CHAPTER VII

MINISTER TO FRANCE

Lewis Cass resigned his post as Minister to France in November, 1842. President Tyler appointed Henry Alexander Wise of Virginia to succeed Cass, but the Senate refused to confirm him. For about eighteen months the post remained vacant. Finally on April 9, 1844, President Tyler presented the name of William R. King, and the Senate unanimously confirmed him.[1]

The French mission to which King was appointed was one of the most important posts in the foreign service, for England was making a determined effort to prevent the annexation of Texas and had convinced France that she would gain in supporting England in her effort to keep Texas independent. King's task, therefore, became that of counteracting British influence and convincing the French government that intervention in the Texas question was not best for French interests. During the two years King was Minister to France, the Texas question was finally settled, the Oregon negotiations were completed, and the Mexican War was

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1 Senate Executive Journal (1843), p. 186; (1844), p. 253; Beckles Willson, America's Ambassadors to France (1777-1927) a Narrative of Franco-American Diplomatic Relations (London: John Murray, 1928), p. 206.

begun.[2]

King's appointment was generally well received in the United States. His unanimous confirmation by the Senate is evidence of the esteem in which King was held by that body. The Washington Globe declared that King accepted the place with reluctance because he realized the importance of having a minister of high standing at Paris. It added that "no man ever better deserved such a high distinction" than King.[3] The Huntsville Democrat predicted that King would prove himself abroad, as he had proved at home, an able and faithful servant and that his appointment by a Whig President should not endanger his standing in the Democratic Party.[4] The Baltimore Clipper had only one regret, namely that the long social and political union which had existed between King and James Buchanan, two bachelors, was about to be broken.[5] The appointment was not well received by Richard Pakenham, English minister in Washington. He recognized in King an able proponent of the annexation of Texas and a likely foe

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2 Adequate accounts of the diplomacy of this period are found in Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, 10 volumes (New York: Knopf, 1927-1929), V, 164 ff., and Ephriam Douglass Adams, British Interests and Activities in Texas 1838-1846. (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1910.) (Hereinafter cited as Adams, British Interests.)

3 April 9, 1844.

4 April 24, 1844.

5 Quoted in Washington Daily National Intelligencer, April 12, 1844.

of British policy. Pakenham wrote his government that King was a member of the Democratic Party and a representative of the faction in the Senate that had recently "distinguished itself by marked hostility towards England." Besides, said he, King was a Southerner and felt "strongly upon the subject of slavery." Such feelings would lead him to side with those who were critical of the right of search and the non-surrender of fugitive Negroes. If an opportunity offered itself for King to thwart British policy at Paris, therefore, he would "make the most of it."[6] In making this prediction, Pakenham was not mistaken.

Accompanying King on his trip abroad were Catharine Ellis, his favorite niece, and Joshua L. Martin, who had been chosen Secretary of the Legation.[7] Among King's chief regrets at leaving the United States was the necessity of severing his associations with Buchanan. He wrote Buchanan that he would feel "lonely in the midst of Paris," for there he would have no friend with whom he could commune as with his own thoughts.[8] Buchanan envied King's visit to Paris

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6 Richard Pakenham to Earl of Aberdeen, February 27, 1844, Great Britain, Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office 5, 404, pt. 2, Photostats in Library of Congress. (Hereinafter cited as P. R. O., F. O.)

7 William R. King to James Buchanan, May 10, 1844, in Buchanan Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. (Hereinafter cited as Buchanan Collection.) See also Washington Daily National Intelligencer, May 17, 1844.

8 King to Buchanan, May 10, 1844, Buchanan Collection.

and his life in the American colony in that city.[9] The King party sailed from New York for Havre on the packet ship Sylvia de Grasse on May 16, and arrived at that port on June 7, 1844. King reached Paris on June 10, where he was welcomed by the Americans resident in that city.[10]

King's instructions, dated April 23, 1844, ordered him "to express to his majesty assurance of the earnest desire by which the President continues to be animated to maintain unimpaired, and to strengthen if possible the very friendly relations so happily subsisting between the United States and France." He was to cultivate and improve "this good understanding between the parties."[11] No mention was made in the instructions about the course King was to follow in regard to Texas, but the content of his later correspondence leaves little doubt that he had been instructed orally to counteract British activities in that matter.

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9 James Buchanan to Mrs. Cornelia Roosevelt, May 13, 1844, in John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan, 12 volumes (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1908-1911), VI, 1-3.

10 William R. King to John C. Calhoun, July 13, 1844, in Dispatches from United States Ministers to France, XXX, December 20, 1842-January 28, 1847, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as Dispatches.) See also Washington Daily National Intelligencer, May 17, 1844, and Journal des Débats (Paris), June 12, 1844.

11 John C. Calhoun to William R. King, April 23, 1844, Instructions to Ministers in France, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as Instructions.)

King's first audience with King Louis Phillipe occurred on July 1. King presented his credentials along with a brief address assuring Louis Phillipe and the French people of the friendly sentiments felt for them by the United States and recalling French efforts in the cause of American independence. "Ancient recollections," said King, "have not lost their influence over the hearts of the American people, who recall with lively emotions, the efforts which so efficiently aided their infant struggles for political existence and public liberty." He pointed out that the interests of France and the United States were still harmonious. Louis Phillipe gave assurances of his personal and France's good will toward the United States and declared that recollection of the close relations between France and the United States in the revolutionary struggle gave him great satisfaction. He had ever considered America the natural ally of France. "Nothing," King wrote, "could have been more cordial than the reply and reception of the King." After his talk with Louis Phillipe, King was presented to the Queen and the Duke de Nemours and was invited to dine with the King on July 4.

After the dinner on July 4, Louis Phillipe brought up the subject of Texas and asked why the treaty had been rejected by the Senate. King assured him that the defeat of the treaty had been caused by political considerations of a domestic nature, that the object of annexation would be pursued with unabated vigor, that a majority of the American

people favored the treaty, and that the measure would be carried out at no distant date. Louis Phillipe then frankly answered that he wished to see Texas remain an independent state and spoke of commercial advantages secured to France by an existing treaty with Texas. He had advised the Mexican government that the best policy was to acknowledge the independence of Texas at once. Seeking to drive a wedge between England and France, King pointed out that the interests of France, which were purely commercial, were totally distinct from those of England, and that French interests would be promoted by the annexation of Texas to the United States. Louis Phillipe admitted that British colonial possessions in North America involved her in political considerations which did not affect France and finally assured King, or at least gave him "distinctly to understand," that "no steps would be taken by his government, in the slightest degree hostile, or which would give to the United States just cause of complaint." In sending this intelligence to Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, King pointed out that it was of great significance because Louis Phillipe was to a large degree his own prime minister and could speak with authority.[12]

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12 King to Calhoun, July 13, 1844, Dispatches. Louis Phillipe also questioned King about the Sandwich Islands and received assurances that the United States was interested in them for commercial reasons and to prevent European powers from gaining domination over the islands.

