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Philip G. Dwyer, *Talleyrand*. London: Longman Press, 2002. x + 232 pp. Maps, tables, notes, plate, bibliographical essay, and index. (pb). \$15.95 U.S. ISBN 0-582-32384-3.

Review by William Olejniczak, College of Charleston.

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Napoleon reportedly called him “shit in a silk stocking.” Mirabeau opined that “he would exchange his soul for a pile of dung, and he would be right to do so.” Scatological comments aside, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord has attracted more than his fair share of detractors. Until recently, admirers have been in shorter supply.

The most recent biography by an Anglophone on Talleyrand appeared more than thirty years ago. Philip G. Dwyer’s contribution to the Longman “Profiles in Power” series (which in 2002 listed forty biographies of famous political leaders) is an effort to provide an up-to-date look at Talleyrand. Longman Press’s willingness to give Talleyrand a place in its series deserves praise. Talleyrand may continue to fascinate the French reading public, but it might be argued that Talleyrand is in danger of falling into historical obscurity. He is probably still most known for his pivotal role at the Congress of Vienna, but this treaty gets less space in the western civilization textbooks than it used to. As the peace conferences after World War I (that served as a failed contrast to 1815) recede into the very distant past, so too does the world of Talleyrand.

Philip Dwyer is rightly dismissive of the vast majority of published works on Talleyrand. He cast such a long shadow over the high politics of Europe from the end of the Old Regime until well into the July Monarchy that nearly everyone of importance in the nineteenth century felt compelled to offer an opinion. A political leader who took fourteen loyalty oaths during his lifetime did not fare very well in the view of most nineteenth-century political observers. Leading French lights such as Chateaubriand, Sand, Saint-Beuve, and Hugo helped shape an unsympathetic Talleyrand “imaginary,” as Dwyer puts it. Lesser lights tended to take a judgmental and moralistic stance, employing the language of treason, scandal, hypocrisy, and opportunism to describe him. In addition to the hundreds of memoirs that provided first-hand accounts by noteworthy individuals who interacted in official and unofficial capacities with Talleyrand, countless hagiographies appeared during his lifetime. Countless more appeared after his death in 1838.

Most twentieth-century biographers and historians have weighed in harshly, especially Francophones such as Albert Sorel, Emile Dard, Louis Madelin, Edouard Aujay, and Georges Lefebvre, who called him one of the “most despicable characters in the history of France.” Dwyer tells us that Anglophones like Duff Cooper, Crane Brinton, Louis Greenbaum, J. F. Bernard, and Simon Schama have been kinder in their treatments. Dwyer’s aim is to “transcend the imaginary, the emotive, judgmental element” (p. 3). He wishes to avoid Talleyrand’s private life unless it is relevant to his public life. His focus is on Talleyrand’s ideas and motives, his actions and their consequences. Due to space limits, he focuses on the two areas associated with Talleyrand’s career: religion and foreign policy (p. 3).

Between 1891 and 1892 Talleyrand’s memoirs were published, much to the disappointment of those expecting scandalous revelations. Dwyer does not inform us much about the reliability and contents of these volumes, but Crane Brinton states that volumes one and two, written in 1816, form a narrative up to 1814, while volumes three, four, and five are almost wholly official correspondence with much detail on the Congress of Vienna and the London Conference. [1] No one has yet put together a complete

edition of Talleyrand's vast private correspondence, apparently because so much of it is scattered around the globe.

