

ASYLUM IN MALTA – A BRITISH OFFER TO POPE PIUS IX

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On June 16, 1846, the partly liberal bishop of Imola, Giovanni Mastai Ferretti, was elected to the throne of Peter as Pope Pius IX. During his pontificate, the longest in history, the confrontation of liberal ideas with traditional positions of the church, which had started in the eighteenth century and continued to grow during the French Revolution, reached its peak. The hostility was further inflamed by the revival of the Roman Question.

The restoration of the authority of the Pope in the Papal States after the brief interlude of the Roman Republic had taken place in a clear reactionary atmosphere. The movement for the unification of Italy, headed by Victor Emmanuel II (1849–1878) and directed by the Piedmontese Prime Minister Cavour (1852–1861), had in the meantime grown into an avalanche that could no longer be stopped. By 1860, the Pope had lost most of his territory: the Papal States became restricted to an area around Rome. On March 17, 1861, the first Italian parliament in history proclaimed the kingdom of Italy. Many were trying to convince the Pope to seek a reasonable compromise with the new kingdom. Pius IX was not so much concerned with temporal power for its own sake as that he saw in it the indispensable guarantee of his spiritual independence, and the outraged reaction of Europe's ultramontane press confirmed him in the belief that this power was something for which he had to answer to the Catholics of the whole world and of which he could not dispose according to his private wishes.

The situation worsened further during 1862. *Pio Nono* felt helpless. And like the proverbial drowning man clutching at a straw he sought British help — those same British whom he had many times denounced for backing publicly the *Risorgimento*. In the night of July 25, 1862, Odo Russell⁽¹⁾

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1. This paper is to a large extent based on the despatches of Odo Russell from Rome to his uncle Lord John eventually Earl Russell. Extracts from these despatches have been edited by Noel BLAKISTON, *The Roman Question*, London 1962, with an excellent introduction (pages ix–xxxviii) on their author.

received a note that the Pope wanted to see him the next morning.⁽²⁾ Odo Russell was not an official accredited agent to the Vatican. Protestant England would not have permitted such an appointment. However, he was for all practical purposes, except in certain matters of diplomatic ceremonial, the English representative at the Vatican.

Russell was received by the Pope at noon. After an exchange of views on the prevailing situation, the Pope expressly asked Russell whether he could “do something for *il Papa* in London”.⁽³⁾ When Russell begged an explanation, the Pope expressly told him whether under the prevailing circumstances “he could go and live in peace in England”.⁽⁴⁾

The British representative replied that “in England the rights of hospitality were sacred (and) that so long as he submitted to the laws of the land, he could enjoy that national hospitality and protection England extended to those who sought refuge within her realms”. However, he added hastily, he “trusted His Holiness would never have to resort to so extreme a measure and would rather make peace with Italy than abandon Rome”. The Pope disagreed, but Russell, in an answer that attests to the foresightedness of this diplomat, retorted: “I believe on the contrary that the Spiritual Power would be far stronger without that temporal millstone round the neck of the Papacy which required the support of a foreign army to impose it upon Italy. Indeed the Temporal Power as it now existed appears to me a serious impediment to the free exercise of the Spiritual Power and I wonder he had not cast it away since it was now evident that it could not be upheld many years longer without endangering the peace of Europe and the unity of the Roman Church”.⁽⁵⁾

The circumstances behind the request

The circumstances that led the Pope to send for the British representative in July 1862 and grant him an audience after a lapse of one year and a half⁽⁶⁾ were several. Giuseppe Garibaldi and the thousand had crossed over from Sicily to Calabria and were preparing to march upon Rome. General Comte de Montebello, head of the French army that was

Odo Russell’s connection with Malta had begun at least in 1860. That year he was instrumental in overcoming a host of difficulties related to the establishment of the Diocese of Gozo; cf (= confer) in relation my book Joseph BEZZINA, *Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony. The Gozo-Malta Story. 1798–1864*, Valletta 1985, especially pages 198–215.