A few days later, King requested an interview with Guizot, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss questions affecting the United States and France. Guizot, however, requested delay on the grounds that he had numerous other engagements. Writing to Calhoun before the interview occurred, King said that he planned to question Guizot about Anglo-French relations. The best informed circles in Paris believed that England was exerting a marked influence upon the French government, and especially upon Guizot, the ruling spirit of the cabinet. King was persuaded by his own observations, however, that Louis Phillipe's policy was essentially "pacific and conservative" and that the French would not "proceed to the extent of acts hostile or unfriendly to the United States in reference to the Texas question," regardless of the desire of some ministers to cooperate with England. He believed, in fact, that domestic problems would deter both England and France from involving themselves in active difficulties in remote quarters. King discounted a rumor he had heard that England and France had planned a joint protest against the annexation of Texas. Although the Texas chargé d'affaires had informed him that such action had been contemplated, other information that he had gathered led him to an opposite conclusion. Even if such a plan had existed, it should be regarded as of "little

weight after the assurances of the King" on the subject.[13]

The American minister's interview with Guizot eventually took place on July 20. King began by remarking that he had heard rumors that the French government had united with that of England in a formal protest against the annexation of Texas. Although he had at first attached little importance to the rumor, he had received subsequent information about the plan which induced him to seek the truth from a source on which he could "altogether rely." Guizot, "with considerable animation if not some impatience," assured him that no such step had been taken, that on this subject "France had acted for herself with no other power," that France did, indeed, desire the independence of Texas, but that its action "would be entirely independent of that of England whose interests in relation to this question were different from those of France." King pointed out to Guizot that good relations between the United States and France might have been impaired if the charge had been true. Guizot then asked if the defeat of the treaty did not mean an end of the annexation question. King answered that a large part of the American people favored annexation, not so much for the sake of acquiring territory, but from a feeling that annexation was necessary for the security of the country. Such being the case, public opinion would exert a

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13 Ibid.

strong influence upon anyone called to administer the government. Annexation sentiment, he said, was not confined to one party although the feeling was stronger in the Democratic Party. Guizot asked King if the United States would be satisfied with a guarantee of Texas independence, but King, in the absence of instructions, refused to commit himself. He noted, however, that it was vitally important to the United States that no foreign nation should obtain a preponderance of power in Texas and that the United States would view with great distrust any movement designed to put that republic under foreign rule, especially that of England. Mexico was already known to be very much under English control, and English subjects had been migrating to Texas in such numbers as to cause fears that they would become the predominating influence there. The United States, said King, must guard against such a possibility not only to protect the western part of the country against a hostile neighbor but also to protect the "peculiar property of the South."[14]

After the interview, King wrote Calhoun that however great the French desire to see Texas independent might be her opposition would not assume an unfriendly attitude nor would that of England be so extreme as some had predicted. England, he felt, would not "hazard the employment of any

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14 King to Calhoun, July 31, 1844, Dispatches.

arms, besides those of diplomacy, a cheap instrument if it prove successful." The American government should not be influenced by dangers that were rumored to exist and that, if real, should be faced with a "calm but firm aspect."[15]

Other diplomatic sources show that King was told a good deal less than the truth when Louis Phillipe and Guizot assured him that no steps would be taken in the slightest degree hostile to the United States and that France had acted "for herself with no other power" in regard to the Texas question, or else King read a great deal more into their statements than they really meant to say. In January, 1844, British Foreign Minister Aberdeen wrote Lord Cowley in Paris to call to the attention of the French government American plans for the annexation of Texas and to ascertain whether French interests corresponded with those of England. If so, he was to propose that the ministers of the two countries in Washington be instructed to use similar language in a protest "deprecating all interference on the part of the United States in the affairs of Texas, or the adoption of any measure leading to the destruction of the separate existence of that State."[16] Cowley wrote back on January 15 that he had found the French government in sympathy with Aberdeen's ideas. Guizot had promised to have the French ambassador in London confer with Aberdeen and to instruct Pageot in

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15 Ibid.

16 Adams, British Interests, pp. 158-159.

Washington "to act in strict accordance" with British Minister Pakenham in matters relating to Texas. Guizot agreed that it was important for American designs in Texas to be prevented, and the French King desired that the independence of Texas should be maintained as a barrier to prevent further American expansion into Mexico.[17]

On February 27, 1844, the British Minister in Washington wrote his government that he had consulted the French Minister Pageot about acting together on the Texas question, but that the latter had not yet received instructions.[18] On April 14, however, he reported that Pageot had received instructions directing him "to act in strict concert" with the British mission "in resisting the project of annexation" and empowering him "to enter a formal protest against the measure."[19] In succeeding weeks, Pageot and Pakenham worked in close concert, but agreed that no protest was to be made by either during the debates on the treaty because they feared that foreign intervention would insure passage, instead of defeat, of the treaty in the Senate. Pakenham later wrote his government advising further delay of any protest until after the presidential election in the United

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17 Ibid., pp. 159-160.

18 Richard Pakenham to Lord Aberdeen, February 27, 1844, P. R. O., F. O. 5, 404, pt. 1.

19 Pakenham to Aberdeen, April 14, 1844, ibid., 404, pt. 2.

States, and suggested that both England and France seek to secure the election of Henry Clay to the presidency.[20] Pageot apparently gave his government similar advice, for when Aberdeen sent the Pakenham message to Cowley in Paris, the latter replied on July 22 that Guizot was willing to adopt such a policy.[21] At the very time when King was receiving assurances that France was friendly to the United States and was acting alone, the French minister in Washington was working in close co-operation with the British minister, and both countries were anxiously awaiting a Whig victory to promote their interests. True enough, their policy had been altered and now involved a period of watchful waiting; but later events proved that French policy was subservient to that of England and unfriendly to the United States. Although neither France nor England openly threatened war with the United States, they co-operated in Texas and Mexico to circumvent American plans.

On August 12 Calhoun answered King's first dispatch expressing the pleasure of the American government that no steps were to be taken by the French government "in the slightest degree hostile, or which would give the United States just cause to complain." Such a report was especially gratifying, said Calhoun, since other reports had left

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20 Pakenham to Aberdeen, June 27, 1844, ibid., 406.

