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S L A V E T R A D E.

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COPY of CORRESPONDENCE relating to the SUPPRESSION of the  
S L A V E T R A D E.

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 5 February 1845.*

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— No. 1. —

*The Earl of Aberdeen to Lord Cowley.*

My Lord,

Foreign Office, 9 January 1845.

**T**HE French Ambassador has delivered to me a despatch from his Government, in which M. Guizot describes in strong terms the feeling which has prevailed for some time past in the French Chambers, and generally in France, relative to the right of search. After detailing at length the reasons which have induced him to arrive at such a conclusion, he suggests to Her Majesty's Government the expediency of appointing a joint Commission, for the purpose of inquiring whether means may not be discovered for the suppression of the slave trade, as effectual, or even more effectual than those afforded by the treaties which confer the mutual right of search.

No. 1.  
Earl of Aberdeen  
to Lord Cowley.  
9 January 1845.

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A copy of this despatch is enclosed for your Excellency's information.

M. Guizot correctly states, that when, at the close of the year 1843, the Count de St. Aulaire announced to me the intentions of the French Government to propose certain measures, which they felt satisfied would be found preferable to the exercise of the right of search, and better calculated to attain the objects in view, I at that time informed the French Ambassador, that my conviction of the sincerity and zeal of M. Guizot for the abolition of the slave trade, would induce me to receive any suggestions from him on the subject, and to submit them for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

*26 Dec. 1844.*

Your Excellency may assure M. Guizot, that Her Majesty's Government attach no special value to the right of search, except in so far as it affords an effectual means of suppressing the slave trade. They are indeed aware that the exercise of this right cannot fail to be attended with some inconvenience; and they would willingly see the adoption of any measures which should be as effectual for the accomplishment of the great end in view, and which should not be liable to the same objections. I am bound, however, in candour to declare, that I have not hitherto seen any plan proposed which could safely be adopted as a substitute for the right of search. And when M. Guizot recollects how earnestly the people of this country have desired the abolition of the slave trade, and the enormous sacrifices which they have made, and are daily making, to secure the attainment of this object, he will not be surprised if we hesitate to abrogate treaties, the stipulations of which have been found efficient, until we are satisfied that the measures about to be proposed will be attended with equal success.

I abstain from inquiring into the causes which have led to the great change of sentiment in France respecting these treaties, which up to a recent period the French Government had united with that of Her Majesty, in pressing on the adoption of other nations. Be these causes what they may, I fully admit that such engagements, if not executed with cordiality and zeal by both the contracting parties, must become less likely to answer the purpose intended, and their value be greatly impaired. It is unnecessary, therefore, to dwell on the means taken by Her Majesty's Government to remove all reasonable grounds of objection to the exercise of the right of search, and on the care with which the instructions recently delivered to the officers engaged in this service have been prepared. The mere fact, officially declared by M. Guizot, that the Government, the Legislature, and the people of France, earnestly demand a revision of these engagements, while they

they profess an undiminished desire to attain the objects for which they were contracted, would afford to Her Majesty's Government a sufficient reason for agreeing to the proposed inquiry.

But in assenting to this suggestion of M. Guizot, your Excellency cannot too strongly impress upon his mind how much will depend on the character of the persons who may be selected as Commissioners, in order to inspire the necessary degree of confidence, and to ensure any useful result. It appears to Her Majesty's Government to be indispensable that the Commission should be composed of individuals of high station and of enlightened views; men perfectly independent, and well known for their attachment to the great cause of freedom and humanity. It must clearly be made known that the object of the Commission is not to get rid of the treaties, but to ascertain the possibility of adopting measures by which they may advantageously be replaced. It appears essential also, that whatever substitute may be proposed, if any be found, should be considered in the first instance only an experiment, but by which the operation of the treaties in this respect would necessarily be suspended, until its success or failure had been made manifest.

To a Commission thus constituted and thus instructed, Her Majesty's Government could not only entertain no objection, but would be disposed, in common with all who sincerely desire the early and complete abolition of this detestable traffic, to look with hope and satisfaction.

