giving it the territorial extension which he may think desirable.”

By which was intended that the Polish Palatinates, which Russia had acquired at the former partition of Poland should be reunited to the new kingdom.

“2. That Prussia and Austria should give a representative form of government to the Polish provinces which they were to retain, and that all the Polish provinces should have such institutions as should preserve their nationality.

“3. That there was to be the most complete freedom of commercial intercourse between all the provinces which had constituted the ancient kingdom of Poland, previous to the partition of 1782.

“4. That Cracow, the ancient capital of Poland, should be a free and independent city.”

It will be observed, that of such importance was it considered that the nationality of the Poles should be secured, that its preservation was not only required in the new kingdom of Poland. but also in the Polish provinces which were to remain in the hands of other powers. It was even determined that, in those provinces, the Poles should obtain a representative form of government. The treaty defines the future form of government in those provinces with more accuracy than it does that of the new kingdom of Poland; but the reason was, that at the time of the Congress, in those provinces there was nothing of the kind—whilst the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, which



was to form the new kingdom of Poland, was already in possession of a constitution which had previously been conferred upon it by Napoleon. The expression, therefore, of "par sa constitution," which has sometimes been said to be vague, was not, in fact, vague, because it referred to the constitution which was already in existence. In 1815, in compliance with the treaty of Vienna, the Emperor Alexander gave a charter to Poland. By that charter the Emperor made some alterations in the constitution granted by Napoleon; but these alterations were of no great importance, and the charter of 1815 was accepted as the constitution guaranteed by the treaty of Vienna. Amongst the articles contained in the charter were—

"Articles 86, 87.—The legislative power shall reside in the king and the two Houses of the Diet. The Diet shall assemble once in two years at Warsaw.

"Article 29.—The public offices, civil or military, shall only be exercised by Poles.

"Articles 11, 13.—The Roman Catholic Religion, which is the religion of the great majority of the inhabitants of Poland, shall be especially protected by the Government.

"The property with which the Roman Catholic Clergy, or the Clergy of the united Greek Church"

— which acknowledges the Pope as its head—

"are endowed, or shall be endowed, shall be inalienable."

If this charter did not confer liberties so extensive as are enjoyed in this country, it at least, gave im-

portant pledges to the Poles, and to Europe, it, at least, gave the Poles a government of their own, a distinct administration. The public offices were only to be exercised by Poles. The Polish language was to be employed in all public acts, and the nationality of the Polish nation was preserved. But it may be said, for it has been said, that the insurrection of 1830 sufficiently accounts for any alterations that may have been made. But, alas! a great change had taken place in the sentiments of the Emperor Alexander, a great change in the manner in which the affairs of Poland were administered, long before that unfortunate insurrection occurred. That change did not arise from any misconduct of the Poles, but from what was passing in other countries. Spain demanded a representative government—Naples followed her example—Germany was in a state of ferment—the monarchs were alarmed—Alexander himself was induced to see danger in free institutions. In this alarm, he forgot earlier and more rational sentiments; he forgot his letter to Kosciuszko; he forgot that the most secure foundation upon which the throne of a monarch can be based, is the happiness of his people. From that moment, the Poles were treated in a very different manner than what they had been. Promises were not fulfilled—various infractions took place, and the harsh government of the Grand-Duke Con-



stantine filled the cup of Polish disappointment to the brim. I do not stand here to justify that insurrection. I do not stand here to say, that the Emperor had not a perfect right to put it down; but this I say, that Russia might have remembered of how much the Poles had to complain; this I say, that Russia might have remembered the generous and chivalrous manner in which the Poles suffered the Grand-Duke Constantine, who had used them so cruelly, to escape unharmed, and at a moment when it was obvious how important a hostage he would have been in their hands; above all, I say, that the insurrection did not give Russia a right to abolish the Polish constitution. She had no right to abolish the constitution, even had Poland and herself been the only parties concerned; for, according to all the laws of civilized nations, the misconduct of a part does not entitle a sovereign to file a bill of indictment against the whole—and not only to take vengeance on the offending generation, but also to punish their latest and blameless posterity. But on the occasion in question, there were other parties concerned. The Polish constitution was as much guaranteed to the Powers who had signed the Treaty of Vienna as to Poland itself—and setting Poland aside, so long as treaties are binding, Russia had no right to abolish the Polish constitution, until she had previously obtained the

consent of the contracting powers to whom it had been conceded. But I need not occupy the time of the House with further urging this point, for, upon this point, England has declared its opinion. Whilst the struggle was yet going on (for this House will remember, that Russia did not find it so easy a matter to crush the handful of brave men who ventured to resist an empire) it was intimated to Russia by the Government of this country, that if not a finger would be lifted in opposition to Russia, or in aid of the Poles, yet that this country expected that the conditions of the treaty of Vienna would be maintained; and when it was perceived that such were not the intentions of Russia, the British minister at the Court of St. Petersburg was directed to make representations on the subject. Russia replied by alleging that the insurrection had released her from all her obligations, and argued that Poland was now her property by the right of conquest. The right of conquest! Does any nation that pretends to be civilized assert that conquest confers the right of inflicting wound after wound? No. Does not the conqueror who has any sense of the duties of a ruler, or any respect for the opinion of mankind, rather seek to heal the wounds which he could not help inflicting, and secure his restored authority by acts of generosity and kindness? But the arguments of Russia were not allowed



to be valid. The noble Lord, the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, expressly informed this House, in the speech which he delivered in 1833, that he had instructed the British Minister to rejoin that the insurrection had only conveyed the right of putting it down; that, in spite of the insurrection, the treaty of Vienna remained in full force; but if Russia had no compassion for Poland, she would not be released from the obligations into which she had entered with Europe; and that, in spite of all that had been advanced, the abolition of the constitution of Poland would only be regarded as a direct infraction of the treaty of Vienna. Lord Palmerston said, 9th July, 1833—

“The contracting parties to the treaty of Vienna have a right to require that the constitution of Poland should not be touched—and this is an opinion which I have not concealed from the Russian government previous to the taking of Warsaw—and when Warsaw fell, that opinion was again conveyed to the Russian government. The Russian government, however, took a different view of the question. They contended that, by the re-conquest of Poland, the Emperor was placed in the same situation in which he stood after the treaty of Vienna, and before the granting of a constitution to Poland, and that he was at liberty, the previously-existing institutions having been swept away, as they contended, by the revolution, to determine by what sort of institutions they should be replaced. The reply of the English Government was to the following effect:—That having taken into full consideration all that the Russian government had stated in support of their view of the case, they still adhered to the

opinion previously expressed, that the true and fair interpretation of the Treaty of Vienna required that the Polish Constitution should remain as before the revolution, and that Russia had no right to abolish it.”