21 Adams, British Interests, pp. 181-182.

the impression that France and England were prepared to make a joint protest against annexation and a joint effort to induce Texas not to accept annexation on condition that Mexico would recognize her independence. Calhoun agreed with King that the annexation policy would be pursued and that the majority of the American people favored it. He commended King for making a distinction between the interests of France and those of England in Texas. Said Calhoun, "France cannot possibly have any other than commercial interest in desiring to see her [Texas] preserve her separate independence; while it is certain that England looks beyond, to political interests, to which she apparently attaches much importance." England, declared Calhoun, wished the abolition of slavery in Texas so that the institution would be weakened in the South. With southern producers handicapped by lack of a labor force, England hoped to regain markets which she had lost when she freed her own slaves. France, Calhoun felt, could have no interest in such a program as this. Calhoun closed by reminding King that his mission was "one of the first magnitude" and urged him to leave nothing undone "to do justice to the country and the Government in reference to this great measure."[22]

Two weeks later, Calhoun replied to King's dispatch

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22 John C. Calhoun to William R. King, August 12, 1844, quoted in United States 28 Cong., 2 sess., Senate Document, No. 1, pp. 40-45.

reporting his conference with Guizot. He expressed pleasure that France was not acting in concert with England. Such a step, he declared, would be considered unfriendly by the United States. Said he:

> The Government of the United States will confidently rely on the assurances of Mr. Guizot; and it is hoped that, neither separately, nor jointly with any other Power, will France adopt a course which would seem so little in accordance with her true interests, or the friendly relations which have so long subsisted between the two countries.[23]

Calhoun added that King's reply to Guizot's inquiry about a joint guarantee of Texas independence was "well-timed and judicious." The policy of the United States had been to avoid such agreements except in cases of strong necessity; the present case offered no reason to warrant a change in policy. In fact, to enter such a guarantee would work disadvantageously against the United States and Texas by preventing the annexation which both countries were "anxious to advance."

On August 31, King wrote the State Department that the Texas question had "almost disappeared from the horizon." People in Europe were absorbed in topics of more urgent local importance. "To annoy or to thwart the United States," he wrote, "the French government will no longer be disposed to follow in the wake of England." Guizot could

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23 Calhoun to King, August 26, 1844, Instructions.

no longer be seen as subservient to British policy and remain popular at home. In fact, good feelings between the two countries had been seriously impaired by trouble in Morocco and Tahiti.[24]

In a private letter to President Tyler King amplified views he had earlier expressed about Guizot and the French King. Guizot and Louis Phillipe, he said, had a strong leaning toward England. But so hostile were the feelings of the French people that the government dared not yield to England more than was absolutely necessary. Louis Phillipe understood France and knew that any act wounding French pride would shake his very throne; hence he would oppose steps opposed by the French people. In this state of affairs the United States had nothing to fear. France recognized the importance of American friendship and knew that it would become even more important in the future, nor would England "lightly hazard" a rupture with the United States. He regretted that some had found it necessary to use the fear of England as a reason for opposing the Texas treaty; in fact he had hoped that the mere thought of English intervention would have caused the Senate to ratify the treaty of annexation. American standing in Europe had been lowered

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24 King to Calhoun, August 31, 1844, Dispatches.

by the cowardly course which had been taken.[25]

In October King still held the opinion that Louis Phillipe, in his own and France's interest, would not connect himself actively, if at all, with any hostile moves of the British to prevent annexation.[26] King's relations with Louis Phillipe continued to be most friendly. In a private letter to Calhoun he wrote, "I converse with him often and freely; and my intercourse with him has been all that I can desire." He had found Guizot to be "able and adroit," but some called him "deceptive and false." According to his enemies, Guizot would not hesitate to lie when he could gain by so doing, yet he was secure in his position because he had the confidence and support of the King. Had he known this about Guizot from the beginning, King said he would have reduced all his conversation relative to Texas to writing and submitted it to Guizot for correction so as to bind him to his declarations beyond the possibility of cavil or denial.

King also called Calhoun's attention to the fact that the subject of emancipation in the French colonies was about to come before the French Chambers and that a great deal of

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25 King to John Tyler, September 13, 1844, quoted in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, The Letters and Times of the Tylers, 2 volumes (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1885), II, 328. (Hereinafter cited as Tyler, Letters and Times.)

26 King to Calhoun, October 6, 1844, Dispatches.

money was being spent by abolitionist societies in an effort to secure passage of such a bill. If France decided to abolish slavery in her colonies and Spain and Brazil were influenced to do likewise, the United States would be left standing alone with the whole civilized world against her; it was to her interest, therefore, to meet the threat in France. The French should be warned that the British favored abolition not so much because of their interest in the welfare of the slave as their desire to engross to themselves the entire production of sugar and much of the cotton and rice. To carry out this purpose, the French press must be used. He suggested that Calhoun furnish money from the contingent fund to be used to procure insertion of articles in the French press "calculated to disabuse the public mind here, as to the actual condition of the Slaves in our country."[27] Calhoun responded to the request by sending $500 to King to be used in his program of education.[28]

By November King had apparently discovered why European governments were keeping quiet about annexation. He wrote Calhoun on November 15: "The fate is considered to be very much involved in the Presidential contest, the result of

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27 King to Calhoun, [October or November, 1844], in James Franklin Jameson, ed., Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, Annual Report of the American Historical Association (1899), II, 986-990. (Hereinafter cited as Jameson, Calhoun Correspondence.)

28 Calhoun to King, December 13, 1844, ibid., p. 633.

which may revive that solicitude which is now permitted to slumber." In his own conversations he had tried to treat the annexation of Texas as a national rather than a political issue and hoped that the attitude of the American people would prove him correct. He could detect no change of opinion in regard to the Texas question and still felt that Louis Phillipe favored a policy of peace and non-intervention and would not become entangled in a knotty question that would alienate the "natural allies" of France in the United States. So long as France did not become hostile in her actions and did not lend herself to the unfriendly designs of England, he saw no reason to complain of French sentiments about Texas independence.[29]

In a letter to Buchanan, King summarized with considerable pride what he thought he had accomplished in his first months abroad. He had "succeeded in putting an end to an arrangement" which the Minister of Foreign Affairs was inclined to make with the British government in opposition to the annexation of Texas. There was now no danger of "united action on the part of France and England." Even if the Texas treaty had been ratified, the French government would have acquiesced without a murmur and England would probably have confined herself to empty threats.[30]

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29 King to Calhoun, November 15, 1844, Dispatches.