I am, &c.  
(signed) *Aberdeen.*

Encl. in No. 1.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Mons. Guizot to Count *S<sup>te</sup> Aulaire.*

Mons. le Comte,

Paris, 26 Decembre 1844.

L'AN dernier, à pareille époque, je vous invitai à appeler l'attention de Lord Aberdeen sur la grave question du droit de visite, et sur les motifs puissans qui nous portaient à desirer que les deux Cabinets se concertassent en vue de substituer, à ce mode de répression de la traite des noirs, un mode nouveau qui, tout en étant aussi efficace pour notre but commun, n'entraînât pas les mêmes inconvéniens ni les mêmes périls.

Lord Aberdeen, à la communication que vous lui fîtes, répondit que, parfaitement convaincu de ma résolution sincère de travailler avec persévérance à la suppression de la traite, toute proposition fait par moi serait accueillie par lui avec confiance, et examinée avec la plus religieuse attention.

Si, depuis lors, je me suis abstenu, M. le Comte, de vous entretenir, dans ma correspondance officielle, de cette importante affaire, si j'ai différé l'envoi des instructions que je vous avais annoncées, ce n'est assurément pas que le Gouvernement du Roi ait perdu de vue, un seul jour, le but qu'il devait se proposer, ni que ses convictions se soient affaiblies. Vous connaissez les diverses causes, intérieures et extérieures, qui en nous obligeant à consacrer à des questions urgentes tous nos efforts, nous ont fait une loi de suspendre la négociation dont vous aviez été chargé de provoquer l'ouverture à Londres, sur la question des moyens de répression de la traite: le moment est venu de la reprendre.

Ainsi que je vous le disais tout à l'heure, M. le Comte, notre conviction sur la nécessité de recourir, de concert avec l'Angleterre, à un nouveau mode de répression de la traite, est entière et profonde.

Tous les évènements qui sont survenus, toutes les réflexions que nous avons été appelés à faire, depuis que cette question s'est élevée, nous ont fait plus fortement sentir la nécessité de modifier le système actuellement en vigueur. Pour que ce système soit efficace et sans danger, il ne suffit pas que les deux Gouvernemens soient animés d'un bon vouloir et d'une confiance réciproques.

Incessamment exposé dans son application, à contrarier, à gêner, à blesser des intérêts privées, souvent légitimes et inoffensifs, ce système entretient au sein d'une classe nombreuse, active, et nécessairement rude dans ses mœurs, un principe d'irritation qui peut bien soumeiller pendant un tems plus au moins long, mais qu'un incident de mer imprévu, que la moindre oscillation dans les rapports politiques des deux Etats, peut à tout moment développer, échauffer, propager, et transformer en un sentiment national, puissant, et redoutable. Arrivé à ce point, le système du droit de visite, employé comme moyen de la répression de la traite, est plus dangereux qu'utile; car il compromet, tout à la fois, la paix, la bonne intelligence entre les deux pays, et le succès même de la grande cause qu'il est destiné à servir.

Ce n'est point là, M. le Comte, une simple conjecture; c'est aujourd'hui un fait démontré par l'expérience. Pendant dix ans le droit de visite réciproque a été accepté et exercé par la France et par l'Angleterre d'un commun accord, et sans aucun sentiment prononcé,

prononcé, sans aucune manifestation de méfiance ni de repulsion. Par des causes qu'il est inutile de rappeler, il n'en est plus de même aujourd'hui. Ce système est fortement repoussé chez nous par le sentiment des Chambres et du pays. Ce n'est pas, M. le Comte, que la France soit aujourd'hui plus indifférente qu'elle ne l'étoit, il y a quelques années, aux horreurs de la traite; mais on est convaincu en France (et le Gouvernement du Roi partage cette conviction) qu'il est possible de trouver d'autres moyens tout aussi efficaces, plus efficaces même, que le droit de visite réciproque, pour atteindre cet infâme trafic. Pour obtenir le concours du pays et des Chambres, leur concours sérieux, actif, infatigable, à la repression de la traite, l'adoption d'un système différent est désormais indispensable.