On the 19th of February, 1836, Lord Palmerston said,

“I stated on a former occasion, that the British Government had remonstrated against the change which was made in the constitution of Poland, and had expressed it as their opinion that it was not consistent with the treaty of Vienna.”

England, therefore, through the mouth of her Minister, stands committed to the opinion that the insurrection was no justification of the violation of the treaty; and, in this country, every succeeding Government admits itself to be bound by the acts of its predecessor. If the representations of England, unsupported by Austria and Russia, did not obtain all that was desired, yet they had an effect; for in the very organic statute which Russia promulgated in 1832, and which is odious in the eyes of the friends of Poland, as having been the first public act by which this constitution was abolished—in that destructive statute Russia felt it necessary to introduce pledges of an opposite character. If the organic statute violated one half of the treaty of Vienna, it respected the other half. If it abolished the constitution—if it substituted a Council of State



for the Polish Diet—it preserved the distinct administration. If it deprived Poland of its independence, it preserved its nationality—and entered into fresh obligations to respect its religion,—its tribunals,—and its language. Thus it was that, in 1832, despotic rule was, by the organic statute, substituted in the place of free institutions. I will not here dwell upon the pains and penalties by which the new system was ushered in; the suppression of the Universities, the confiscations, the banishments to Siberia, the expatriation of families and children. Of all these this House has heard before, and it might have been hoped that with them resentment would have been exhausted. Neither will I say a word about Cracow, for Cracow is a subject to itself. But I now pass on to the recent Ukases, to the new matter, in consequence of which I feel myself authorised to call upon this House to express an opinion. After a lapse of nine years,—after an interval during which no new insurrectionary movement has appeared in Poland, during which, if many blows have been inflicted, no resistance has been attempted, Russia, without any communication with the contracting powers, as if to ascertain how much Europe would endure, has issued two Ukases which complete the violation of the Treaty of Vienna, by putting an end to the distinct administration of Poland. These Ukases were issued in

September last, since the accession to power of the present Ministry. No room is left for doubt, for the Ukases are prepared with the following words,—

“ Finding that a separate Council of State for Poland no longer suits the present posture of affairs”—

And the Ukase then proceeds to incorporate the government of Poland with the government of the empire. Instead of the Polish Council of State, the 9th and 10th sections of the senate of Petersburg are henceforth to administer the affairs of Poland. The 7th and 8th sections superintend the administration of Moscow, so that the government of Poland is assimilated in every respect to that of every other province of the Russian empire. The Supreme Court of Justice of Poland is abolished, and the 9th and 10th sections of the senate of Petersburg succeed to all its functions. These sections are to sit at Warsaw, but, component parts as they are of the Russian senate, they are under the same control which directs the senate of Petersburg, and no longer possess any distinct character. They are to be composed indifferently of Russians and Poles. The emperor names the whole body in the first instance. These are the words of the Ukase;—

“ Finding that the existence of a separate Council of State for the kingdom of Poland is no longer suitable to the existing state of



things, and as it is necessary to place the Supreme Tribunal of Justice upon a better basis, we have determined that the Council of State of the kingdom of Poland, and the Supreme Court of Justice shall be suppressed, and, by these presents, we create at Warsaw, for the kingdom of Poland, two new sections of the senate of the empire, which shall be called the 9th and 10th sections. These two sections shall preside over all the affairs over which the Council of State used to preside; with the exception of the budget, which shall be a department to itself.

“Article 3.—The 9th section of the senate of the empire succeeds to all the functions of the Supreme Court of Justice. The 10th section shall preside over criminal matters, and shall be regulated by a penal code which will be published hereafter.

“Article 7.—The section shall, in the first instance, be composed of persons named by the emperor; afterwards they shall be chosen from a list presented by the Viceroy.”

I need not remind the House that, next to the enjoyment of freedom, nothing is so essential to the well-being of a people as an administration of justice in which they confide. With what feelings, therefore, must the people of Poland behold their ancient supreme tribunal subverted, the administration of justice taken out of the hands of their countrymen, and a branch of the senate of Petersburg installed in its stead? From the decisions of the 9th and 10th sections, the only appeal is to the Emperor himself, and an appeal which must be carried to Petersburg, a distance of 1,500 miles, an appeal to which, an appeal from Dublin or Edinburgh to London would be

a trifling inconvenience. The second Ukase makes the Russian money the current coin of Poland. But this is not all; for other Ukases have been issued which make it evident that Russia is acting upon a systematic plan of reducing Poland from a separate kingdom into an ordinary province of the empire, and nothing shows the deliberate intention more completely than the manner in which it is executed. All the changes are first introduced into the Polish provinces which Russia obtained by the first partition, and which, consequently, have been the longest habituated to their absolute control, and from those provinces they are gradually extended to the provinces of the kingdom. In the first place, with regard to the established religion of Poland, that religion of which Alexander declared the property to be inalienable, and which even the organic statute undertakes to respect. By a stroke of the pen, 4,000,000 of the united Greek Church, who acknowledge the pope as their head, have been converted into Russian Greeks, acknowledging the Emperor. Another Ukase dispossesses the Catholic clergy of all their landed property, and makes them dependent on the state. Another reduces their stipends. A Greek bishop is established at Warsaw\*—