A short chapter one, "Cultivating an Ambition" moves very quickly through the first thirty-five years of Talleyrand's life. The sources are rather thin, which probably explains why Dwyer and other biographers do not dwell on nearly one-half of Talleyrand's life. J. P. Bernard's 1973 biography, for example, employs just a little over fifty pages of a more than 600 page tome to get Talleyrand to the Estates General in 1789. Crane Brinton's *The Lives of Talleyrand* (1936) likewise devotes only about 10 percent of his 300-page work to the world of the Old Regime. Dwyer deftly covers the central moments in Talleyrand's pre-revolutionary days. He was born into one of the most notable families in France. His father was a lieutenant-general in Louis XV's army and would tutor Louis XVI; his mother was a *dame-d'honneur* for Louis's wife and would later serve as a *dame du palais* to Marie-Antoinette. Talleyrand felt uncherished by his parents. Due to a foot deformity, the option of a military career was closed off. He spent his very early childhood with his affectionate great-grandmother in the Périgord and thereafter boarded at the college d'Harcourt in Paris, surviving smallpox at age twelve. This school was where the sons of nobles went to prepare for the priesthood, Talleyrand's fate. Dwyer follows earlier biographers in asserting that Talleyrand's personality was shaped by these painful years of parental neglect. As a result, he developed a "feigned or real indifference" (p. 11) towards others, a "mask" that remained with him for the rest of his life.

Sent to live with his ambitious uncle who was conveniently in line to become the next archbishop of the rich diocese of Reims, the talented boy was perfectly placed to move into the upper circles of the secular clergy. During the next five years of his unhappy adolescence he prepared for the priesthood in Saint-Sulpice, settling into solitary and serious reading. Family connections insured that Talleyrand remained on the fast track. He was promised an abbey in Reims at age twenty-one, and by age twenty-five he was a deacon. After putting in two years at the Sorbonne to finish his degree in theology, Talleyrand was free in 1779 to assume his light duties at the Abbey of Saint-Remy in Reims. His uncle again made it possible for Talleyrand to be nominated to the extremely important post of Agent-General of the Clergy. In this position Talleyrand gained valuable administrative and budgetary experience and earned the reputation of being a capable, hard-working, resourceful, and tactful administrator. During the 1780s he was the Church's chief representative before the monarchy, keeping in constant contact with royal ministers as well as heading the vast ecclesiastical network of 40,000 parishes. Dwyer argues that, in this post and at the periodic Assemblies of the Clergy, Talleyrand developed all of the ministerial, diplomatic, and political skills that would ably serve him for the rest of his career. The bishopric of Autun in 1788 was the icing on the cake, once again due to the intervention of his now-dying father.

The next chapter is devoted to the question of Talleyrand's about-face towards the clergy in the early years of the Revolution. He had protected the church in the 1780s and now called for the nationalization of its lands. He took the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Dwyer tackles these inconsistencies head on: was it hypocrisy? opportunism? treachery? Dwyer wants to paint a "realistic" Talleyrand (but is this not another historian's opportunist?). In his search for explanations, Dwyer reminds us that Talleyrand, especially in the 1780s, had imbibed Enlightenment ideas in the salons and frequently entertained liberals in his Parisian house. But we do not learn much about their conversations or their intellectual networks. Dwyer also notes that Talleyrand was a member of the Society of Thirty. But here too one wants to learn more. Dwyer does provide an interesting insight drawn from Governor Morris's diary: that personal animosity against Jacques Necker motivated Talleyrand to show his greater expertise in solving the financial crisis--thus his famous proposal to nationalize church lands that had long been in the air.

Here, placing Talleyrand more precisely into the period from October, 1789, through the end of the Constituent Assembly would be most helpful. For instance, Talleyrand could have emigrated during this period, as Dwyer notes, but he could also have simply receded into the background of the assembly. Instead, Talleyrand took an activist role in legislative activity and assembly politics, helping to draft the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen, serving on five committees, and drafting a 216-page report (according to Brinton) on public education which was published by order of the assembly. Talleyrand's memoirs, not surprisingly, downplayed his revolutionary activities. Yet a letter from Talleyrand to the Comtesse de Brionne on October 9, 1789, for example, shows him to be a clear advocate of the Revolution: "One truth ought to be clear to you, and that is that the revolution now going on in France is indispensable under the conditions in which we live, and that this revolution will in the end be useful...In this situation...it is necessary to tear oneself from the narrow circles of intrigue and convention in order to consider wider relations and to envisage the new epoch to which we have come. To take half-sides therefore becomes a danger for weak men and a disgrace for those who think themselves strong." [2] Talleyrand's political activities and ideas could have been more precisely situated within the shifting contexts and political groupings in the Constituent Assembly. We would then get a fuller picture and perhaps arrive at an answer to one of Dwyer's central contentions: that Talleyrand "...was representative of a particular class and a particular set of political principles" (p. 4). We know enough about the political configurations and political and religious ideas of groups of representatives of the first two years of the assembly for Dwyer to be able to place Talleyrand within a sector of the political elite as well as delineate to which principles he adhered. The remainder of the chapter discusses Talleyrand's visits to Great Britain first as an envoy and then as an exile.