Mais quel doit être le nouveau système? Par quelle mesure, par quel ensemble de mesures, peut on raisonnablement se flatter d'obtenir en fait de repression des résultats au moins égaux à ceux que le droit de visite a pu faire espérer? Je pourrais, M. le Comte, indiquer ici quelques uns de ces moyens; mais dans une matière où nécessairement les hommes spéciaux des deux pays doivent être entendus, il me paraît préférable que le soin de réunir et d'examiner tous les élémens de la question soit d'abord confié à une Commission mixte. Cette commission, qui siégerait à Londres, devrait, je pense, être formée d'hommes considérables dans leurs pays respectifs, bien connus par leur franche sympathie pour la cause de la repression de la traite, et par leur entière liberté d'esprit relativement aux moyens d'atteindre ce noble but. Et quand la Commission aurait profondément examiné la question, quand elle aurait bien recherché et déterminé quels nouveaux moyens de repression de la traite pourraient être aussi efficaces, plus efficaces même que le système actuellement en vigueur, son travail serait présenté aux deux Gouvernemens, et soumis à leur décision.

Veillez, Monsieur le Comte, mettre cette proposition sous les yeux de Lord Aberdeen. J'ai la confiance que, dans la communication que vous lui donnerez de la présente dépêche, il verra un nouveau témoignage de notre sollicitude constante pour les deux grands intérêts que nous avons également à cœur, le maintien de la paix et de la bonne intelligence entre les deux pays, et la repression de la traite des noirs.

Recevez, &c.  
(signé Guizot.

(Translation.)

M. Guizot to Count St. Aulaire.

Monsieur le Comte,

Paris, 26 December 1844.

LAST year, about this time, I requested you to call the attention of Lord Aberdeen to the important question of the right of search, and to the powerful motives which led us to desire that the two Cabinets should concert together with the view of substituting, for this mode of repressing the slave trade, a new mode which, whilst equally efficacious for our common object, should be free from the same inconveniences and the same dangers.

To the communication which you made to Lord Aberdeen, his Lordship answered that, being perfectly convinced of my sincere resolution to labour perseveringly for the suppression of the trade, any proposition made by me would be received by him with confidence, and examined with the most scrupulous attention.

If, since that time, I have abstained, Monsieur le Comte, from treating of this important affair in my official correspondence with you, if I have delayed sending the instructions which I had announced to you, it certainly has not been that the Government of the King have lost sight for a single day of the object which they had to propose to themselves, nor that their convictions had become less strong. You know the various causes, internal and external, which, by obliging us to devote all our efforts to urgent questions, have made it imperative on us to suspend the negotiation, the opening of which in London you had been charged to call for, on the question of the means of repressing the slave trade: the time is now arrived for resuming it.

As I have already mentioned to you, Monsieur le Comte, our conviction of the necessity of having recourse, in concert with England, to a new mode of repressing the slave trade, is undiminished and profound: all the events which have occurred, all the reflections which have forced themselves upon us since this question was raised, have made us feel more strongly the necessity of modifying the system actually in force. In order that this system should be effectual and without danger, it is not sufficient that the two Governments are animated by reciprocal good-will and confidence.

Constantly liable in its application to oppose, cramp, and injure private interests, often legitimate and inoffensive ones, this system keeps up in the minds of a numerous class, active and necessarily rough in manners, a source of irritation, which, though it may sleep for a time more or less long, may, by an unforeseen accident at sea, or by the slightest disturbance in the political relations of the two States, be at any moment developed, inflamed, extended, and transformed into a powerful and formidable national sentiment. This being so, the system of the right of search, used as a means for repressing the slave trade, is more dangerous than useful; for it compromises, at one and the same time, peace, good understanding between the two countries, and even the success of the great cause which it is intended to serve.

This, M. le Comte, is not a mere conjecture; it is a fact which experience has now demonstrated. During ten years the reciprocal right of search has been accepted and exercised

## CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE

exercised by France and by England with common consent, and without any declared feeling, or any manifestation of mistrust or of repulsion. Owing to causes which it is useless to revert to, the case is now different. The feeling of the Chambers and of the country is strongly averse to this system. Not, M. le Comte, that France is at present more indifferent than she was some years ago to the horrors of the slave trade; but a conviction exists in France (and the Government of the King shares this conviction), that it is possible to find other means quite as effectual, more effectual even, than the reciprocal right of search, by which the infamous traffic may be reached.