\* About the time when this Debate took place, the Emperor of Russia raised the Greek schismatical Bishop of Warsaw to an archbishopric, and established a suffragan Bishop at Pultusk; where



a Catholic church is turned into a Greek cathedral—and obstacles are thrown in the way of erecting Catholic chapels in the rural districts. Do not these measures reveal a fixed intention of extirpating the established religion of Poland, and introducing the Greek church in its stead? In the same way a Russian superintendent is appointed to watch over the public education of Poland, and the Russian language is made a principal part of Polish education. It has already been shown what has been done with the courts of justice. The Polish uniform, the Polish colours, the Polish cockade have been made to give place to the Russian. Russians as well as Poles are allowed to exercise public offices, both social and military. All the Public acts are henceforth to be published in the Russian language. Another Ukase changes the Polish palatinates into governments, to assimilate them even the more with the other divisions of the empire. The Russian money becomes the common coin of Poland. The metamorphosis descends from the most important offices to the most minute. Even the weights and measures of Poland are to be Russian: even the year is not undisturbed and the Poles are obliged to abandon the new style, and return to the old, because it has been persevered in in Russia—a petty annoyance, which will remind them

the Monks of the Benedictine order were turned out of their Convent, and the building appropriated to the use of the Greek bishop.

of their yoke every day. It is a complete system of fusion—a settled intention of effacing the Polish nationality, the Polish religion, the Polish language, of leaving not a trace behind; so that, at length, no man shall be able to say this was Poland. And now I think I have made out my case. I think I have shown that promises of a very different nature were originally held out by Russia, that the independence of Poland was considered by the late Lord Londonderry to be essential to the welfare of Europe, that, in conformity with those views, a constitution and a distinct administration were guaranteed to Poland by the treaty of Vienna, and that now the last fragment of that treaty is scattered to the winds; and allow me to ask what change has taken place in the position of Russia, which makes it more safe than it was in 1814, that Poland should cease to exist as a nation? The honour of this country as well as the safety of Europe, is concerned. Would it be for the honour of England that she should take no notice of the final annihilation of the treaty, to which she was a party, and which was declared to be of such vital importance? If I am told that I am calling upon this country to rush into a war, I declare that I have no such intentions. But I call upon this House to express its sense of the annihilation of the treaty of Vienna; and I call upon the Government to adopt the same course which was adopted before, and to make



remonstrances and representations against the infraction of the second half of the treaty, and the abolition of the distinct administration. We might venture to hope that, on the present occasion, we should have the advantage of the co-operation of Prussia. If the only speck on the memory of the late King of Prussia was his subserviency to Russia in all things relating to the Poles, the present king, with whose high qualities this country has recently had the opportunity of becoming acquainted, has already evinced an intention of acting in a different manner. In proof of which, I need only read an extract from the speech of the President of the Diet of the Grand Duchy of Posen, addressed to that body, on the opening of their session in February 1841:—

“The generous sentiments of His Majesty (Frederick William the Fourth) assure us, that the happiness of the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Posen, is the object of his wishes and exertions. Already he has afforded us proofs of his sincerity. Our Archbishop is restored to us. A general amnesty has been granted to the Poles accused of political offences. Our deputies at Königsberg, on the occasion of his present Majesty's accession have received from the king his solemn promise that nothing shall be done to impair our nationality. His majesty has revoked the edict of 1817, which was a violation of our rights, and he has decreed that the Poles shall be allowed to plead in their own language in the courts of justice.”

May we not conclude, that the sovereign who is acting in this manner by the Poles within his own dominions, will be disposed to exert himself in favour of

those whom, by the treaty, he is equally bound to protect? We may rely on the co-operation of France—for though I am constrained to acknowledge, that at this moment there exists a feeling, with respect to this country, which I deeply regret; which I the more regret, because the real interests of both countries are the same, because I am well assured, that there are no substantial or sufficient grounds for the feeling to which I have alluded—yet, in anything relating to the Poles, we might rely on the co-operation of France, and such a co-operation would be more likely than anything else to lead to a renewal of that good understanding between this country and France which is so much to be desired. If I am asked what is the use of making representations, I answer, that by so doing, we should preserve a right which, otherwise, will be lost; that, perhaps, we should obtain kinder treatment for Poland; that, at any rate, we should make it impossible for Russia to say—“we thought you approved, because you expressed no opinion to the contrary”—at any rate, we should discharge what appears to me an absolute duty—and never, I trust, will the hour arrive, that shall see England shrink from a duty, or descend from that moral eminence which has hitherto obtained for her the admiration of the world. I am well aware, that at the present moment, we have every reason to be satisfied with the conduct of Russia, except with res-



pect to Poland, and that between Russia and this country the most amicable relations exist; but such a posture of affairs, far from making an appeal to Russia more difficult, should afford it facility; for, have we not a right to say, "if your friendship is sincere, prove it by fulfilling the treaty." And is there anything that should disturb amicable relations when we approach a friend with exhortations that are no less for his real interests than our own? Is it for the interest of Russia that she should prepare for herself a constant source of anxiety? Is it for the interest of Russia that she should make herself an object of jealousy to all the other powers of Europe? Is it better that the safety and tranquility of Europe should repose on a sleeping volcano, or on Polish nationality? In order to prove that it is not for the real interest of Russia, that she should trample upon the Polish nation, we might point out to her the example of our own conduct to Ireland. Thank God the time is arrived, when I may advert to that subject without indiscretion. But we might tell Russia, that for centuries England treated Ireland as a conquered country; endeavouring to efface her nationality, and her religion; endeavouring to do to Ireland exactly what Russia is now endeavouring to do to Poland; that not only overwhelming force was employed, but that laws were introduced which have been admitted to be the most atrociously ingenious that ever