Chapter three concentrates on Talleyrand's record under the Directory. As a result of Madame de Stael's successful lobbying, he was appointed minister of foreign affairs in 1797, a post he held for ten years. Dwyer goes into considerable detail on the two years preceding the coup of 1799 and finds that, with the exception of his call for an invasion of Egypt, Talleyrand had little influence on policy decisions. Dwyer chastises him for his poor knowledge of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire and for his naiveté that a French army would be seen as a liberator. He stresses Talleyrand's role as an intermediary between Sièyes and Napoleon in the coup and as a principle adviser in the makeup of the consulate.

In chapters four and five, which focus on the years from 1800 to 1814, Dwyer tackles the familiar question that faces scholars of Talleyrand: why did the "devoted servant" of Napoleon later become the "courtier in opposition?" First, Dwyer dismisses cynics who interpret Talleyrand's flattery of Napoleon as mere opportunism; on the contrary, Talleyrand early on genuinely admired and revered Bonaparte. Next, Dwyer asks if Talleyrand "really had a vision for France" (p. 85), presumably to determine if this vision led to principled disagreements with Bonaparte. To address this question Dwyer places much importance on Talleyrand's Strasbourg Memorandum of 1805, "one of the rare instances of a French high political personality putting forward a programme outlining France's place in Europe" (p. 98). The memorandum proposed that France and Austria form a common front against Russia. According to this scenario, Austria would gain territory in southeast Europe at the expense of the Ottomans, while Russia would be forced to expand eastward, thus pitting it against British interests in Asia. Unlimited French expansion and annexation was unnecessary. France should consolidate its gains in western Europe (p. 99). In the wake of the victory at Austerlitz, however, Talleyrand's proposals carried no weight with the ambitious Napoleon, and he simply followed orders in arranging the harsh Peace of Pressburg with Austria. Dwyer chastises Talleyrand for his mishandling of affairs throughout 1806 with Prussia and Britain because he neither understood the importance of Hanover to Britain nor of northern Germany to Prussia.

On the other hand, little disagreement existed between Talleyrand and Napoleon on the domestic front. Talleyrand was instrumental in advocating that Napoleon establish a dynasty; he was guilty of

complicity in the duc d'Enghien's execution; and he reaped the personal rewards of his powerful position and his frequent access to Napoleon.

In August 1807, just after the treaties of Tilsit were signed, Talleyrand resigned his post as foreign minister, but, according to Dwyer, the real split between Talleyrand and Napoleon did not occur until August, 1808 (p. 114), chiefly because Talleyrand could no longer accept Napoleon's boundless territorial appetites. Napoleon kept him on to carry out various tasks, but, from this point on, Talleyrand occupied a shadowy position. Until the military defeat of Napoleon in 1814 Talleyrand remained in Napoleon's inner circle but refused to return as minister of foreign affairs. At the same time, he carried on secret discussions with the Austrian and Russian governments. By 1814 the possibility of a regency had faded, and his agents had entered into discussions with the Bourbons. In April, 1814, Talleyrand brokered the return of the Bourbons and, shortly thereafter, once again assumed the foreign ministry, this time on behalf of Louis XVIII.