In order to obtain the co-operation of the country and of the Chambers, their earnest, active, indefatigable co-operation, for the repression of the trade, the adoption of a different system is henceforth indispensable.

But what ought to be the new system? By what measure, by what combination of measures, can we reasonably hope to obtain results in the way of repression, at least equal to those which the right of search has led us to hope for? I might, M. le Comte, here point out some of these measures; but in a matter on which the men of the two countries specially qualified must of necessity be heard, it appears to me preferable that the task of collecting and examining all the elements of the question should, in the first instance, be confided to a mixed Commission. This Commission, which would hold its sittings in London, ought, I think, to be composed of men of consideration in their respective countries, well known for their sincere sympathy for the cause of repressing the slave trade, and by their entire freedom of judgment relative to the means of attaining this noble end. And when the Commission shall have thoroughly examined the question, when it shall have searched well and determined what new means of repressing the trade may be as efficacious as, or even more efficacious than, the system at present in force, its work should be presented to the two Governments, and submitted for their decision.

Have the goodness, M. le Comte, to place this proposal before the eyes of Lord Aberdeen. I am confident that, in the communication which you will make to him of the present despatch, he will see a new evidence of our constant solicitude for the two great interests which we have equally at heart, the maintenance of peace and of a good understanding between the two countries, and the repression of the slave trade.

Receive, &c.

(signed) Guizot.

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— No. 2. —

Lord Cowley to the Earl of Aberdeen.

No. 2.

Lord Cowley to  
the Earl of  
Aberdeen.  
13 January 1845.

My Lord,

Paris, 13 January 1845.

THE messenger Fennessey arrived at Paris on Saturday the 11th instant, and delivered to me your Lordship's despatch of the 9th instant.

I immediately directed a copy to be prepared of it, and placed it in the hands of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the course of that day.

After reading that despatch with attention in my presence, his Excellency said that he entirely concurred in the view therein taken by your Lordship respecting the engagements entered into by the two Governments for the suppression of the traffic in slaves. He admitted likewise, that since the conclusion of the treaties of 1831 and 1833, a great change had taken place in the opinions of the Chambers, as well as of the public generally, upon the question of the right of search. It would be useless, he said, to enter into any examination of the causes which had led to that change; he would only say, that the prejudice existing throughout France against the exercise of that right was unconquerable, and was daily increasing.

I might therefore, he continued, form some judgment of the degree of satisfaction with which he had received the communication which I had just made to him, announcing the acquiescence of Her Majesty's Government in the proposal of that of France for the appointment of a joint Commission for the purpose of inquiring whether means as effectual as the mutual right of search might not be resorted to, for the suppression of the slave trade.

He was fully aware of the feelings of the people of England on the subject of this odious traffic, and of the jealousy with which the proceedings of the proposed Commission would be watched; and I might therefore be assured, that the compliance of Her Majesty's Government in the proposed inquiry would be justly appreciated by the Government, the Legislature, and the people of France.

His Excellency then informed me that the Duc de Broglie would be charged with

## SUPPRESSION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

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with this important Commission ; and I am certain your Lordship will be of opinion that a better selection for that purpose could not have been made.

The Duc de Broglie has for many years been a strenuous advocate for the abolition of the slave trade ; and it was under his auspices, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the supplementary convention of 1833 was concluded. It is not likely, therefore, that he will propose, or will himself be satisfied with, any measures for the suppression of the traffic in slaves, less efficacious than those at present in force under the treaties.

I have, &c.  
(signed) *Cowley.*

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SLAVE TRADE.

COPY of CORRESPONDENCE relating to the  
SUPPRESSION of the SLAVE TRADE.

[Presented to Parliament by Her Majesty's Command.]

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
5 February 1845.

3.  
*Under 1 oz.*