were designed to torture and subdue a people? and what was the result?—that centuries of oppression yielded us nothing,—that the Irish only clung to their customs and their creed with the greater tenacity—that they were not subdued, not extirpated, not changed—and that all that England obtained was weakness where she ought to have had strength, and abhorrence where she might have won affection. At last, thank God, the system of persecution was abandoned, and the experiment of kindness resorted to. I will not say, that it has, as yet, completely succeeded; we could not expect it, from our prolonged misconduct; but the good seed is sown, it has already begun to grow, and, in due season, will, I am convinced, produce a rich and abundant harvest. Surely, it cannot offend our august ally to be told that we find it more agreeable to begin to be loved than to continue to be hated; and if I am told that a state of which the nationality is respected, cannot be advantageously combined with a despotic empire, I will point to the analogous case of Austria and Hungary. I will recal to recollection the celebrated cry of "*Moriemur pro rege nostro, Mariâ Theresâ*;" a sufficient proof that the state of which the nationality is respected, may be the most zealous and devoted support of the empire to which it is attached. Despotism has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. The Em-



peror of Russia is possessed of unlimited power. He can make nations miserable or happy with a stroke of his pen. He, therefore, can make Poland happy if he will. Let him, as we have done, try the experiment of kindness — remove grievances, redress wrongs; break the chains of the captive, recall the exile to his home; treat the brave, as they deserve to be treated, with confidence, and earn from them respect and esteem in return—consult the wishes of the people over whom he rules—extend blessings as wide as his sway. This is “the sweetest, holiest, draught of power.” By these means he will add strength to his empire, and glory to his name. “*Hæ tibi erunt artes.*” —“These are imperial arts, and worthy thee.” The hon. Member concluded by moving an address for certain Ukases, bearing date the 15th and 18th of September, 1841, issued by the Russian government and relating to the administration of the kingdom of Poland.

SIR F. BURDETT, in seconding the motion, said, that he would not in the absence of any functionary connected with the foreign department of the late Government, make those observations on the subject so ably brought forward by the hon. Member, which he had come down to the House with the intention of making. He should therefore confine himself to the expression of the pleasure with which he gave

his cordial support to the motion of the hon. Member, and would only further state, that he looked upon it as an earnest of the justice which this great country was at length prepared to do the ill-fated and unjustly used Poles. He begged also to express his earnest hopes, that insomuch as the present Ministry had incurred no responsibility whatever in regard to the acts of the Russian Government towards Poland, and as the late Government alone had participated in the responsibility which attached to this country for having quietly permitted them to be carried into effect,—he trusted the existing Ministry would still continue to act upon the same principle, and to refuse a participation in the responsibility assumed by their predecessors.

MR. HUME would permit the hon. Baronet's example to influence him, and therefore would refrain from addressing the House at any length on the motion of the hon. Member; but he must express his hope that the people of Great Britain would at length agree to wipe off the stain which had been cast on them in consequence of their having quietly permitted the treaty of Vienna, to which this country was a party, to be so grossly violated as it had been in the case of the Polish nation. The British Government had often interfered abroad in matters which, in no way concerned England; but in 1830,



when the fate of Poland was in the balance, and the mere expression of a wish on our part would have secured her independence, the Government of Earl Grey stood culpably by and saw her political exertions sacrificed. It was the duty of the British country to have supported the treaty they were a party to at Vienna. The French Chambers passed, he believed, a resolution every year, declaring that the independence of Poland ought to be supported; and he would be very much pleased if the House of Commons would adopt a similar course. Though he scarcely expected to live to see that happy event, yet the day he hoped would come when Polish nationality would be restored, and the integrity of that kingdom recognised. He deeply deplored the present oppressed state of Poland, the destruction of her national institutions, and the fate of her children and women; and trusting to see them soon reinstated in some of their rights by the remonstrance of this Government, he gave his willing support to the motion of the hon. Member.

MR. MILNES: Sir, the Government of any country that was a party to the treaty of Vienna is more or less responsible for the well-being of Poland. It was the sanction of those Governments and of England among them, which submitted Poland to Russian rule, which exposed it to the insanc

ferocities of the governor whom Russia imposed on it, and which therefore was the remote cause of the Polish revolution, and all its calamitous consequence. If there is such a thing as the responsibility of governments in this case England is responsible, and, admitting this, one only question remains for us—by what means, and to what extent that responsibility is to be asserted? In all matters of diplomacy, power must be regarded as well as right, and in none more than in the case before us. If what has occurred between Russia and Poland, had occurred between Holland and Belgium, had Belgium been defeated by Holland after her rebellion and resistance, and Holland had attempted to annihilate the nationality of Belgium, and transmute it into a Dutch province, is it conceivable that France and England would have permitted this infraction of the treaty of Vienna? We know, indeed, from the results of the Belgium revolution, that so far from this being the case, a new occasion for diplomatic interference was declared to have presented itself—the arrangements of 1815 were re-considered and re-modelled, and the independence of Belgium was the issue. The physical circumstances of Poland are different. I do not believe it was the duty of England to interfere alone by her resources or her arms in this quarrel; she owed something to Poland,



but she owed more to the interests of her citizens and the peace of the civilised world. One function, however, after the contest remained for her to perform, one from which no difficulties, no special interests, no diplomatic delicacies, could excuse her, and this was most clearly and energetically to protest against any infraction of the privileges guaranteed to Poland by the treaty of Vienna. And this course was at once adopted. On the 9th of July, 1833, the noble Lord, the Member for Tiverton, (Lord Palmerston) whose absence from this debate, I trust, is wholly accidental, stated—

“That the contracting parties to the treaty of Vienna have a right to require that the constitution of Poland should not be touched, and this was an opinion which he had not concealed from the Russian Government, previous to the taking of Warsaw, and before the result of hostilities was known, and when Warsaw fell, and Poland was placed at the disposal of Russia, that opinion was again distinctly conveyed to the Russian Government.”