Here we enter the terrain for which Talleyrand is most famous: the May 1814 treaty and the Congress of Vienna which convened from October, 1814, until June, 1815. Given the key role played by Talleyrand in May, 1814, with the great powers and the leniency of the treaty, it is surprising that Dwyer does not provide more detail on this diplomatic triumph. Dwyer is more impressed with Talleyrand's "theoretical political principles" than he is with his diplomatic triumph for France. These principles were the rule of law, the concept of legitimacy, and the notion of a balance of power (pp. 145-46). On the question of Talleyrand's individual impact on the outcome, Dwyer states, "all the important decisions at the Congress were taken without him" (p. 150). Yet Dwyer credits Talleyrand for driving a wedge between Russia and Prussia, spoiling their territorial designs (Russia in Poland and Prussia in Saxony), and gaining the support of the British and Austrians to allow France back to the bargaining table. Dwyer credits him with holding to the longer term goals of the "reconstruction of the European system and the rehabilitation of France in Europe" (p. 153).

In chapter seven we follow Talleyrand into the political and diplomatic thickets of 1815. Dwyer chronicles Talleyrand's role in choosing the peerage for the upper legislative house, his brief stint as ministerial head, and his reentry into a harsher diplomatic climate. The election of an ultra majority in the lower house, an uneasy relationship with Louis XVIII, and the treaty demands of the allied powers made Talleyrand's resignation inevitable. Throughout the 1820s Dwyer finds Talleyrand criticizing the Bourbon ministries, taking up the cause of the duc d'Orleans, and endorsing liberal journalists such as Adolphe Thiers. However, Dwyer dwells too long on the details of the various Restoration ministries (pp. 176-7), which are of little relevance to Talleyrand's profile, and neglects to relate Talleyrand's opposition to French military intervention in Spain. The detailed account of the 1830 Revolution (pp. 180-2) is unnecessary, and the references supplied in the endnotes are too few for such a complex revolution. Talleyrand appears to have played a major role in convincing Louis Philippe to assume the throne. The relevance of a detailed look into British ministerial intrigues in the early 1830s (p. 192) is not clear.

Chapter eight recounts Talleyrand's role as foreign minister at the London Conference, where his amiable relationship with the Duke of Wellington combined with the support of King Louis Phillippe secured a smooth transition of Belgian independence from the Dutch. In this instance Dwyer gives Talleyrand primacy of place in this potential international crisis. Why this was so is left under analyzed, which is surprising in light of Dwyer's downplaying of Talleyrand's influence in several earlier diplomatic episodes. Why was Talleyrand more influential in the settlement of the Belgian state? The Belgian settlement also brought forth another principle of Talleyrand: non-intervention.<sup>[3]</sup> J. F. Bernard raises the question of William of Holland's possible bribery of Talleyrand, but Dwyer makes no mention of this.<sup>[4]</sup> Dwyer recounts the details of the Spanish succession crisis of 1833 (p. 195-6) rather

than the more relevant issue of Talleyrand's diplomatic role. We are told that Talleyrand "finally managed to get France, Britain, Spain and Portugal to sign a Quadruple Alliance (22 April 1834) in mutual support and defence against external attack." Dwyer "[w]ithout going into the details" asserts that this alliance was "widely regarded as a great victory for Talleyrand" (p. 196). This example of diplomatic finesse seems very germane to Talleyrand's profile, and the details in this case would be most appropriate.

Readers will disagree on the quality and usefulness of this work. There are useful maps and tables which list the French foreign ministers (1774-1839) and important dates corresponding to Talleyrand's life. The chronological framework of the book will guide undergraduates, but too many will get lost in the listings of now obscure ministries. Especially unhelpful are various unidentified personages who appear and disappear in the text, often without explanation of their relevance to the profile of Talleyrand. For example, Savary is mentioned (p. 94) but not identified and listed in the index as the duc de Rovigo. The comte de Mole is mentioned (pp. 88, 94) but not identified; La Besnardiere (p. 124) is never identified or mentioned again; an unidentified Mollien appears in the text (p. 119) but not in the index; Baron de Pasquier is mentioned several times without identification. Graduate students, in particular, would benefit from at least two changes: the inclusion of a formal bibliography to make the chapter endnotes easier to follow and a longer bibliographical essay that not only more carefully assesses the primary materials (especially the various memoirs cited throughout the book) and historiography on Talleyrand but also sets him in the broader context of French history and European diplomatic history. Dwyer cites a great many contemporary memoirs but owes the reader an assessment of their quality and veracity.