30 King to Buchanan, November 14, 1844, Buchanan Collection.

On November 28, 1844, King dined with Guizot and deduced from his conversation that James Knox Polk's election as President would not produce any change in the views of the French government toward Texas. Guizot seemed pleased at Polk's election, for he saw a prospect that the tariff would be modified so as to aid French commerce. King pressed the point on him and received assurances from Guizot that France would follow suit if the United States made the first step in tariff reduction.[31]

By December 31, however, King had reached the conclusion that the election had caused interest in Texas to be renewed. French officials had looked forward to Clay's election to bring an end to annexation; Polk's victory assured Texas annexation. King felt the French government would take no active steps against the United States but noted that its wishes coincided with those of England and that its influence might be lent, to a certain extent, to British policy in Texas. The French King was anxious to conciliate England because he needed her friendship to counteract hostility toward him in other European countries. This did not mean that he had an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. Rather he was trying to preserve

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31 King to John C. Calhoun, November 29, 1844, in Chauncey Samuel Boucher and Robert Preston Brooks, ed., Correspondence addressed to John C. Calhoun 1837-1849, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the year 1929, p. 266.

peace in Europe. Guizot, however, had a "systematic devotion to England" which blinded him to the other interests of France. He had rendered the English alliance almost odious to the French people by his ostentatious "deference to English policy." Public opinion, King felt, restrained Guizot's pro-English tendencies and even rendered his tenure in office precarious. The Royal speech at the recent opening of the French Parliament had been coldly received, mainly because of opposition to the English alliance. The United States had little to fear beyond "diplomatic remonstrance," because French rulers did not want to multiply the difficulties in French foreign relations. The course of the American government should be determined by "duty and patriotism alone" and should not be influenced in the slightest by empty demonstration from Europe. King's chief fear was that the ardor of Texas for annexation had cooled and that European intrigue would be used to foster this adverse feeling.[32]

In a private letter to John C. Calhoun, King advised that there should be no wavering on the Texas question. Any signs of hesitancy would disgrace the United States in European eyes. The growling of the British lion should "only stimulate to immediate action." With annexation accomplished, England would complain and threaten; her newspapers

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32 King to Calhoun, December 31, 1844, Dispatches.

would lavish abuse on the United States, but there would be no war. England was exerting all her influence to induce France to make common cause with her. The plan would not succeed, however, because Louis Phillipe was too wise and prudent to act counter to the wishes of the French people.[33]

That King was correct in his general estimate of the situation is revealed by a letter of Cowley to Aberdeen dated December 2. Guizot, said Cowley, had promised to join with England in any negotiations with Mexico for the purpose of securing Mexican acknowledgement of Texas independence and to refuse to recognize annexation of Texas to the United States. As to the question of war and peace, he refused to concede that annexation would constitute sufficient cause for taking up arms to prevent it. France was willing to join in diplomatic efforts to thwart American policy in Texas, but not to make war over the question.[34]

In the meantime, an event had occurred in the United States which caused a furor in European capitals. In his Annual Message in 1844 President Tyler called for the annexation of Texas and submitted to Congress some of the diplomatic correspondence dealing with the Texas question, including Calhoun's letter to King of August 12. This letter, and the Calhoun letter of August 29, were published in the

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33 King to Calhoun, December 28, 1844, Jameson, Calhoun Correspondence, pp. 1014-1015.

34 Adams, British Interests, pp. 190-191.

American press and came to the attention of the English minister in Washington as well as the ministries in London and Paris.[35] King had sought to avert such embarrassment by warning Buchanan privately that the publication of his conversations with the French King and Guizot would produce a "rather awkward" situation.[36] Although the King dispatches were not published, the Calhoun letters included significant quotes which aroused the ire of the English. Pakenham wrote to London that King had apparently understood Louis Phillipe and Guizot to say that France would not interfere in the annexation of Texas or otherwise oppose the project. He felt that King had strangely misunderstood them in the last mentioned sense because the French minister at Washington had actually been instructed to protest against the measure and had only refrained from doing so because he feared that the protest would do the cause of French policy more harm than good. Nor had Pakenham reason to think that Pageot's instructions had been rescinded.[37]

The London Times of January 2, 1845, said that the French promise made to King afforded the "most powerful encouragement" the annexation scheme could have received from Europe since it left Great Britain to maintain the

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35 King to Calhoun, January 29, 1844, Dispatches.

36 King to Buchanan, November 14, 1844, Buchanan Collection.

37 Pakenham to Aberdeen, December 29, 1844, P. R. O., F. O. 5, 409, pt. 2.

independence of Texas single-handed. Since the good faith of the French government was placed in a very equivocal light, the Times wished to know whether the French had been giving assurances to King that they would not take unfriendly action at the same time they were promising England aid in maintaining the status quo in Texas. When the official French press remained silent on the subject, the Times expressed surprise that the French government had not accused "the American Ministers of the grossest inaccuracy, if not of a more serious attempt to commit a foreign Government by deliberate misstatement."[38]

In a series of letters written in late January, King described the sensation produced in Europe by the publication of the Calhoun letters. In his official dispatch of January 29, King wrote that the feeling in England was one of disappointment and anger and that the English press had charged the French government with treachery and duplicity. In France the feeling seemed to be one of satisfaction because the people generally disapproved of the English alliance. King had deemed it the part both of "policy and dignity" to presume that the earlier declarations of the French government were to be relied on, unless modified or retracted from an official quarter; hence he had not questioned the Ministry so long as it remained silent. He had seen both the King and his ministers, but they had not spoken to him

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38 The Times (London), January 10, 1845.

about the subject. The official press had published the Calhoun letters without a word of contradiction or comment. The Ministry, he surmised, may even have welcomed the letters because they relieved it from the charge made by the opposition that it had been subservient to England in its foreign policy. Whatever the feeling of the Cabinet, popular opinion would "forbid offensive or active interference against the annexation of Texas."[39]

In private letters to Calhoun and Buchanan, King expressed hope that Congress would pass the annexation resolutions then before it without delay. Delay, he warned, would enable England to perfect her plan of operations in Texas. King reported that Ashbel Smith, the Texas representative in Europe, had talked to Aberdeen and now seemed hostile to annexation. Smith had returned home, probably with a plan worked out with Aberdeen and Guizot, to induce the Texas government not to proceed with annexation plans. In conversations with King, Smith had said he would be "a willing instrument in the hands of England." On more than one occasion Smith had said that the time and circumstances were propitious for Texas to obtain an acknowledgement of her independence by Mexico and to procure the payment of her debt by granting certain commercial concessions to England;