The Russian Government remonstrated against this view, on the ground that the previously existing institutions were swept away by the revolution; but, continued the noble Lord—

“The reply of the English Government was to this effect, that having taken into full consideration all that the Russian Government had stated in support of this view of the case they still adhered to the opinion previously expressed, that the true and fair

interpretation of the treaty of Vienna, required that the Polish constitution should remain as before the revolution, and that Russia had no right to abolish it. No circumstances can arise, under which the English Government can give their sanction or acquiescence to the arrangements which the Emperor has made,”

In the same debate, Lord John Russell expressed the same sentiments; the noble Lord, now Secretary for the Colonial Department (Lord Stanley) said,—

“If I am asked my own opinion as to the interpretation to be put upon the treaty of Vienna, I am ready to say, that it is that stated to be the opinion of the Government, and that I consider it has been violated by Russia.”

And the right hon. Baronet, now at the head of her Majesty's Government, declared in the strongest terms his sympathy for the condition of the “Poles, and his indignation as to the course pursued by Russia.” About three years afterwards, Lord Palmerston alluded to and repeated the protest which he had made in 1833, and now in 1842, after years of repeated violations — of continued infractions — of avowed aggressions — I call on the right hon. Baronet, representing the department of Foreign affairs in this House, to avow his continuance of the policy which has been consistently and distinctly adopted by this country in this matter, and once more to record in the hearing of the civilized nations the firm and friendly protest of England in favour of the nation-



ality of Poland. I would, Sir, do this in no spirit of enmity to Russia, I would do it as one who consults her best interests and her real honour. I am opposed to all violent language on this subject, for, however excusable by individual zeal and private indignation, angry words are no dignified expression of the feelings of Governments. I would remonstrate with Russia in this case, as any one of the Roman Catholic Governments of Europe might have remonstrated with our Elizabeth or James the 1st, for their treatment of the Roman Catholics of Ireland—as Elizabeth did remonstrate with Spain and France for their persecution of the Protestants, for the Inquisition in the low countries, and for the horrors of the St. Bartholomew; but I should stand on stronger grounds than any of those Governments, for my remonstrances would be based not only on considerations of humanity, but also on the special provisions of a solemn treaty. I own, Sir, that I cannot consistently, with my information, hope for any immediate advantage to Poland from any proceeding of this House, or any declaration of public opinion; but a protest is rather for the future than for the present; a protest leaves the question open, adjourns to some indefinite period the final resolution of it, and reserves the right of returning to the subject, whenever favourable circumstances may arise. I see no reason

to believe, that the present emperor will pause in his work of the annihilation of Poland; if he were a weak, or an ignorant man, he might be terrified or enlightened, but advanced as he is, in intelligence and reflection beyond his people, endowed with so many qualities of vigour, determination, and perseverance, I can only regard this his project as the settled purpose of a man, whose will knows no control, and whose passion is petrified into stern resolution. But brute violence only provokes resistance, and gives permanence to the feelings it intends to destroy. Oppress a people, and you keep them together—banish a man, and you make him love his country—do as Russia is now doing with Poland, and Polish nationality can never perish. In the due course of time the present Emperor will be gathered to his fathers. Another sovereign may ascend that throne of a less severe and unrelenting temper. He, perhaps, may deem another line of policy towards Poland at once expedient and just. He may regard the relation of Hungary to Austria as better than that of a province in permanent though covert rebellion to a Government whose only security is the weight of its despotism. He may discern the true limits of his own power, and abandon an attempt which he believes to be impious because he sees that it is impossible. And then the untiring protest which



England and France have made against this wrong, and their continued assertion of this right will have their full efficacy in encouraging this benevolent wisdom, in proving to that sovereign, that in best consulting the interests of his own empire, he will be confirming the ties of amity and peace with the most powerful nations of the world. Or another alternative may occur. The throne of the Czars may be filled by a person less respectful of the interests of foreign nations, less prudent in his estimate of other powers, less temperate in his schemes of conquest and desires of ambition than the Emperor Nicholas. Again may the multitudes of the south be covetous of the wealth and luxuries of the southern and western kingdoms, and as the armies of Sobieski formed the barrier against Turkish invasion, so may the Polish nation, still show itself the frontier guardian of the common liberties and common civilization of Europe. In that day Poland will not forget those who now remember her. At the same time, Sir, I cannot deny that I perceive in this our act of sympathy and protestation, an immediate advantage for this country in a most important and delicate quarter. In the year 1839, at a Polish meeting in London, the Count Montalembert, one of the most distinguished of the younger statesmen of France, expressed himself to

the effect, "that if by bad policy or untoward misunderstandings, the good feeling then existing between France and England should come to be disturbed, England will always find in the cause of Poland a common ground for sympathy with France, will always have a common subject of interest, will always retain at least one common tie of external policy." Late events, Sir, have realized this sad possibility: by policy, which I believe to be bad, France is alienated from England. Misunderstandings, as I believe, totally groundless, have arisen, to disturb the union of those two nations; those only two which, in the emphatic language of Mr. Thiers, "can fight together under the banner of constitutional freedom." Still this common cause of Poland remains to us, and firmly convinced as I am, that in the intimate alliance of France and England lie the best hopes of the coming years, that without that union there is no perfectly secure political basis for our civilization, that with that union, we may defy all assaults of brute force, all machinations of subtle intrigue, all policies and all powers—I will not abandon that link of sympathy, which however slight, still shows that the two sister nations of the west are actuated by the same sense of justice, good faith, national honour, and respect for national independence. For these reasons, therefore, and with an earnest desire that



this country should continue the same distinct and honourable line it has already pursued on this subject, I trust that her Majesty's Government will add their weight to this protest in favour of the nationality of Poland,

