CHAPTER LXXX

DANTE'S DREAM

THE dismissal of Lord Palmerston was an event the echoes of which reverberated throughout Europe. On technical grounds, there had been against him an "enormous case." But amid "his crotchets, caprices, and prejudices," he stood for a principle that transcended proprieties. Diplomacy had dealt with dynasties. Palmerston recognized peoples.

It is, then, as a chapter in the annals of liberty that the tale of Palmerston's quarrel with the Court must be retold. And the scene of the drama is set in Italy. The Queen stood stoutly for the *status quo* with its abuses. Palmerston believed in Italy united as a nation:

March 4, 1850: . . . Among many other things Albert said that he had earnestly pressed Palmerston to send a Minister to Rome, to negotiate with the Pope, but that he never would, and he was convinced that Palmerston had only refused because *he* had pressed it. Such is the feeling about him in their minds.

Greville himself had seen and described the condition of Naples. Against that sovereignty, the Sicilians rebelled. And they sent "agents" to Woolwich, that place of arms, where they—

March 2, 1849: . . . applied to the government contractor to supply them with stores. He said he had none ready, having just supplied all he had to Government, but that if Government would let him have them back, he would supply them to the agents, and replace the government stores in a short time. The Sicilians had no time to lose, and by their desire the contractor applied to the Ordnance, stating the object of his application. If the matter had been merely treated commercially, and the contractor, without stating his object, had asked the Government to oblige him as a convenience to him-

self, it would have been quite harmless; but the object having been stated, it became a political matter. So the Ordnance considered it, and they referred the request to Palmerston as Foreign Secretary, who gave his sanction to the transaction.

Here undoubtedly was a breach of neutrality, and the affair was exposed in the *Times*. By the Cabinet, therefore, "an enquiry was made to Palmerston as to the truth of it *when he flatly denied the whole story!*" It was Lord Grey who "found out it was true" and he wrote "a letter of complaint" to the Prime Minister.

"John," said the Duke of Bedford to Greville, had been at the Speaker's when Grey's letter reached him:

January 22, 1849: . . . A red box had arrived with something in it very serious indeed, and which must bring matters to a sort of crisis about Palmerston. He could not tell me what it was, but it was so serious that he had no idea how it would end, and whether it would not lead to Palmerston's retirement, that the Queen knew nothing of it, nor the Cabinet except two or three of them. He then let out that something had been done which rendered an apology necessary from Palmerston, and that he did not think Palmerston could well consent to make such a one as John would think it right to require of him. I thought it was an apology to his own colleagues, but he said no, it was an apology to *a foreign power*.

There were "repeated Cabinets, and one morning John Russell went down to the Queen and returned." He wanted "to fight the battle" with Palmerston at his side. But "with all Palmerston's abilities and perhaps sound views of foreign policy, he gives terrible offence."

Questioned in the Commons, Palmerston, "in his usual offhand way"—

March 16, 1849: . . . delivered a slashing, impudent speech, full of sarcasm, jokes, and claptraps, the whole eminently successful. He quizzed Bankes unmercifully, he expressed ultra-Liberal sentiments to please the Radicals, and he gathered shouts of laughter and applause as he dashed and rattled along. He scarcely deigned to notice *the* question, merely saying a few words at the end of his speech in replying to it. All this did

perfectly well for the House of Commons, and he got the honours of the day. Stanley was furious, and all the Anti-Palmerstonians provoked to death, while he and his friends chuckled and laughed in their sleeves.

March 16, 1849: . . . John Russell also came to his [Lord Lansdowne's] rescue, and made an apology for him, which in his mouth was very discreditable, for it was in fact untrue. He tried to give to the House of Commons an impression of Palmerston's conduct in the affair which is the reverse of the truth, and this is really tantamount to a lie, but he has in fact completely prostituted himself to Palmerston. The Duke of Bedford tells me he has a strange partiality for him, is in fact fascinated and enthralled by him in spite of all the embarrassments he causes him.

In the House of Lords, however, an "inadvertence" was admitted. And Lord John Russell told his masterful colleague that "he must apologize."

March 16, 1849: . . . On the Sunday when I saw the Duke of Bedford, Palmerston's answer had not come, but John was of an opinion that Palmerston would not, and *could* not, consent to the humiliation of making an apology. I laughed to scorn this idea. As I predicted, Palmerston made no difficulty.

Indeed, Palmerston took the initiative and, in the Cabinet, himself proposed the apology!

But he had a habit of hitting back. And having apologized to Naples, he calmly instructed the British Consul at Messina "to collect the details of the Neapolitan atrocities," which "story" he did not hesitate to "put into the mouth of the Queen in her speech in Parliament."