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39 King to Calhoun, January 29, 1845, Dispatches. King also noted that right of search treaties, which the French government had negotiated with England for the suppression of the slave trade, had wounded the pride of the French people.

at the same time the arrangement could be made more beneficial to Texas by a stipulation for the admission of Texas cotton into British ports free of duty. "Would to God," King wrote Calhoun, "our Congress could but understand the importance of prompt action to put an end to European intrigue, and the ultimate loss of that fine country, unless we resort to force to obtain it. The act done, we should hear no more of opposition on this side of the Atlantic."[40] The British lion might growl and show his teeth, King wrote Buchanan, but it would not bite. Guizot, he was convinced, had once agreed to join the British in a protest against annexation, but he dare not avow it because of French public opinion.[41]

Lord Cowley, the British minister at Paris, lost no time in seeking to find the meaning of the Calhoun letters. On January 3 he went to Guizot and read the passage in which Calhoun spoke of France's planning not to take joint action with Britain. Guizot answered that he was positively certain that no such assurance had been given by the King and that both his and the King's views corresponded with those of the British government. Louis Phillipe, said Cowley, had

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40 King to Calhoun, January 29, 1845, in Jameson, Calhoun Correspondence, pp. 1022-1023.

41 King to Buchanan, January 28, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

more than once spoken of the importance of preventing Texas from becoming part of the United States.[42]

Lord Aberdeen answered Cowley on January 7 expressing regret that an apparent rift between England and France had been exposed to the world under such circumstances that public refutation would be difficult to carry out. He proposed, therefore, some joint action by the two countries to show their unanimity of feeling. Such an opportunity had presented itself in the form of a proposal from Santa Anna in regard to the recognition of Texas independence. Cowley was to suggest to Guizot that the representatives of both countries in Texas be instructed to join in pressing on the government of Texas the abandonment of all schemes of annexation with the United States. In return Britain and France would enter into an agreement with Texas and Mexico to preserve their independence and territory.[43]

When Cowley acquainted Guizot with the British proposal, the latter "concurred without hesitation" in the suggestion that the two powers take immediate steps to show the similarity of their views. Cowley asked Aberdeen to send to Paris a copy of the instructions to the English agent in

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42 Cowley to Lord Aberdeen, January 3, 1845, P. R. O., F. O. 115, 88, pt. 2.

43 Aberdeen to Cowley, January 7, 1845, ibid.

Texas for transmission to Guizot.[44] The latter sent similar instructions to the French agent in Texas and made a copy to be given to Aberdeen. The note to the French representative in Texas instructed him to act in concert with the English agent in persuading Texas to give up the idea of annexation and to accept the Mexican offer of independence along with a guarantee of her borders by the English and French governments.[45] But nowhere in the correspondence did either country propose to use anything other than diplomatic means in carrying out their joint policy.

King noted that nothing was to be feared from the open hostility of European governments, but that much was to be feared from their influence upon the government of Texas. "There can be no doubt [he wrote] that French influence both at Washington and in Texas, is cooperating with that of England, actively, perseveringly, and it is to be feared, efficiently. Secret opposition is more to be feared than open hostility." These circumstances pointed to the necessity of "prompt, able and vigilant counteraction of the combined policy of England and France in Texas." The rejection of the Treaty in 1844 had cooled the ardor of the Texans for annexation, and every moment of delay strengthened the foes of annexation. "The question," King concluded, "is now to

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44 Cowley to Aberdeen, January 10, 1845, ibid.

45 Guizot to Comte de Ste Aulaire, January 17, 1845, ibid.; Guizot to Dubois de Saligny, January 17, 1845, ibid.

be decided not in London or Paris, or even Washington, but in Texas."[46] Shortly thereafter Congress passed the joint resolution of annexation.

President Polk in 1845 appointed as his Secretary of State King's old friend James Buchanan. Writing King, Buchanan expressed surprise that France continued to act in concert with England in trying to dissuade Texas from joining the union. President Polk left to King's discretion, however, whether to communicate to the French government, formally or informally, "the painful disappointment which he had experienced from a review of these circumstances."[47]

King wrote that news of the passage of the annexation resolution had been generally well-received by the people of France, but that the pro-English government was dissatisfied. In a conference with King, Louis Phillipe had expressed fear that by extending its territories the United States was endangering the permanency of the American union. King replied that experience had proved that the erection of new states strengthened the union and that it was for the American people to decide the question. King urged that action on annexation be completed speedily. "If you do not take immediate steps to reconcile Texas to annexation by modifying the objectionable provisions of the resolutions which you passed and thus put an end to British intrigue,"

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46 King to Calhoun, February 27, 1845, Dispatches.

47 Buchanan to King, March 25, 1845, Instructions.

he warned Buchanan, "that country will be lost to us. If not already done, send commissioners without delay."[48]

British diplomatic correspondence verifies King's declaration that British intrigues would be stimulated by the distaste of Texans for the annexation resolutions. On April 15 Aberdeen wrote Cowley to contact Guizot and determine whether France was willing to join in a move to try to induce Mexico and Texas to come to terms. The British would not pledge themselves to make war for Texas independence, but the two nations could use moral influence to bring about peace and promote stability in the area.[49] On April 28 Cowley reported that Guizot had presented the British proposition to the Cabinet and that it had approved the plan.[50] On May 3 Aberdeen sent the British representative in Texas a declaration agreed to by both Britain and France proposing that the two countries "employ their best efforts to restore Peace between Mexico and Texas" and secure the recognition of Texas independence by Mexico provided Texas would promise to remain independent.[51] The plan was to be presented only

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48 King to Buchanan, April 16, 1845, in Thomas Sidney Jesup Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

49 Aberdeen to Cowley, April 15, 1845, P. R. O., F. O. 115, 88, pt. 4.

50 Cowley to Aberdeen, April 28, 1845, ibid.

51 Aberdeen to Captain Elliot, May 3, 1845, ibid.; see also Aberdeen to Charles Bankhead, May 1, 1845, ibid.

if the status quo still existed in America; it probably came too late, therefore, to have any influence on the annexation question.

King recognized that the action of France was inconsistent with her proclaimed sympathy for the United States, but he felt that her desire to conciliate England was a more important factor in shaping her policy than was her desire to injure the United States. Under the circumstances, he deemed it inadvisable to present any protest to the French government. He believed French influence would have little effect upon the councils of Texas, and critical relations with England over the Oregon question pointed to the wisdom of avoiding an irritating controversy with a people who were generally friendly toward the United States.[52] "No good purpose," he wrote Buchanan privately, "could be effected by convicting M^r Guizot of the gross duplicity of which he has been guilty; and especially, as it is to be hoped, that the question of annexation has before this time been diffinitively settled."[53]

After annexation was accomplished, Martin, the American chargé, wrote from Paris that the French generally approved the action. In tribute to King's diplomacy he declared: "He [King] thought it was hardly worth a quarrel, and wisely

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52 King to Buchanan, April 29, 1845, Dispatches.