Dwyer too frequently enters into historiographical terrain with little reference to the scholarly literature, as in his discussion of the early years of the Revolution. Dwyer rightly points out that Talleyrand lived through the Enlightenment and the Romantic eras but does not attempt to situate Talleyrand into these eras. One of his central assertions, that Talleyrand was "the embodiment of the political views prevalent in certain circles of the French ruling elite between the 1780s and 1830s," is not in doubt. The literature on Restoration politics as well as on the July Monarchy is vast. The questions are which political views did he embody? Did they evolve over time? To which groups within the notables did he belong and to what extent did these relationships remain constant or shift?

Dwyer decided not to dwell on the personal except when it informed public policy, a perfectly appropriate choice in most cases. It does, however, cut us off from what made Talleyrand such a loved and hated man. Many came away from meetings with Talleyrand absolutely charmed in spite of their deep misgivings and mistrust. Many found him inscrutable and many attributed this quality to his survivability. His diplomatic skills seem to have been formidable. Metternich, Wellington, and, for a time, Alexander I (just to name a few) all were impressed. We do not learn much about his acumen in business or his impact on countless individuals. Here the personal would probably add a great deal to a profile, as occurs in J. F. Bernard's (1973) very readable, detailed, and judicious life of Talleyrand. Dwyer is certainly familiar with this work, for he refers to Bernard in his introduction as "the most complete biography in English" (p. 2). Beyond such praise, however, throughout Dwyer's book there is disturbing pattern of passages highly derivative of those in Bernard's. This pattern consists in the repeated copying of phrases and sentences from Bernard's earlier work, with minor amendments or simplifications but without reference or attribution to the Bernard text in the vast majority of cases. Narrative language is frequently borrowed from Bernard's text, including the identical sequencing of presented information. As a result, it is difficult at times to determine the extent to which the arguments presented in Dwyer's book differ in substance from those of Bernard. These findings have been reviewed by the H-France editorial staff in full accordance with the editorial policies of H-France. Readers are invited to review these issues further for themselves in order to make their own judgments about these important matters (See Appendix A for examples).

Although long out of print (1963 was the last, as far as I can reckon), the even more impressive account by Crane Brinton provides an excellent analysis of Talleyrand's intellectual equipment. Granting that Talleyrand was not a systematic thinker, Brinton pieces together an evocative portrait from Talleyrand's eulogies, speeches, and official and private conversations. He concludes that Talleyrand was educated in what we would now call an early Enlightenment worldview. As a result, he was something of a philosophical skeptic and distrustful of dogmas, abstract ideas, and "systems." He saw the limitations of human nature and was pessimistic about the possibilities for radical reform. At the same time, according to Brinton, his tolerance, willingness to hear out new ideas, and keen sense of observation of people in particular contexts go a long way towards explaining what carried him through the vicissitudes of many regimes. Perhaps the last words should be left to Napoleon. On one occasion a minister asserted to Napoleon: "Your majesty must admit that Talleyrand's conversation has elegance and charm." "I admit it. That is his triumph—and he well knows it." Later on, in a retrospective moment, Napoleon summed up the man. "It is [Talleyrand], after all, who best understands this age and society, both the governments and the peoples...We were not always of the same opinion, but more than once the advice he gave me was sound." [5]