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2. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 26 Jul 1862, PRO, F(oreign) O(ffice), 43/86B, no 100.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 13 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 24.

occupying the Papal States on behalf of the Pope, had concentrated his troops in Rome and was making great preparations to defend the port of Cività Vecchia. He had thus withdrawn his troops from the Neapolitan frontier and, in doing so, left the mountain passes of Abruzzo free for Garibaldi's army to invade Rome without meeting any obstacle or resistance. These circumstances and military measures led the Papal Government to believe that the French moves were done with a precise purpose: the French Government would allow the invasion of the Papal States and then impose their conditions on the Papacy for the general pacification of Italy. Finally, at the time, great irritation prevailed at the Vatican against Emperor Napoleon III for having obtained the recognition of the Kingdom of Italy by Russia, Prussia and Portugal.⁽⁷⁾

The question then arose as to where the Pope should go if he had to leave Rome. Three countries were proposed: Austria, Spain and Bavaria. It was ascertained that Austria and Spain might be seriously embarrassed in their relations with powerful France if they received the fugitive Pope. Würzburg in Bavaria was recommended, but there was no way to reach it without passing through Austria, Northern Italy or France. Two governments only remained to be appealed to in case of need: England and Turkey. The Pope could of course not ask the Sultan for protection. England alone remained. England that was strong enough to meet the displeasure of Catholic France.⁽⁸⁾

There is a possibility that the Pope was really seeking refuge in the British realms and that he was placing his hopes for a return of the Papal States in an imaginary war between France and England. Yet in all probability the Pope's intentions were otherwise. Odo Russell thought in fact that the Pope had made that request so that he would report what the Pope had requested and so "the French Government should feel the necessity of taking measures to ensure his remaining in Rome, as his flight to England would have a bad effect in France".⁽⁹⁾ Russell did not comply.

The British offer

"I need scarcely add that there is no prospect whatever of the Pope ever carrying out his threat of going to England",⁽¹⁰⁾ concluded Odo Russell in his report to London on the papal audience and request. However Earl Russell,

7. Cf in relation Giacomo MARTINA, Pio IX. *Chiesa e mondo moderno* (= Nuova Universale Studium 18), Roma 1976, 19–26; Roger AUBERT, *The Roman Question*, in *History of the Church*, ed by H. Jedin – J. Dolan, VIII, London 1981, 248–255.

8. Cf Odo RUSSELL (secret) to Earl Russell, 14 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B no 25.

9. Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 26 Jul 1862, PRO, FO, 43/86B, no 100.

10. *Ibid.*

the British Foreign Secretary did give some consideration to the request.

Since June 1859, when he became Foreign Secretary of State in the second cabinet of Viscount Palmerston, Russell had fully occupied himself with the problem of Italian Unification. On October 27, 1860, in a famous despatch to Sir James Hudson, the British Minister in Turin, the Foreign Secretary had publicly supported the *Risorgimento* movement: "Her Majesty's Government will turn their eyes rather to the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties, and consolidating the work of their independence, amid the sympathies and good wishes of Europe".⁽¹¹⁾ For that letter, informed him Odo Russell, his nephew, "you are blessed night and morning by twenty million of Italians . . . and at the moment it was published in Italian, thousands of people copied it from each other to carry it to their homes and weep over it for joy and gratitude in the bosom of their families".⁽¹²⁾

Even before this despatch, described by a French critic as *le monument le plus curieux d'une littérature diplomatique tout a fait nouvelle*,⁽¹³⁾ the Pope had been very critical of Russell's policy. "Our bitterest enemy, and I will say so even before you, is Lord John Russell", he told Odo Russell during a private audience in January 1860. "His dislike to the papacy and to the Catholic religion is so violent that he seems to tremble over with hatred when he speaks against us".⁽¹⁴⁾

The British Foreign Secretary was, of course, asserting all the time the official British stand upon the Roman Question. This he repeated very clearly in his reply to the papal request despatched to Odo Russell on October 25, 1862. However, he also made it clear that he did comprehend the stand taken by the Pope. "This melancholy state of things in Italy wounded the kind heart and harrowed the paternal feelings of His Holiness, and . . . the conscientious feelings of duty of the Pope would always oblige him to refuse any terms of accomodation, whether recommended by the Emperor of the French or by any other power, which would leave him with less than his former territory".⁽¹⁵⁾

The policy pursued by the Pope had very recently been publicly and unanimously approved by the whole of the Catholic world. On the occasion of the canonization of the Japanese martyrs on Pentecost Sunday, 1862, all the bishops had been invited to attend so that the occasion be rendered a manifestation of the power, the union and the universality of the Church.