53 King to Buchanan, April 30, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

deemed that the best rebuke of this ridiculous intermeddling was the proof of its impotency."[54] King himself wrote that since Mexico had abandoned hostile designs against the United States all hope for successful resistance to the annexation of Texas had been abandoned. The feeling against annexation was dying down even in England. The prompt and easy success of the action convinced King that he was correct in not making a formal protest to France. The best triumph was success, and it had been obtained.[55]

Almost from the time of his arrival King complained that the French climate was unfavorable for his health and that he suffered severely from rheumatism.[56] In January, 1845, he complained of rheumatism and spoke hopefully of returning home in the autumn.[57] President Polk gave him permission to return home, but King decided that he would remain at his Paris post until the difficulties with England over the Oregon question were settled. He felt that his experience in France would enable him to serve the country better than any newly appointed minister in case of a war with England.[58]

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54 Martin to Buchanan, August 15, 1845, Dispatches.

55 King to Buchanan, October 31, 1845, Dispatches.

56 King to John Tyler, September 13, 1844, quoted in Tyler, Life and Times, II, 328.

57 King to Buchanan, January 28, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

58 King to Buchanan, April 30, September 29, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

On April 16, 1845, King noted the flare-up in England over President Polk's Inaugural Message in which he declared that the title of the United States to all of Oregon was unquestioned. King told Buchanan that he would yield nothing because of English threats, but he pointed out that the American claim to all of Oregon was not so entirely free from doubt as to justify the government in refusing an adjustment upon "equitable principles." King hoped that the forty-ninth parallel of latitude might be extended to the Pacific. If negotiations could not secure an agreement on this line, he suggested that the question be submitted to arbitration with an independent and impartial umpire, such as the Emperor of Russia. To submit the question to arbitration, King declared, would be the best way for the administration to escape censure from the American people for the loss of any part of Oregon. The United States must keep out of war if it could do so without sacrificing its rights, but it must not submit to greater evils than war.[59] King reported that British bluster had produced a sensation in France, but that the Oregon question was remote and little understood in France.[60]

On April 30 King again wrote Buchanan about the Oregon problem. If the British sent an ultimatum, he declared,

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59 King to Buchanan, April 16, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

60 King to Buchanan, April 29, 1845, Dispatches.

"Negotiations must cease; for to such terms we can never accede." But if the British were in a conciliatory mood, as King believed they were, the United States should divide the territory along the forty-ninth parallel of latitude or yield even more. King himself would accept the "southern shore of the straits of Fucca and thus give to England the whole of Van Couver's Island." King admitted that the plan would run into opposition from American public opinion, which held that the title of the United States to the whole territory was unquestioned. For himself, however, King concluded that the title was not perfectly clear and might well be questioned. If such were the case, the problem should be settled by mutual concessions and, if this plan failed, by arbitration.[61]

A few weeks later, King expressed the opinion that the English were prepared to accept a compromise on the forty-ninth parallel regardless of all the talk in Parliament. England did not desire war with the United States. She understood well the consequences which war would have on her commerce and manufactures. Her statesmen did not underrate American resolution and knew full well the indomitable spirit and energy of the American people. England would, therefore, resort to war only under compulsion. If England proved conciliatory and the United States did not, the world

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61 King to Buchanan, April 30, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

would conclude that the latter was grasping for territory for which its claims were unsound. If arbitration were resorted to, either the Emperor of Russia or the King of Prussia would give the United States a fair hearing. The public might condemn compromise for a time, but right action would, in the end, win the support of the intelligence of the country.[62] A compromise settlement would "neither derogate from our honor, nor effect [sic] injuriously our interests."[63]

On November 14, King reported that the French were much concerned over the Oregon problem. Louis Phillipe feared a war between the United States and England because any war between great powers might result in a general war. King himself declared that private accounts, the attitude of the British press, and public preparations all indicated that the British were in earnest about their threats. But a conflict could probably be avoided by "honorable compromise." If the United States was unwilling to compromise, she should prepare for a "trial of arms," for neither side could honorably give up all the disputed territory. In case of war, King felt the French government would remain neutral although the government would favor England while the general

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62 King to Buchanan, [May or June, 1845] Buchanan Collection.

63 King to Buchanan, June 30, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

public would sympathize with the United States.[64]

King predicted that if Polk's Annual Message should be in the same vein of his Inaugural, war would quite likely occur. Already the British press was pouring full vials of "wrath and indignation" on the government of the United States. King regretted that the United States was not better prepared to meet the first shock of war. If the United States had improved fortifications and thirty or forty steam frigates, King would not fear a contest with "our Jealous and arrogant Mother." The United States, however, should not make the mistake of thinking that England would not fight. True enough, England had troubles at home, but these would vanish in the face of a popular war -- and a war with the United States would be "exceedingly popular." He warned Buchanan that Congress must make "extensive preparations to meet the consequences" if the government did not plan to take conciliatory action. King expressed surprise that Pakenham had refused the compromise offered by the United States to extend the boundary along the forty-ninth parallel. Nor did he understand why the United States refused to accept arbitration. "The point of honor served," he wrote, "I do not see the great importance of a strip more or less on the Pacific; as in the nature of things the whole must come under our controul, long before it could be

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64 King to Buchanan, November 14, 1845, Dispatches.

advantageously occupied by us."[65]

The President's Annual Message created a sensation, and King wrote that the United States could "under no circumstances" depend on the friendship of Louis Phillipe. King had concluded that the United States was obnoxious to Louis because it was a republic and because it was a rival of England. The most that could be hoped for was that public sentiment in France would prevent the government from joining England in hostile measures. King still felt, however, that the English government wanted war only as a "reluctant alternative." It would keep the peace if it could do so without giving the appearance of "tame submission." King believed that the proposal to compromise on the forty-ninth parallel was a good starting point and might be made "substantially the basis of an arrangement." In the meantime, the United States should continue to prepare for war. King urged especially the strengthening of a steam navy.[66]

Late in January King wrote Buchanan urging that Congress put an end to joint occupation in Oregon as suggested by President Polk. It should set up territorial government in the area, however, only after a year's notice had expired. King believed the British would propose a compromise essentially the same as that suggested by Polk. He thought