March 2, 1849: . . . The mention in the Queen's Speech of the "King of *Naples*," instead of the King of the Two Sicilies, is now said to have been a mere inadvertence, but I have no doubt it was overlooked by his colleagues, but put in by him intentionally and with a significant purpose.

Nor did Palmerston's rejoinder end there. The rebellion in Sicily had injured foreign property and "after above a year

of enquiry," a commission decided what indemnity should be paid by Naples. After reading the report:

December 2, 1851: . . . Palmerston sent it back and said the money was not enough, and he arbitrarily fixed a higher sum to be given to the English. Of this the Neapolitan Government bitterly complained, and the other commissioners considered it unwarrantable and unfair. After a great deal of remonstrance and discussion, Palmerston proving inexorable, the Neapolitans gave way. They then considered the affair settled; but not at all. Palmerston then sent it back again, and said the allotted sum should not be paid in stock, but in money. . . . He [the French Ambassador] had a conversation of two hours with Palmerston, who listened with great politeness, appeared struck by Walewski's representations, and ended by saying, "Well, I will write to Temple about it." Walewsk wient away, fancying he had produced a great effect, and that Palmerston was going to write to Temple to relax the rigour of his exactions; but he did not then know his man, and was only undeceived when he found afterward that he had written to Temple, but only to desire him to press his demands, and exact a concession to them to the uttermost farthing.

It was Gladstone who in 1850 saw and described the horrors endured by political prisoners in Naples. And Palmerston's sympathies were justified. Whether Britain should intervene was a matter of argument:

September 21, 1856: . . . The quarrel with the King of Naples appears to be coming to a crisis, and though it will not produce any serious consequences now, the precedent of interference we are establishing may have very important ones at some future time, and though philanthropy may make us rejoice at some coercion being applied to put an end to such a cruel and oppressive government as that of King Bomba (as they call Ferdinand), it may be doubted whether it would not be sounder policy to abstain from interference with what only indirectly and remotely concerns us.

November 10, 1856: . . . Clarendon talked of the various atrocities of the King of Naples, but with an evident consciousness that the fact, even if it be true, and not, as is probable, exaggerated, affords no excuse for our policy in the matter.

March 22, 1859: . . . Yesterday the Neapolitan exiles arrived at an hotel in Dover Street in several hack cabs, decorated with laurels, and preceded by a band of music. I did not see the men, but saw the empty cabs; there was no crowd.

Mme. de Lieven wrote Greville (October 3, 1856) that "the Neapolitan Minister at Paris affirms that his King will not give way at the dictation of the Allied Powers"—when this "almost incredible anecdote" was told me:

May 17, 1860: . . . There is just arrived a new Neapolitan Minister, Count Ludolph, grandson of the Ludolph who was formerly here. He has replaced the former Minister, who by his own desire was recently recalled, and he had begged for his recall because he had been grossly insulted by Palmerston at the Queen's Drawing Room, his story being that in that room, in the Queen's presence (who was of course out of hearing), Palmerston had attacked him on the proceeding of his government and the conduct of the King, telling him that a revolution would probably be the consequence thereof, which would be nothing more than they deserve, and which would be seen in this country with universal satisfaction. The man was so flabbergasted by this unexpected and monstrous sortie that he had not presence of mind to make a suitable answer.

September 23, 1855: . . . The Sicilian malcontents sent to the King of Sardinia an offer of their crown for one of his sons. He replied, "You have need of a man, and a boy will be of no use to you." This they took for a refusal, and they are now thinking of a Coburg; in no case will they have a Murat.

Northern Italy was still held in the grip of Austria. And, as Greville was to write on February 27, 1859, "the Austrians are so proud, obstinate, and pig-headed." Against Austria, war was vainly waged by Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, the head of the House of Savoy which was afterward to reign in Rome. Palmerston supported Sardinia and the Austrian Ambassador, Colloredo, was left in no doubt as to his sentiments.

November 25, 1848: Clarendon told me he had a long talk with the Queen and Prince Albert at the Priory the other day, when they imparted to him their extreme dissatisfaction with the Foreign Policy of their own government for the last six

or eight months, their abhorrence of Charles Albert, and their entire sympathy with all the political reactions now going on. He did not like to say much on the subject, rather delicate for him, and contented himself with hearing what they had to say and expressing his own ignorance of all details.