## APPENDIX A

### Parallel Texts

#### **Philip Dwyer, p. 47:**

Knowing that the mission would probably be a failure, Talleyrand nevertheless accepted. As far as he was concerned, it could not have come at a better time. Tired and disgusted with the turn the Revolution had taken, he simply wanted to get out of France and especially Paris where the atmosphere was becoming increasingly dangerous. He had been looking for a position as ambassador for some months: it was a means of maintaining contact with power without the risk of compromising oneself in factional politics. He had stepped forward for the position of ambassador to Vienna, but had been rejected by Delessart, possibly as the insistence of Marie-Antoinette who undoubtedly would have preferred a friend and confidant to represent France in her father's court. His position as a former member of the Assembly, which precluded him from being nominated ambassador for a period of two years, was also a stumbling block. Nevertheless, the opportunity to leave for London in a semi-official capacity came soon after this initial rejection, and it was warmly welcomed by Talleyrand. It not only presented the opportunity to

#### **J. Bernard, p. 114:**

The mission had come at an auspicious moment so far as Talleyrand himself was concerned. "I had been anxious to leave France for some time, for I was tired and disgusted." He had, only a short time before, on the advice of Gouverneur Morris, suggested himself to Narbonne for the post of minister to Vienna and had been disappointed when De Lessart, the Foreign Minister, had refused him the appointment—very possibly at the insistence of Marie-Antoinette, who undoubtedly would have preferred a friend and confidant to represent France in her native land. It is also likely that the Feuillant ministry was not insensitive to the effect that the presence of a renegade and excommunicated bishop might produce at the court of his Apostolic Majesty of Austria. The mission to London, coming as it did upon the heels of this rejection, had been warmly received by Talleyrand. It presented the opportunity not only to undertake a task of considerable importance for France, but also to renew acquaintances among the émigrés with which England, especially London, was filled.

undertake a task of considerable importance for the government, but also perhaps to renew some acquaintances with the *émigré* population in London, and to carry out some personal financial dealings.

**Philip Dwyer, p. 50:**

Like Delessart and Narbonne, Dumouriez regarded war as the only effective means of restoring order in France and authority to the crown. But whereas the Feuillant government had contemplated a limited war along the frontiers of France and directed essentially against the *émigré* armies that had been forming in the German-speaking lands, Dumouriez was determined to strike at Vienna by invading the Austrian Netherlands and to establish a Belgian republic. Almost the first act of Dumouriez's ministry was to dispatch a special agent, Hugues Maret, inciting the Belgians to revolt. The second was to ask Talleyrand to discuss how an attack on the Austrian Netherlands might be viewed by the British.

**Philip Dwyer, p. 63:**

Fifteen days after he had read his second paper to the Institute (3 July), Talleyrand received a note from one of the Directors, Lazare Carnot, inviting him to take control of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The circumstances that led to this point are far from clear. We know that, once Talleyrand decided to become involved in politics again, he became a member of one of the few influential political clubs in Paris, the Constitutional Club, composed of moderate progressives and moderate Jacobins. The abbé Sieyès, Talleyrand's friend of twenty years and a rival in the National Assembly, was a member, as was Chénier who had moved Talleyrand's recall in the Assembly. So too was the political theorist Benjamin Constant. Most of the members were on cordial terms with Talleyrand, and all of them knew him from his days in the

**J. Bernard, p. 121:**

Like De Lessart and Narbonne, he [Dumouriez] regarded war as the only effective means of restoring order in France by restoring authority to the crown. But whereas the Feuillant government had contemplated a limited war along the French frontier, directed at the lands of the Elector of Trier, Dumouriez was determined to strike directly at Austria by invading its province of the Netherlands. His object, however, was not to annex the Netherlands (that would have been unacceptable to the British), but to establish a Belgian republic. Almost the first act of Dumouriez's ministry, therefore, was to dispatch a special agent, Hugues Maret, to incite the Belgians to revolt. The second was to ask Talleyrand to visit him in order to discuss how an attack against the Netherlands might be justified to the British.