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65 King to Buchanan, November 28, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

66 King to Buchanan, January 1, 1846, Dispatches.

Parliament would have approved the Polk plan if Pakenham had transmitted it to that body. And if the United States showed itself "arrayed for conflict," there was a much better chance of settlement.[67]

King approved the course of the United States in refusing to accept a plan of arbitration suggested by Pakenham in December. Aberdeen, he felt, had not expected the offer of arbitration to be accepted. Rather he wanted to convince Europe that England was willing to make a just settlement, and he wanted more time for negotiation. King predicted that Pakenham would soon make an offer which would be acceptable in most respects. But he feared England might demand perpetual freedom of navigation of the Columbia River. This King would not grant without an equivalent right for the United States to use the St. Lawrence. Possibly navigation for a period of ten years might be granted so that the Northwest Fur Company could gradually withdraw its interests which had grown up during joint occupation. "The President," he advised, "will certainly act with prudence, by submitting the proposition whatever it may be, (unless altogether inadmissible) to the Senate, for the advice in advance of that Body." Opponents of compromise would find that they could make no political capital by arraying themselves against a measure that yielded little and extended

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67 King to Buchanan, January 27, 18[4]67, Buchanan Collection; King to Buchanan, January 30, 1846, Dispatches.

the boundary along the forty-ninth parallel. "The good sense of the country," he concluded, "will approve of such a settlement."[68]

In June Pakenham presented a plan similar to the one King had predicted. It called for a boundary to be drawn along the forty-ninth parallel from the Rocky Mountains to the Straits of Juan de Fuca and thence down the main channel to the sea, with the stipulation that the Hudson's Bay Company and other British owners were to keep their property and that free use of the Columbia River would be granted for their use. When King heard of the exact terms of the proposal, he insisted that the United States should not make a "disgraceful surrender" of her rights. He preferred war to granting perpetual navigation of the Columbia. He would go along with the Senate, however, if it should accept the treaty without modification.[69] Despite his earlier demands for all of Oregon, President Polk submitted the compromise plan to the Senate without change, and it was accepted by a vote of 38-12.[70]

King wrote Buchanan that the settlement had given general satisfaction in Europe, and that the French looked on

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68 King to Buchanan, March 28, 1845, Buchanan Collection.

69 King to Buchanan, June 27, 1846, Buchanan Collection, pp. 607-608.

70 Eugene Irving McCormac, James K. Polk a Political Biography (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 1922), pp. 607-611.

the United States as "by no means losers in the settlement." King felt that firmness of the American government had made the treaty possible.[71] The treaty, except for the navigation clause, was about the same as the plan suggested by King. King's advice probably influenced Buchanan's thinking about the negotiations, for he at all times kept in close touch with King on the subject.

During the Oregon controversy King became involved in a personal controversy with portions of the British and French press and with French Foreign Minister Guizot. This controversy grew out of a press attack on King and Calhoun for statements they had made in 1844 concerning King's conversations with Louis Phillipe and Guizot. When President Polk, in his Annual Message of 1845, rebuked the French and English for their part in the Texas question, the government press of both countries launched an attack on the United States and its representatives. King referred to some early anti-American articles in the Journal des Débats, the French ministerial organ, as outbreaks of "impotent spleen" that required no official notice.[72] But when the Journal reprinted a very critical article from the London Times on January 4, he demanded an explanation. The article reads in part as follows:

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71 King to Buchanan, July 20, 1846, Dispatches.

72 King to Buchanan, January 1, 1846, Dispatches.

> Mr. Calhoun and Mr. King stated in their official correspondence, with an assurance that has seldom been equalled, that they received from the King of the French a pledge that France would offer no opposition to the work they had in hand. That statement was utterly false; for although France, like England, did not conceive that her interest in the province or state of Texas was sufficiently strong to justify a war against the aggressor, she did protest as energetically as England, against the violation of those principles which are the basis and the safeguard of international relations.[73]

King wrote Guizot that, as the representative of the United States, he could not stand by and allow his own and Calhoun's veracity to be questioned in a newspaper which had a degree of official authority. To remain silent, said he, would be "to manifest an unworthy indifference to private reputation as well as to public consideration." He hoped that Guizot would see fit to deny that the article had been approved by the French government.[74]

Guizot requested an interview with King in which the French minister assured King that the Journal des Débats was not the government organ and that the government should not be held responsible for views expressed in it. King replied that the Journal was considered the official organ and had been described as such in the very article copied from the Times. Unless Guizot was prepared to confirm the accuracy of the statements found in his 1844 dispatch, King said he

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73 Quoted in King to Guizot, January 4, 1846, Dispatches.

74 Ibid.

would be compelled to suspend diplomatic relations with the French government. Guizot then promised to write a note repeating the assurances he had given in 1844 that on the Texas question France would do nothing hostile to the United States nor anything which would give just cause of complaint. He professed, however, not to remember saying that France would not unite with England in protesting against annexation and insisted that King had misunderstood him on the subject.[75]

The next day Guizot sent King a letter marked "private" in which he denied that the Journal des Débats was the government organ or that the government should be held responsible for its statements, and assured King that the French government had had no intention of doing anything which might give the United States just cause of complaint.[76] King replied that, despite the notation "private," he presumed he would be allowed to use the note in such a way as to vindicate his character.[77] Receiving no answer, King showed the correspondence freely to Americans and other friends in Paris and sent it to the State Department so that the Washington government might take any action it chose.[78]

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75 King to Buchanan, January 29, 1846, Dispatches.

76 Guizot to King, January 9, 1846, Dispatches.

77 King to Guizot, January 9, 1846, Dispatches.

78 King to Buchanan, January 29, 1846, Dispatches. The correspondence was printed in American newspapers in February. See Washington Daily Union, February 25, 1846.

The correspondence was also sent to Louis McLane, Minister in London, for publication in London newspapers. King predicted that the publication would put an end to the "calumny" which had been conducted by the London Times for about a year.[79] Because King had allowed himself to be drawn into the correspondence, one English newspaper called him "sadly too thin-skinned" and said that "a high diplomatic functionary ought to be above this."[80]

Privately, King wrote Buchanan that Guizot had lied in 1844 when he said France planned no joint action with England and had lied again to cover up his first one. But since Guizot had used words in the note identical to those expressed in his 1844 dispatch, King was willing to accept the note as a final settlement.[81] Guizot took the affair with good grace and showed King more cordiality after the event than he had shown before. He even attended a ball given by King to celebrate Washington's Birthday.[82] In a speech before the Chamber of Deputies, Guizot explained that

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79 King to Buchanan, February 28, 1846, Dispatches.