11. Earl RUSSELL to Sir James Hudson, 27 Oct 1860, reproduced in Spencer WALPOLE, *The Life of Lord John Russell*, II, London 1889, 325-327.

12. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Lord Russell, 1 Dec 1860, in WALPOLE, II, 328.

13. Cf WALPOLE, II, 325.

14. Odo RUSSELL (secret) to Lord Russell, 31 Jan 1860, PRO, FO, 43/76, no 19.

15. Earl RUSSELL to Odo Russell, 25 Oct 1862, PRO, FO, 43/85, no 46.

They reiterated that it was the duty of the Pope to assert the temporal rights of the church by remaining in Rome, until violently driven away by the enemies of religion.⁽¹⁶⁾

Nonetheless, animated by a friendly feeling to both parties, Earl Russell suggested that the Pope should retire from the conflict and expect in tranquillity the issue which in the order of Province might await the Papacy and determine the fate of Italy. In the name of Her Majesty's Government, he then offered the Pope asylum in the island of Malta.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Vatican reaction

On November 11, Odo Russell communicated the contents of the despatch with the Malta offer to Giacomo Cardinal Antonelli, the papal Secretary of State.⁽¹⁸⁾ He informed Russell that he was as much anxious as the British Foreign Secretary “that Rome should not be the seat of a perpetual foreign occupation” and that the Pope should be “independent of enemies who persecuted the church and independent of friends whose protection could not unhappily yet be dispensed with”. “He was compelled, he further explained, to accept the protection afforded him by the presence of French garrison in Rome”.⁽¹⁹⁾

Cardinal Antonelli seemed to have been immensely pleased with the despatch and asked for a copy to submit it to the Pope. When Russell went with a copy a few days later, the Cardinal snatched it out of his hands and “crammed it into his bosom and buttoned it up as if it had been a bag of golden *scudi*”.⁽²⁰⁾ Russell was of the opinion that the despatch was a good move in every respect and if the Pope were to accept it would be the best thing he could do for the Roman Catholic Church”.⁽²¹⁾

The despatch was probably communicated to the Pope on November 20. A few days later Cardinal Antonelli informed Odo Russell that “His Holiness had fully acknowledged the friendly spirit in which that

16. Cf. in relation to Roger AUBERT – Giacomo MARTINA, *Il Pontificato di Pio IX (1846–1878)*, 2da edizione italiana a cura di G. Martina (= *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, fondata da A. Fliche – V. Martin, XXI) 1v in 2, Torino 1970, 160–163.

17. Cf Earl RUSSELL to Odo Russell, 25 Oct 1862, PRO, FO, 43/85 no 46.

A short account of the story was given by Arturo MERCIECA, *Il Papa a Malta*, in *Malta Letteraria* 1/7 (1904) 212–216. His account is based entirely on a review of the monumental work by Emile OLLIVIER, *Empire Liberal*, IX, Paris 1904. The review appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* (30 Sep 1904) 293. In its essentials this account is accurate, though there is some doubt on who first requested the asylum.

18. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 11 Nov 1862, PRO, FO, 43/86B, no 108.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 19 Nov 1862, PRO, 30/22/76.

21. *Ibid.*



Odo Russell *later*
Lord Amphil of Amphil



Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli

communication had been made, but that since it was his manifest duty to remain in Rome so long as he could do so with advantage to the spiritual interests of the Church, he could but thank Her Majesty's Government for their intentions but he could not share their opinions nor could he avail himself of their hospitable offers at present".⁽²²⁾

Pope Pius IX could speak in that way for another reason: Garibaldi had been halted in his march towards Rome. He was met to the south by an Italian force sent to meet him by the Italian Prime Minister Urbano Rattazzi, afraid that an attack on the papal city would provoke the French and the Austrians into a counterattack. On August 29, Garibaldi's Thousand were routed at Aspromonte, he himself was wounded and held as prisoner for a considerable time. This tense situation of July had thus been somehow relieved.