MR. PATRICK STEWART said, that from the reasonableness of the motion, he assumed that it would be assented to; but as an old and attached friend to the cause of Poland, he could not abstain from addressing a few words to the house on the present occasion. Doubtless the question was surrounded by difficulties and delicacies; points of national honour and the faith of treaties being involved in it. Under these circumstances it was necessary that an individual who rose to speak on the subject in a popular assembly should endeavour to suppress the feelings which naturally arose in his bosom at the contemplation of the wrongs which Poland had endured. He would speak very shortly, and he hoped clearly, and would avoid expressing himself so warmly as he had done when he first addressed the House on the subject. There could be no doubt that, as parties to the treaty of Vienna, we were authorised to attempt, by such a course as that now pursued, to redress the wrongs of that ill-used and high-minded people. At the congress of Vienna our ambassador had expressed his anxiety, an anxiety experienced by the diplomatic

representatives of the other great powers of Europe, that Poland should be recognised as an independent state, and placed under a form of government separate and distinct from that of Russia, so as to form a power interposed between three great empires of Europe. It had been stated by some high authorities, that the hands of England and of those other states, the guarantees of the rights of the Polish nation, had been tied up and restrained from any interference in her favour, in consequence of the revolt of Poland in the year 1830. Now, he recollected with peculiar satisfaction the sentiments expressed upon that subject by one of the most enlightened and temperate members of the Legislature, he meant Lord Ashburton, who had reflected great honour on his character by declaring that if ever a people had been justified in revolting against authority when grossly abused, it was in the case of the revolt of the Poles, against the cruel misrule of the Grand Duke Constantine. That monster being deemed unworthy of ruling in Russia had been invested with the sovereign authority in Poland, where he abused power so outrageously as to goad and force the Poles to revolt, and the determined resistance then made to his tyranny shed fresh glory upon the military prowess and bravery of this extraordinary and interesting people. It was but too clear now what were the intentions of the Russian



government and unless this country assisted the Poles, by energetic protests, which could not be misunderstood by foreign governments, he saw great reason to believe that Russia would persevere in her resolution to extinguish the nationality, and so erase the name of Poland from the map of the civilized world. He trusted our Government would vigilantly watch the conduct of Russia, and thwart her ambitious and unlawful designs. Before he left Parliament, in 1836, he stated what the conduct of Russia would be; and although he was then held to be a visionary alarmist, the events of the two subsequent years proved that his anticipations were correct. In the late debate upon Eastern affairs, it seemed to be assumed that the assurances of Russia were to be implicitly depended upon. Now he protested against that assumption. Sad experience prompted this distrust. The House had been told that Count Simonich had been recalled by the Russian Government from his embassy to Persia, on account of the part which he had acted at the siege of Herat. That was only a part of the sinister policy of Russia—that policy which induced her to furnish her agents with two sets of instructions, to be used as occasion might require. He would inform the House what had been the fate of Count Simonich, who had been denounced for having exceeded the powers vested in

him by his government. Recalled from Persia, he was immediately made governor of a fortress in Poland, where he is at this moment; while some of his sons are pages to the emperor at Petersburg. These were facts which ought to open our eyes relative to the conduct of Russia. It might be said that the present discussion was of no use; but its use consisted in this—that it would lead the Poles to look upon us as their friends. It was our duty towards our own national character, as well as to the rights of Poland, which we had guaranteed, to record upon our Journals that those rights had been unlawfully invaded by Russia. As a gallant Pole had said to him that morning—

“Write your protest against Russia’s conduct on the walls of this House, for it will be a consolation to Poland in her sufferings.”

He, Mr. Stewart, had great satisfaction in now assisting in this solemn protest; and his belief and hope was, that whilst it would prove to be a source of comfort to Poland now, it would still more, when the principles of eternal justice shall be hereafter vindicated, prove to be to her in her hour of need, a deep source of national strength.

SIR R. PEEL and SIR R. INGLIS rose together; the former gave way.

SIR R. INGLIS began by apologising for attempting to force himself upon their attention in preference



or priority to his right hon. Friend; but he was induced to address the House now rather than attempt to follow his right hon. Friend, as he believed many other hon. Members would, with him, think it more expedient that the right hon. Baronet should be permitted to close the debate upon the subject. He must, in the first instance, protest against a distinction that might be drawn from the remark of his hon. Friend the Member for Pomfret, respecting the right of England to interfere in the affairs of Poland being analagous with that of Roman Catholic countries to interfere with England at a former period of our history. He must protest against the supposition that any foreign country whatever could have a right to interfere with our affairs. Our right to interfere in the affairs of Poland rested on stronger grounds—it was simply derived from treaty. He felt that the discussion which had taken place, considering the unity of sentiment, moderation, and good feeling which had characterised it throughout, must have some effect in bringing about that object which they all desired—an amelioration of the condition of the Poles. He feared, however, that there was a technical objection to the motion. The hon. Gentleman called for papers connected with the proceedings of another country, which any man might obtain, with some trouble

perhaps, and at some cost, but he was not aware how far it was the province of the Government to produce such papers as an act of the Government, or whether or not they had the means of doing so. He deprecated the principle of calling in that House for the municipal proceedings of foreign governments. Our right to interfere in the case of Poland, as he had before said, was founded upon treaty; and that being the case, the Government had a right to interfere in any way it might think proper for the fulfilment of that treaty. But in this case there was this difficulty. He believed the whole of the contracting parties to the treaty had never been united as to its construction. He wished to urge upon the Government of this country to exercise all the moral influence they possessed to induce the Emperor of Russia to treat his Polish subjects with greater moderation and fairness than it appeared he had done, for his treatment of them hitherto had been quite inconsistent with both the letter and spirit of the treaty of Vienna. It was however important that our interference should not go beyond that in which we should be supported by the other contracting powers to the treaty. He hailed the discussion which had taken place with the greatest satisfaction, and the warmest wish of his heart was, that the moral influence of this country, exercised as he had no doubt



it would be, would tend to remedy those evils and wrongs which Poland had so long suffered. He hoped no division upon the motion would be taken, for he was most anxious that the general feeling which had been that evening expressed should not be weakened by any apparent difference.