March 30, 1849: . . . Yesterday came the news of the defeat of the Sardinians and the abdication of Charles Albert (their King), which was received with universal joy, everybody rejoicing at it except Palmerston, who will be excessively provoked and disappointed, though he will not venture, and is too clever, to show it. Clarendon had a conversation with him a few days ago, in which he told Palmerston how much he wished that Radetzky might crush the King of Sardinia, when Palmerston did not disguise the difference of his own opinions, and his wishes that the Austrians might be defeated. Yesterday there was a Drawing Room, at which everybody, the Queen included, complimented and wished joy to Colloredo except Palmerston, who, though he spoke to him about other things, never alluded to the news that had just arrived from Italy. I met Colloredo at Madame de Lieven's (who was in a state of rapturous excitement), and he told us so there. Nothing could be more striking than this marked difference between the Foreign Secretary and his Sovereign, and all his countrymen.

April 1, 1849: I do not think anything Palmerston has done has excited so great a sensation, and exposed him to so much animadversion, as his behaviour to Colloredo at the Drawing Room the day on which the news of Radetzky's victory arrived. Everybody is talking of it; Clarendon told Lord Lansdowne of it, who was both shocked and surprised. The impolicy of this unmistakable display of *animus* is the more striking, because we are now (through Ponsonby) entreating the Austrian Government to show moderation, and not to exact large contributions. This is not the first time men have suffered more from their small misdeeds than from their great ones.

Immediately afterward, there was (May 21, 1849) "a fresh Palmerstonian affair."

May 21, 1849: . . . On Monday last Lord Lansdowne in reply to a question of Beaumont's said, that "no communica-

tion whatever had been made by the Austrian Government to ours relative to their intervention in Italy," the fact being that Colloredo [the Austrian Ambassador] had five or six days before gone to Palmerston, and communicated to him by order of his government their motives, objects, and intentions, as to Italian intervention in great detail. This communication he never imparted to his colleagues, and Lord Lansdowne was consequently ignorant of it.

At the Queen's Ball, Colloredo complained:

May 21, 1849: . . . I resolved to go to Lord Lansdowne. I found him at Lansdowne House, just going to the House of Lords. I began to tell him the object of my calling on him. He stopped me, said he knew all about it, that he was going to the House to correct his former statement, and "to make the best excuse he could," that it was exceedingly disagreeable, and the more unaccountable as he had taken the precaution on Monday before he went to the House of Lords to answer Beaumont, to send to the Foreign Office to enquire whether any communication had been received, and the reply was, "None whatever." On reference to Palmerston he had said that "he had quite forgotten it."

Austrian rule was attacked not only by Sardinia but by Hungary. The revolt was suppressed, but its leader, Kossuth, appealed to the conscience of mankind:

London, November 8, 1851: . . . About three weeks ago Kossuth arrived in England, and was received at Southampton and Winchester with prodigious demonstration and a great uproar on the part of Mayors and Corporations, the rabble and a sprinkling of Radicals, of whom the most conspicuous were Cobden and Dudley Stuart. While Kossuth was still at Southampton, but about to proceed to London, on Monday, October 24, I received a letter from my brother Henry, informing me that he had just received information that Palmerston was going to receive Kossuth, and he entreated me, if I had any influence with the Government, to try and prevent such an outrage, and that he believed if it was done Buol [the Austrian Ambassador] would be recalled. I could not doubt that the information from such a quarter was correct, and it was con-

firmed by a notice in one of the *pro*-Kossuth papers, that Lord Palmerston was going to receive Mr. Kossuth "privately and unofficially." Thinking that it would be an outrage, and one in all probability attended with serious consequences, I resolved to write to John Russell at once. I sent him a copy of my brother's letter, only putting the names in blank, said that the authority on which this was notified to me compelled me to attend to it, and added, "I send you this without comment; you will deal with it as you think fit, *liberavi animam meam.*" . . . On Tuesday he [the Duke of Bedford] was sitting in his dressing room, when there was a knock at the door, and the Prince came in. After a great deal of conversation upon various subjects, particularly about the new Reform Bill (on which his Royal Highness seems to entertain very sound and moderate views) he said just as he was going away:

"Lord Palmerston has been behaving infamously to your brother."

But this was all he said, and the Duke did not ask for any explanation of his words. At dinner he was desired to go and place himself next to the Queen, and there her Majesty gave him an account of what had passed. She, of course, did not know (at least, so the Duke supposed, and I suppose) anything of my letter, but (as I can have no doubt) upon the receipt of it, John Russell wrote to Palmerston. I do not know what he wrote, but evidently an enquiry and a remonstrance. To this letter Palmerston wrote the most insolent answer. The Queen said she could not recollect the whole of it, but she recollected this much:

"I will not be dictated to, and shall receive whomsoever I please in my own house. If you are dissatisfied, my office is at your disposal, and you may do with it what you please."