The passage in the Malta despatch that mostly pleased the Pope and caught Cardinal Antonelli's fancy was the one where Earl Russell affirmed that the Pope might one day return to Rome owing his power to the love and respect of his subjects.⁽²³⁾ On January 7, 1863, Pope Pius himself confided to Odo Russell how much "he had been gratified by the offers of hospitality made to him by Her Majesty's Government" and requested him to thank Earl Russell for "offering him a palace at Malta". "The Maltese", proceeded the Pope during the same audience, "were good Catholics and he knew he would there be surrounded by a population as devoted and respectful as his own subjects might be at Viterbo, but so long as he was protected by France he would not avail himself of the protection of England".⁽²⁴⁾

Irritation at Paris and Vienna

In the meantime, Cardinal Antonelli had assured Russell that he intended to make a secret of the Malta despatch and that he would not communicate its contents to anybody. This declaration led Russell to believe that in fact he must have given a copy of it to some friend. Russell soon found out that His Eminence had given a copy of the despatch, together with an Italian translation to Baron Bach, the Austrian Ambassador in Rome, who had sent a special messenger with it to Vienna via Paris so that it might be read by Prince Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris. The informant also told Russell that Cardinal Antonelli had explained to the Ambassador that he had accepted the document as it might one day prove

22. Odo RUSSELL (confidential), 28 Nov 1862, PRO, FO, 43/86B, no 118.

23. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 25 Feb 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

24. Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 7 Jan 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 5.

most useful and “that although the Pope could not accept English hospitality at present he might stand in need of it in the future”.⁽²⁵⁾

At the beginning of 1863, there was in fact a feeling of great expectations. Many from the Pope downwards were hoping that a solution for the Roman Question was finally dawning. The Malta despatch led some to believe that the British had begun to favour the Pope. The French were seemingly also harbouring friendlier feelings and a booklet circulated in Paris around that time confirmed this view. This booklet, *L'Union Italienne*, after proving the impossibility of a united Italy showed the advantages of a Confederation with several suggestions to satisfy all parties concerned. The idea of a Confederation had been first suggested in 1843 by Vincenzo Gioberti in his masterpiece *Il primato morale e civile degli Italiani*. *L'Unione Italienne*, inspired without doubt by Emperor Napoleon himself, further suggested that England and France, by virtue of their possession of the islands of Malta and Corsica, should equally become members of the Italian Confederation.⁽²⁶⁾

In the meantime, the contents of the Malta despatch had also been leaked to the French. Prince Metternich had most probably handed a copy to the Emperor. Monsignor Flavio Chigi, the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, informed Cardinal Antonelli that the French were deeply annoyed at the Malta despatch.⁽²⁷⁾ On January 22, the *Journal des Débats* of Paris published some extracts and, to the indignation of Odo Russell,⁽²⁸⁾ also gave an imprecise account of the circumstances under which the despatch had been forwarded to the Pope. In a Blue Book, *Documents Diplomatiques*, the French also made public the diplomatic correspondence that had been exchanged to date concerning the matter.

The following story emerged. After having been received by the Pope, Odo Russell advised His Holiness in the Foreign Secretary's name “to leave Italy, adding that Her Majesty's Government would in such case willingly offer him Malta as a residence, that English ships would be placed at his disposal and that the Pope could reckon on the readiness of England to secure an asylum to him worthy of himself”.⁽²⁹⁾ The story proceeded that on December 26, 1862, Odo Russell made a further communication to Cardinal Antonelli delivering a private letter from Earl Russell “expressing regret that the Pope had not availed himself of the offer of an asylum in Malta and adding that the Pope would soon be obliged to have recourse to it”.⁽³⁰⁾ The

25. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 16 Dec 1962, PRO, 30/22/76.

26. Cf AUBERT – MARTINA, *ibid.*

27. Cf Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 21 Jan 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

28. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 26 Jan 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 13.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

sources concluded that the Vatican wanted to keep the question secret but that Odo Russell had spoken on the subject to one of the diplomatic envoys accredited to the Holy See.

The story, based on correspondence exchanged between the French Foreign Minister, Monsieur Edouard Drouyn de Lhuys and Prince de la Tour d’Auvergne, the French Ambassador in Rome, was firmly believed by the French authorities and they immediately acted upon it. In fact, the previous French Ambassador in Rome, Marquis de Lavalette, who shared the British views concerning the Pope’s temporal power, had been recalled late in 1862 soon after word on the Malta despatch had reached the French Government. In January all the officers and officials who served Lavalette and shared his views were gradually removed to France and their places filled up by men who believe in the Temporal Power and an Italian Confederation.⁽³¹⁾