**J. Bernard, pp. 177-178:**

The second paper of his "debt as an academician" was read on July 3. Fifteen days later he received a note from Lazare Carnot, one of the Directors: 'The Executive Directory invites you, citizen, to present yourself tomorrow, at 10 o'clock in the morning, at the offices of the Department of Foreign Relations. At that time, Citizen Delacroix, minister of the department, will turn over to you his responsibilities.' For the most part, the circumstances that led directly to Talleyrand's appointment are uncertain. It is known that having decided to reenter the political arena and to seek office, he became a member of one of the most influential of the many political groups in Paris, the Constitutional Club. The club's membership was composed of moderate progressives and moderate Jacobins—the

National Assembly. Once in the club, by virtue of his own intelligence and reputation, Talleyrand quickly gained ascendancy, along with Sieyès and Constant, and emerged as one of the leaders of the moderate constitutionalist 'party' which had great influence among members of the centre of both chambers.

Abbe Sieyès, Talleyrand's friend from almost twenty years and his formal rival in the Assembly; Chénier, who had moved for Talleyrand's recall from America; Montesquieu, a moderate leader of the royalist party; Hugues Maret, future Duke de Bassano; Benjamin Constant, author and political theorist; and, among others, Pierre-Louis Roederer, former *syndic*, or attorney general, of the Department of the Seine under the Constituent Assembly. Most of these men were on cordial terms with Talleyrand, and all of them were known to him, either from his days in the Assembly or through Madame de Staël. (Benjamin Constant, in fact, had lately become Germaine's lover, a fact which Talleyrand either ignored or accepted with his usual complacency.) Within the club, Talleyrand, by virtue of his reputation, his accomplishments, and his intelligence, quickly gained an ascendancy over the other members and thus emerged as one of the leaders, along with Sieyès and Constant, of the moderate constitutionalist "party" which had great influence among the members of the center in both chambers.

**Philip Dwyer, p. 175:**

Talleyrand's stance got him involved in some astonishing political alliances. In 1817, for example, when the government sponsored a bill in the Chamber extending the franchise to anyone in France who paid at least 300 francs in annual taxes, the bill was heatedly opposed by the ultras, led by the count d'Artois and his sons. Talleyrand, on the other hand, who had always favored liberalisation of the voting law, and who had always opposed Artois's party of reactionaries, now did a complete flip. Fully aware that the defeat of the bill would only weaken the government, undermine the prestige of the throne and spread discontent among the people, he placed himself at the head of the opposition to the bill, and succeeded in defeating it by arguing that the proposed law was contrary to the best interests of legitimacy.

**J. Bernard, p. 487:**

Yet his initial determination to bring down Richelieu's government at any cost showed itself not only in his vitriolic attacks on Richelieu himself and on Decazes, but by the astonishing political alliances that he formed in order to bring this about. The first such occasion was in 1817, when the government sponsored a bill in the chamber extending the franchise to anyone in France who paid at least 300 francs in annual taxes. The bill was heatedly opposed by the ultras, led by the Count d'Artois and his sons—Talleyrand's old enemies. Talleyrand, who had always favored liberalization of the voting law, on the one hand, and who had, on the other, always opposed most vehemently Artois' party of reactionaries, now did a complete turnabout. Fully aware that defeat of the bill could only weaken the government,

undermine the prestige of the throne and spread discontent among the people, he placed himself at the head of the opposition to it and succeeded in defeating it by arguing that the proposed law was contrary to the best interests of legitimacy.

**Philip Dwyer, p. 176:**

The key to the interpretation of Talleyrand's jump into the ultra camp is his desire to overthrow the Richelieu government. Richelieu, in Talleyrand's eyes, was no more than a puppet of his now mortal enemy, Alexander I of Russia. To Talleyrand, then, support of Richelieu was in effect support of Russian influence in western Europe, an influence which was essentially and ultimately vowed to repression, absolutism and royal government by divine right. If Talleyrand sided with the ultras, he might succeed in destroying Richelieu's and Alexander's influence. The risk was that the ultras would gain power in France. For Talleyrand, however, there was no choice between a reactionary faction over which he might have some influence and a reactionary Tsar whose intentions were detrimental to the greater interests of France and over whom he no longer had any influence whatsoever.