On receiving this letter, John instantly summoned the Cabinet, and thirteen of his colleagues came together on Monday last. He laid the matter before them. All *but one* sided with him (I don't know who that one was), and the end was that Palmerston (as he has invariably done on all other occasions when tackled and driven to submit or resign) knocked under, and agreed not to receive Kossuth. The Queen told the Duke this story with strong expressions of indignation and said that Lord John had never shown sufficient firmness and had been too

lenient in dealing with Lord Palmerston. The matter thus patched up, and a rupture which would most likely have broken up the Government averted, all will go on as before. Palmerston will not care a straw and will not be deterred from doing whatever his fancy, caprice, or impertinence may prompt him to do on the next occasion that presents itself. They are naturally very anxious to prevent this affair being known.

November 16, 1851: I was at Windsor for a Council on Friday. There I saw Palmerston and Lord John mighty merry and cordial, talking and laughing together. Those breezes leave nothing behind, particularly with Palmerston, who never loses his temper, and treats everything with gaiety and levity. The Queen is vastly displeased with the Kossuth demonstrations, especially at seeing him received at Manchester with as much enthusiasm as attended her own visit to that place. The numbers and the noise that have hailed Kossuth have certainly been curious, but not one individual of station or consideration has gone near him, which cannot fail to mortify him deeply. Delane is just come from Vienna, where he had a long interview with Schwarzenberg, who treated, or at least affected to do so, the Kossuth reception with contempt and indifference.

November 22, 1851: At Brocket on Tuesday and Wednesday last. I found Beauvale knew all about the Palmerston and Kossuth affair, and was of course mightily pleased at his brother-in-law's defeat, and at the interview not having taken place.

But Palmerston had a habit of getting his way, if not by one method, then by another. He received a deputation from Finsbury and Islington and accepted congratulations on Kossuth's liberation:

November 22, 1851: . . . On Wednesday afternoon we were both of us astounded at reading in the paper the account of the deputation to Palmerston, the addresses and his answers. We both agreed that he had only *reculé pour mieux sauter*, and that what he had now done was a great deal worse and more offensive than if he had received Kossuth. The breach of faith and the defiance toward John Russell and his colleagues are flagrant, and the whole affair astonishing even in him who has done such things that nothing ought to astonish me. I am waiting with the greatest curiosity to see what John Russell will do,

and how he will take it, and how it will be taken by the Queen and the foreign Courts and Ministers. To receive an address in which the Emperors of Russia and Austria are called despots, tyrants, and odious assassins, and to express great gratification at it, is an unparalleled outrage, and when to this is added a speech breathing Radical sentiments and interference, it is difficult to believe that the whole thing can pass off without notice.

November 22, 1851: . . . The ostentatious bidding for Radical favour and the flattery of the democracy, of which his speeches were full, are disgusting in themselves and full of danger. It is evident that he has seized the opportunity of the Kossuth demonstrations to associate himself with them, and convert the popular excitement into political capital for himself. . . .

Kossuth is at last gone, but promising to return in a few weeks and openly announcing that he does so for the purpose of stirring up war against Austria, and a great democratic movement for the liberation of Hungary and all other countries under absolute governments, in which he expects England to take a conspicuous part; and his last injunction and entreaty to his friends is to agitate for this purpose. His last speech is by far the most open and significant that he has delivered, and exhibits his confidence, well or ill founded, in the progress he has made. That he is very able, and especially a great speaker, cannot be denied; but I take it that a more hypocritical, unscrupulous, mischievous adventurer never existed. His speeches here have been very clever, but I derive a higher idea of his oratorical power from a speech, reported in the *Times* on Wednesday last, which he made in the Hungarian Diet upon the question of employing Hungarian troops in Italy, which was admirable, and reminded me of Plunket in lucidity and closeness of reasoning.

"The addresses were sent to the Foreign Office before they were presented, and if Palmerston did not read them, he might have done so."

Greville was outraged by this "mixture of effrontery, falsehood, and adroitness." It was "on the whole the worst thing he has ever done." To support Kossuth, how "ungentlemanlike and vulgar!"

There was, in the end, "no quarrel with Austria" (December 19, 1851). But it was sometime before Buol, the Austrian Ambassador, "dined with Palmerston" or the Emperor in Vienna "at last received Westmorland."

The real reason of Palmerston's "dismissal"—

December 23, 1851: . . . was without any doubt the Islington speech and deputation, and his whole conduct in that affair. The Queen had deeply resented it, and had a quarrel with Lord John about it, for he rather defended Palmerston, and accepted his excuses and denials. It is evident that he did this because he did not dare to quarrel with him on grounds which would have enabled him to cast himself on the Radicals, to appeal to all the Kossuthian sympathies of the country, and to represent himself as the victim of our disgraceful subserviency to Austria.