The French Government was also much annoyed by the fact that the Pope seemingly talked about the Malta despatch to everybody and appeared gratified at the course followed by Earl Russell in the matter.⁽³²⁾ So was the Austrian Government, who, it was widely believed, would “advise the Pope to die the death of ten thousand martyrs rather than abandon Rome”.⁽³³⁾

The full facts

Odo Russell felt extremely indignant at how the story of the Malta despatch emerged from the French publications. Three inaccurate facts had been purposely leaked about the despatch. First that it was not Cardinal Antonelli who had given a copy of the despatch to Baron Bach; secondly, that Russell had made a renewed communication about it at Christmas, and finally, that the whole initiative lay with the British. Russell had to make known the full facts.

In a letter to Earl Cowley, the British Ambassador in Paris, he confided that his informant about the leakage by Cardinal Antonelli was none other than an old friend of his, Baron Ottenfels, secretary of Baron Bach. One day “he told me in strict confidence that Bach was in possession of Lord Russell’s Malta despatch . . . I said I could tell him nothing about it and that he must get all his information from the Vatican on the subject”.⁽³⁴⁾ He had also learnt that when La Tour d’Auvergne asked Antonelli whether he had communicated a copy to Baron Bach, the Cardinal hinted to the French Ambassador that Russell might have given a copy to his friend Baron

31. Cf Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 21 Jan 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

32. Ibid.

33. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 16 Dec 1862, PRO, 30/22/76.

34. Odo RUSSELL to Earl Cowley, 30 Jan 1863, PRO, FO, 519/205.

Ottenfels who it turn passed it to his superiors. The fib was told to please the Austrian Ambassador,⁽³⁵⁾ concluded Russell.

It was Earl Russell who first telegraphed Odo Russell whether he had sent him a private letter concerning the Malta despatch.⁽³⁶⁾ Russell replied in the negative⁽³⁷⁾ and later informed him that when he confronted Cardinal Antonelli about this supposed second communication on the morrow of Christmas, the Cardinal felt "much embarrassed . . . and immediately offered to rectify the statement with all sorts of assurances of friendship".⁽³⁸⁾

The greatest inaccuracy concerned the origin of the initiative. The published documents hinted that the papal audience to Odo Russell on the previous July 26 had been granted at the British representative's request. Cardinal Antonelli confirmed this impression in a letter to Flavio Chigi on January 30 and proved the fact by a reference to the Pontifical Audience Register.⁽³⁹⁾ Odo Russell denied to Antonelli that he had ever solicited the papal audience.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In an explanation to the Foreign Office, he recalled how in a report written down on the very same day he reported the words: "*I sent for you to . . . distinctly pronounced by the Pope.* (This) left no doubt in my mind that the audience had not been granted to me in consequence of my past applications which had not been attended to for a year and a half by Cardinal Antonelli, but for a special purpose and I therefore concluded that I had been sent for by the Pope".⁽⁴¹⁾ He also repudiated the French accusation that he had given too much importance to the Pope's words in the same audience and that the Pope spoke to him without attaching the slightest importance to what he said. Explained Odo Russell: "I did not attach undue importance to them for the simple reason that I never believed in the withdrawal of the French garrison from Rome and therefore never believed the Pope would leave Rome".⁽⁴²⁾ Regarding the second, he recalled: "I could not but be impressed by the earnest appearance of Pius IX and it never occurred to my mind that the spiritual independence of the Roman Catholic Church was a subject with which the Pope would trifle in conversation with anyone".⁽⁴³⁾

35. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 31 Jan 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

36. Cf Earl RUSSELL (telegram) to Odo Russell, 19 Jan 1863, recited in Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 20 Jan 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 10.

37. Cf *ibid.*

38. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 31 Jan 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

39. Cf Giacomo Cardinal ANTONELLI to Fabio Chigi, 30 Jan 1863, quoted in Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 13 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 24.

This inaccuracy is also discussed in Henry DRUMMOND WOLFF, *Rambling Recollections*, I, London 1908, 342.

40. Cf Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 13 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 24.

41. *Ibid.* Cf also Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 17 Feb 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

42. Odo RUSSELL to Earl Russell, 13 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 24.

43. *Ibid.*

An uproar in London

The news of the Malta despatch caused an uproar in London. The city dailies, relying initially on the inaccurate reports in the French papers, carried very critical remarks on the whole British initiative. In a leader on January 23, 1863, *The Times* castigated the Whigs for their daring step in the Roman Question and described the offer of a Palace to the Pope in Malta and his eventual transfer to the island with his retinue as tantamount to the creation of an *imperium in imperio*. The critical feelings towards the Malta offer did not abate and the Prime Minister promised a full explanation in parliament.