80 European Times, quoted in Washington Daily Union, February 25, 1846.

81 King to Buchanan, January 27, 184/6/, Buchanan Collection.

82 King to Buchanan, March 28, 1846, Buchanan Collection.

France had interfered in Texas because the United States was growing stronger and needed to be watched with a vigilant eye so that the equilibrium could be maintained in America.[83]

As the last rumblings of the Texas controversy were dying away in 1846, the Mexican War erupted. As in the annexation controversy, the United States feared that England and France might take a hostile stand. For the third time in his two-year tenure at Paris, King used his influence to prevent France from interfering in the affairs of the United States.

On June 1, 1846, King wrote Buchanan that it was too early to predict exactly what reactions would be abroad. He felt, however, that the "promptitude and energy displayed by the American government" in the emergency would have a favorable influence on European opinion. He proposed to impress on the French government that the United States had entered the contest "with great reluctance after much forbearance" and that while it proposed to prosecute the war with vigor both by land and sea, it had entered the conflict solely for the purpose of "conquering an honorable and permanant peace." In his opinion, the feelings of the French government would be adverse to the United States in the war, partly from antipathy to the republican cause and partly from devotion to the English alliance. Nevertheless, there

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83 King to Buchanan, January 30, 1846, Dispatches.

was no ground to fear hostile interference because the French people, already irritated by the government's stand on the Texas question, would not support such a move. He noted that Guizot, in a recent debate, had proclaimed the high respect he felt for the United States and had reiterated the determination of the French government to follow a neutral course. Moreover, Louis Phillipe assured King of the friendship he felt for the United States. Louis Phillipe had expressed regret that hostilities had begun, but assured King of his "firm determination to abstain from all participation, direct or indirect, in the contest."[84]

King reported in June that American advances under General Zachary Taylor had produced a striking change in the tone of public opinion in France. American institutions were no longer deemed ill adapted to military emergencies. Europeans had ceased to sneer at the defenseless condition of the United States or to ridicule its people as vain boasters. He still felt, however, that the French government was unfriendly to the United States. Although the King declared that he would take no part in the contest, he had made similar protestations in 1844 when he was actually pursuing another course. King believed, however, that no "steps of open hostility" would be taken by France unless England should interfere. In such a case, the diplomacy of France would likely be directed in a similar channel. One

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84 King to Buchanan, June 1, 1846, Dispatches.

of the editors of the ministerial Journal des Débats had recently remarked that he doubted whether the European powers would "look patiently on the threatened conquest or mutilation of Mexico." Such an attitude was probably a reflection of official opinion. Guizot informed King that the French squadron in the Gulf of Mexico had been strengthened for the purpose of protecting French commerce, but King surmised that the move had political significance. The French still favored maintaining equilibrium in America and would likely oppose any American accession of territory. American policy should be aimed at keeping the friendship of the French people even though the French government might be hostile.[85]

In a dispatch dated July 20, 1846, King took a hopeful view of the conflict. Commending the government for fighting a vigorous war, he pointed out that the blows inflicted on Mexico had been felt in Europe also. They had proved that Americans could fight when provoked. "Whatever may be the disposition of this government with respect to the maintainence of the 'balance of power' in the American hemisphere," he now declared, "it will not venture to take any active part against the United States in the difficulties with the Mexican republic." Louis Phillipe had said in a recent conversation that Mexico had been hoping for help

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85 King to Buchanan, June 30, 1846, Dispatches; King to Buchanan, June 27, 1846, Buchanan Collection.

from Europe; but when King asked him about French sentiment, Louis declared "in a most emphatic and explicit manner, that no such assistance would be rendered by France" and probably not by England."[86]

On July 15, 1846, King formally requested the State Department for a recall from his ministerial post. He pointed out that the settlement of the Oregon question removed the last remaining cause that threatened to involve the United States in serious difficulties in Europe and that he no longer felt "constrained by a sense of public duty" to remain at the post. On August 12 Buchanan sent him a letter of recall, and on September 15 King took his leave of the French King.[87]

In Paris King had been commended for his generosity and hospitality. Entertainments at his residence in Paris were attended by many of the distinguished residents of the city. As a host King was all affability, and the entertainment was profuse.[88] The ball he gave to celebrate Washington's Birthday in 1846 was called "one of the most splendid affairs of the season." It was attended by upwards of four

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86 King to Buchanan, July 20, 1846, Dispatches.

87 King to Buchanan, July 15, 1846, Dispatches; Buchanan to King, August 12, 1846, Instructions; Martin to Buchanan, October 1, 1846, Dispatches. King had political reasons for returning to the United States in 1846; he expected to seek re-election to the United States Senate.

88 Washington Dollar Globe, October 23, 1844, quoting New York Republic.

hundred of the elite of Paris society together with the eminent Americans resident in Paris.[89] King wrote Buchanan that his expenses for his first year in Paris amounted to $22,000. Such expenses, he pointed out, were necessary to entertain the "numerous countrymen" who flocked to Paris.[90]

King's return home very nearly ended in tragedy. Taking his leave of Louis Phillipe on September 15 and of Paris on September 16, he proceeded to Liverpool where he embarked on the steamer Great Britain on September 22. The day was fine and the wind fair, and the 180 passengers aboard were in high spirits, hoping for a good voyage. But on the first night out the ship struck a ledge of rock off the north coast of Ireland. Imbedded on the reef, the ship listed heavily but remained afloat. The next day the passengers found out that land was nearby. King and his party were taken to Belfast and then to Liverpool. Here, they took passage on the packet ship New York.[91] King reached the United States in early November after an absence of more than two years.[92]

During his tenure abroad, King had performed a valuable

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89 Niles' Register, LXX (March 21, 1846), 48.

90 King to Buchanan, November 14, 1844, Buchanan Collection.

91 King to Buchanan, October 1, 1846, Buchanan Collection.

92 Washington Daily National Intelligencer, November 10, 1846.

service for the United States. Beginning his mission at the time when France and England were seeking to prevent the annexation of Texas, he convinced the French government that intervention was an unwise policy and received assurance that France would not act in a manner unfriendly to the United States. This promise of French acquiescence in annexation was a vital step in the acquisition of Texas. At the time of the Oregon controversy, King again exerted himself to prevent France from joining the side of Great Britain, and again he was successful in preventing French intervention in opposition to the United States. Finally, remaining in France until the Mexican War had been in progress several months, King exerted the influence of his office on France, and she decided not to oppose American policy. Few other ministers to France can boast of having successfully handled three such questions as those of Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War.