**J. Bernard, p. 488:**

The key to the interpretation of Talleyrand's sudden jump into the camp of the ultras is difficult, but not impossible, to find. Richelieu, in his eyes, was nothing more than a puppet of Talleyrand's mortal enemy, the Czar of Russia. (This, of course, explains Pozzo di Borgo's cynicism regarding Talleyrand's motives.) And the Czar of Russia, in turn, was the chief of the forces of reaction and absolutism in Europe. Since the liberalism in France was now represented by the creature of Czar Alexander (that is Richelieu), Talleyrand had been placed squarely between Scylla and Charybdis. If he supported Richelieu, he would, in effect, be supporting the spread of Russian influence in France and in Western Europe—an influence which, for all its liberal veneer in Richelieu's government, was essentially and ultimately vowed to repression, absolutism, and royal government by divine right. If he sided with the only other possible party, the ultras, he might indeed destroy Richelieu and Alexander's influence along with him. The issue was never really in doubt. Between a party whose reactionism he might come to control and a foreign autocrat whose intentions were, in his opinion, detrimental, if not fatal, to the real interests of France, he had no difficulty in choosing.

In addition, see also the following pages in Dwyer and corresponding pages in Bernard:

- Dwyer, 32; Bernard, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90
- Dwyer, 33; Bernard, 87 and 90.
- Dwyer, 34; Bernard, 88.
- Dwyer, 37; Bernard, 89 and 90.
- Dwyer, 38; Bernard, 90.
- Dwyer, 43; Bernard, 95 and 96.

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- Dwyer, 44; Bernard, 96.
  - Dwyer, 46; Bernard, 113 and 114.
  - Dwyer, 47-48; Bernard, 116.
  - Dwyer, 48; Bernard, 116, 117, 118.
  - Dwyer, 49; Bernard, 119.
  - Dwyer, 50; Bernard, 122
  - Dwyer, 51; Bernard, 122, 123, 125
  - Dwyer, 52; Bernard, 125, 126, 127
  - Dwyer, 53; Bernard, 126, 128, 130
  - Dwyer, 62; Bernard, 173, 174, 175, 176
  - Dwyer, 63; Bernard, 176, 177, 178
  - Dwyer, 64; Bernard, 179
  - Dwyer, 90; Bernard, 229
  - Dwyer, 94; Bernard, 252
  - Dwyer, 98-100; Bernard, 261-262, 263
  - Dwyer, 100; Bernard, 267
  - Dwyer, 102-103; Bernard, 271
  - Dwyer, 116; Bernard, 292
  - Dwyer, 117; Bernard, 293
  - Dwyer, 118; Bernard, 299
  - Dwyer, 119; Bernard, 300
  - Dwyer, 123; Bernard, 308
  - Dwyer, 129; Bernard, 325
  - Dwyer, 138; Bernard, 338
  - Dwyer, 139; Bernard, 340
  - Dwyer, 142-43; Bernard, 342-43, 350, 351, 354
  - Dwyer, 144; Bernard, 357-58
  - Dwyer, 156; Bernard, 416
  - Dwyer, 158; Bernard, 416
  - Dwyer, 170; Bernard, 437, 441
  - Dwyer, 171; Bernard, 441, 442, 450
  - Dwyer, 172; Bernard, 450
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  - Dwyer, 192; Bernard, 547, 548, 549
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  - Dwyer, 195-96; Bernard, 570
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## NOTES

[1] Crane Brinton, *The Lives of Talleyrand* (New York: Norton, 1936), pp. 301, 303.

[2] Brinton, pp. 80-85.

[3] Brinton, p. 214-16. It should be mentioned that Brinton does not think Talleyrand placed much stock in this principle.

[4] J. F. Bernard, *Talleyrand, A Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), pp. 567-8.

[5] Bernard, p. 306

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See also Philip Dwyer's response to this review.

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