The Foreign Secretary immediately sent a messenger to Rome to inquire Odo Russell whether he could publish the whole correspondence on the subject. On January 28, he telegraphed to Earl Russell: "Publish anything you please and never mind me".⁽⁴⁴⁾ When a few days later he received a request for the publication of further correspondence related to the Roman Question, he telegraphed the same reply.⁽⁴⁵⁾

On February 5, the Prime Minister Lord Palmerston delivered a statement in the House of Commons. In a speech that reflects what has been rightly described as "the policy of prestige of Palmerston",⁽⁴⁶⁾ the Prime Minister reiterated the British policy towards the unification of Italy since their accession to the Government in June 1859. This policy had been made known far and wide through the despatch of the Foreign Secretary in October 1860. Britain had thus proved to be the champion of liberal and constitutional movements in Europe against the older order of despotism and legitimist monarchy. It was this same pragmatic policy that had led his Government to offer Pope Pius IX asylum in Malta after he had formally requested British help.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In a debate that followed Earl Russell explained further the whole circumstances that had led to the Malta despatch and laid on the table of the House the relative correspondence.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The Governor of Malta and Gozo, Sir John Gaspard Le Marchant had seemingly until then been kept in complete darkness about the Malta despatch. It does not transpire from the official published and unpublished correspondence that he was ever informed about the proceedings. The palace that the British had in mind for the Pope and his retinue, *Verdala* or *San Anton*, could most probably be prepared at a very short notice to

44. Odo RUSSELL (telegram) to Earl Russell, 28 Jan 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 16.

45. Cf Odo RUSSELL (telegram) to Earl Russell, 4 Feb 1863, PRO, FO, 43/89B, no 19.

46. David THOMPSON, *England in the nineteenth century* (= The Pelican History of England 8), London 1979, 153.

47. Cf HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Debate*, 5 Feb 1863, in *Parliamentary Debates*, Hansard, Third series, CLXIX, 122–138.

48. Cf *ibid* and HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Accounts and Papers*, 1863–LXXV–4028.

accommodate His Holiness. Or the British were perhaps convinced that the Pope would never leave Rome.

A profitable move

Odo Russell was more angered than embarrassed with the lies perpetuated by the diplomatic channels on the Malta request. Remembering that July 26, he wrote later: "I felt horribly bored and put out when I received the order to go to him and would have got off if possible, for the heat was intense and the prospect of a uniform at twelve o'clock in the day was most unpleasant to me".⁽⁴⁹⁾ The root of the whole question, he concluded, rests in the fact that "the Pope, who hated Thouvenel [the former French Foreign Minister] and Lavalette, and who now has Drouyn de Lhuys in whom he has more confidence, would willingly hush up the past terrors he underwent when Garibaldi was approaching".⁽⁵⁰⁾ He lamented: "I am accused of lying, which God knows I have not done. And to the evidence brought against me by a Pope, a Cardinal and an Ambassador I have nothing to oppose but my single, simple, and isolated word of honour".⁽⁵¹⁾

Nonetheless, "the more I think the measure over the more I convince myself that it will in the end prove to have been good policy".⁽⁵²⁾ Time later he could write with pleasure to Earl Russell that "the leading cardinals . . . , since your Malta despatch, have much greater confidence in the English Government than in the Emperor Napoleon and Monsieur Drouyn de Lhuys, and seem anxious to be civil to me".⁽⁵³⁾ "The priests (also) are very much pleased with your Malta despatch and with your speech about the Pope".⁽⁵⁴⁾ "The Pope (himself) has quite a weakness for me".⁽⁵⁵⁾

Discussions about an asylum for Pope Pius IX in Malta soon died down. The possibility of the Roman Catholic Church being directed for some time from Malta vanished. Perhaps it had never subsisted in reality.

49. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 17 Feb 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 21 Jan 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

53. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 22 Apr 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

54. Odo RUSSELL (private) to Earl Russell, 25 Feb 1863, PRO, 30/22/76.

55. Ibid.