SIR R. PEEL was not sorry that his hon. Friend (Sir R. Inglis) had spoken before him, for that enabled him to refer to a precedent which appeared to him to settle the only point on which his hon. Friend doubted. His hon. Friend thought it possible that some difficulty of a technical nature might interpose an impediment to the production of the papers referred to in the present motion. In 1832, a motion similar to that now before the House had been made, and he thought that a reference to that motion was important, as forming a precedent, for he should be sorry to take a course which might appear at variance with the view which was taken by Parliament and the Government in 1832. In that year he found that a motion to this effect had been made—

“That there be laid before this House copies of the manifestoes issued by the Emperor of Russia in February last, and of the organic statute to which they referred,”

Now, that motion was unanimously adopted; and were he to take a different course now, and on the part of the Government oppose the production of these

papers, an erroneous construction might be put upon his motive. His hon. Friend had overlooked the distinction between interfering in the municipal proceedings of a foreign country and the interference for a specific object under a specific treaty; and he must beg of his hon. Friend to remember that Poland was not a province of Russia, so as to make the question one of mere municipal administration. He would not now enter into the question, whether the revolt of the Poles in 1830 had set aside the treaty of 1815, but he knew that we were parties to that treaty, and that, by it the condition of Poland had been regulated, and, consequently, we possessed a right to information as to the grounds upon which that condition had been changed. He felt therefore that he was not departing from the strict letter of diplomatic usage by consenting to the production of papers relating to that treaty. The temper and general spirit of the present debate was he thought, most satisfactory, for it could not be said that it opposed any impediment—in point of honour—to the adoption of the motion. There had been throughout a most gratifying abstinence from any thing approaching to abuse or offensive expressions in speaking of the conduct of Russia in reference to Poland, and he for his own part regretted that the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. P.



Stewart) had referred to the policy of Russia in the east. It, however, gave him (Sir R. Peel) an opportunity of repeating what he had previously stated, that Russia had most distinctly disavowed the conduct of her agents in Persia and on the north-west frontier of our Indian possessions—that she had recalled those agents, and given to the British Government the most distinct and positive assurance of her desire to act in concert with England in respect to the affairs of Persia, and had further as distinctly disavowed all intention of interfering hostilely in regard to our Indian possessions. That Russia was sincere in those professions might be inferred from her conduct. Since those assurances had been given, misfortune had befallen our Indian army, and if Russia had not been sincere, there was a temptation to depart from her engagement which doubtless would have been taken advantage of. But, as he had stated, the assurances which Russia had given to this country had been fulfilled strictly and punctually; and it was his duty to acknowledge the amicable and friendly feelings towards this country which Russia had evinced. That power had cordially acted with us, and had done her utmost to discountenance and discourage any hostile demonstration on the part of Persia, or any of the inferior states, in the affairs of Afghanistan. There was at this moment

the most perfect understanding between Russia and this country, and he looked upon it as a great guarantee for the peace and for the general interests of the world, that those amicable relations between the two countries should continue unimpaired. He had felt it to be his duty to state this in respect to the conduct of Russia, and of her friendly intentions towards this country; but at the same time, however desirable it was that these relations of amity should continue, (and so desirable he felt it to be, that he could assure the House it would be the duty of her Majesty's Government to do every thing in their power, consistently with the honour and interests of the country, to promote them) still he could not, for the purpose of confirming the good understanding which existed, consent to any sacrifice of truth or principle. He could not, as a public man, say that in his opinion the policy of Russia with regard to Poland was wise or safe. He spoke of the policy of Russia in reference to Poland, and after what had past at Vienna this country had a right to discuss, of course in moderate terms, any particular line of policy which might be adopted towards Poland. Acting upon that right, he must declare his conviction that the course now pursued by Russia towards Poland would not ultimately conduce to her own interests. Looking at the permanent interests of the two countries,



the force of public opinion in Poland, and the expense which must necessarily be entailed upon Russia in maintaining her present course of policy, he could not think that she was consulting her own advantage. He was convinced, that, after all the blood and treasure that must be expended in carrying out such a pernicious policy, it would be found that to abolish the nationality of Poland was impossible. It might be crushed, but could never be extinguished; its spirit would survive amidst every oppression, and in lands however distant and obscure. The unfortunate natives might indeed be removed from the country and transported into strange climes, but it would be seen how eminently true, in their case, were the words of the poet—

“*Cœlum non animum mutant.*”

Considering what had since occurred in France, in Spain, and in Portugal, and considering the feelings of sympathy that had been expressed in those countries towards Poland, he thought there was more danger to be apprehended for Russia from provoking those sympathies, than there was advantage to be hoped for from acts of force. As he was not prepared, however in the name of her Majesty's Government, to offer any hostile remonstrance, still less was he disposed to hold out any idea of

open demonstration on this subject. Nothing could be more unfortunate for the people of Poland than to have any false hopes of such a kind raised. This country was not the only party with Russia to the treaty of Vienna. Austria and Prussia were parties to it also. He recollected too, and gave due weight to the revolt in Poland. The effort made by the people to relieve themselves from the connection with Russia he would not, however, discuss, or give any opinion as to how far Russia was relieved from the obligations imposed upon her by the treaty by that act of the Poles; but, with respect to any influence to be exercised by the British Government, he thought he had said sufficient to show that they shared in that sympathy which must be felt by all parties as to the present state of that gallant and enlightened people. And he did hope most earnestly, that the Emperor of Russia would himself have the credit of ameliorating the condition of that people. Most certainly nothing had passed in the House of Commons, which could form an impediment to his taking that course which it was his (Sir R. Peel's) opinion would most redound to his honour, and conduce to the permanent interests of those who were committed to his charge.

LORD SANDON rose to express his gratification. that the right hon. Baronet at the head of her



Majesty's Government had in no way quitted the ground with respect to the nationality of Poland, as a question of European interest, and a fit subject for European discussion, which had been taken up by the noble Lord, the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He rejoiced to find this additional evidence furnished in the face of Europe, that on that subject no party distinctions were known in England; that Whig and Tory had but one opinion. He regretted that it had been put on lower ground in one passage of his hon. Friend's the Member for Pontefract's speech—that it had been placed on grounds merely of compassion and sympathy, such as might have been expressed by Philip the 2nd for the Roman Catholics of Ireland, or by Elizabeth for the Huguenots of France. Sympathy and interest we did feel, of course, for a gallant nation, struggling for its independence, and for gallant men suffering all the pains and privations consequent on an ineffectual struggle in such a cause—but such feelings as these would not justify us for calling the attention of the British Parliament to the question now before them. That question is, whether the nationality of Poland, its distinct existence, was not made by the Congress of Vienna, a matter of European diplomacy—a part of the statute law of Europe; whether respect for that

national existence, so recognized by the powers of Europe, was not considered an object of European importance, and an obligation incurred to Europe, at least as much as to the Poles—whether therefore, any act of theirs, however culpable, supposing it to have been so, could have released Russia from that obligation so incurred, not to them, but to Europe, whether finally that obligation had not been most thoroughly and entirely broken by the Emperor of Russia, not only immediately after the insurrection, but most signally by the Ukases, issued since the last Session of Parliament, for a copy of which his hon. Friend, the Member for Nottinghamshire, had moved. Now, what was the principal object of these Ukases? What but the effacement of almost the last trace of their distinct national existence, which had been left by former ordinances; and that, perhaps, one to which nations were the most attached, and which generally survived the longest, the distinctness of their judicial institutions. He passed the practical grievance of having their causes carried before a distant, a hostile, and if report said true not a very incorrupt tribunal—he would only dwell upon the wound to national feeling, the complete amalgamation, so contrary to European obligations, which was implied in the fusion of the judicial courts of Poland with those of Petersburg. Why, looking



to our own country, to what was Scottish feeling after a close and friendly connection of two centuries, more attached still, than to the distinctness of their own laws, of their own tribunals? Had it not taken five or six centuries of most intimate union with Wales, to enable us, and even then not without some difficulty, to persuade the Welsh to give up their separate judicature? And yet with regard to Poland, this was done at once by a stroke of the pen; and the finishing blow was thus dealt, if any yet were needed, to the illusion, that the conditions on which the greater part of Poland was handed over to Russia at the Congress of Vienna, were considered in any way binding upon that power. That the insurrection, to which the Poles were driven, might have led to some modification of their constitution in their internal organization, he could understand, at least it would be a nice question for discussion; but, how it could dissolve the obligation entered into towards Europe to maintain that distinct nationality, the intention to maintain which, pervaded every stipulation of the treaty of Vienna in regard to every fragment of Poland, he was at a loss to comprehend. He hoped, that the unanimous expression of opinion on this subject would have its weight, not only with the Emperor of Russia, but also with the other two powers, who had shared

in the spoils of Poland, and whose obligations had not been much more rigidly observed—though the circumstances were not such as to excite the same degree of public interest. He should not have risen to prolong this debate, if he had not wished to show, that those who had taken an early interest in this cause, had not forgotten it, though they were content, and rejoiced, to leave it mainly in the hands of other, and newer champions, upon whom that interest had descended.

MR. SHIEL hoped that the Government would continue that munificent hospitality to the distressed Polish refugees which they had hitherto experienced at the hands of this country. He congratulated all the speakers, who had preceded him, on the tone and temper of their observations in the course of the debate.

MR. STUART WORTLEY said, that he should scarcely have thought it worth while to prolong this discussion, in which all the speakers were agreed, had he not felt anxious before its close to record, in a very few words, his entire concurrence in the objects of his hon. Friend, the Member for Nottinghamshire. There could be no doubt that, as had been correctly stated, the position in which this country stood with respect to the relations between Russia and Poland was that of right founded upon treaty; and it was impossible to look back to the transactions of the

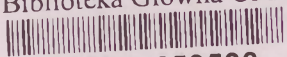


years 1814 and 1815, without becoming convinced that other rights besides those guaranteed to Poland were distinctly asserted and recognized in the negotiations of that period. Indeed, it appeared to him that the very history of the fate of Poland, since the insurrection of 1831, showed symptoms of a lurking consciousness, even on the part of Russia, that there were other parties besides herself who had some right to a voice in her proceedings against that portion of her dominions. For, if we considered that history, what did we find? When she had suppressed the insurrection of 1831, what would have been easier for her than to have asserted at once her right of conquest, and to have incorporated, without delay, the territories and people of Poland within the limits of her own empire? But was this the course which she had pursued? On the contrary, she had proceeded by gradual steps; and if we looked back through the period which had elapsed since that insurrection, we found it marked by a series of successive alterations in the connexion between the Russian Government and that country, but all tending to the same apparent end. Through the years after 1831,—through 1836, 1837, 1838, and thence down to the last year,—we might trace the progress of this course. We might see a partial displacement of the Polish language, followed by its more general exclusion; the suppress-

sion of the universities at one time; encroachments upon the church at another; again, the subversion of the courts of justice; and, finally, the entire annihilation of the structure of the national government in the year just past. And it did therefore appear to him looking at these events, that the dilatory, and he might say insidious course, which had been adopted by Russia in these proceedings, exhibited strong symptoms of a lurking consciousness that her rights in the matter were not quite absolute, and that she was not the only party who had a claim to be heard in the question. He (Mr. Stuart Wortley) should consider it wholly unnecessary to trouble the House with any further observations of his, after what had fallen from his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government. The object for which he rose, was to declare his cordial concurrence in the objects of the present motion; and although the motion itself was not one which would have any immediate practical effect, he should not think it thrown away if it should tend at all to strengthen the hands of the right hon. Baronet in any representations upon the subject which he might find it possible to make, founded upon rights on the part of this country, with respect to which he had declared it to be his wish not to recede from former declarations made within these walls.

MR. P. HOWARD said, it was only by an appeal to





the magnanimity of the present ruler of Russia that any amelioration of the condition of Poland could be effected at present. He trusted that the Emperor Nicholas would imitate the example of his brother Alexander in the early part of his reign, and act justly and humanely towards Poland; and when that last hour shall come which visits the peasant and the prince, he would look back upon that day as the most blest of his career, when old Sarmatia was restored to her rights.

Motion agreed to.

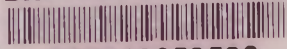


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