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John M. Knapp, *Behind the Diplomatic Curtain: Adolphe de Bourqueney and French Foreign Policy, 1816-1869*. Ohio: University of Akron Press, 2001. xvi + 344 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 US (cl). ISBN 1-884836-71-2.

Review by Bradford C. Brown, Bradley University.

It is the peculiar duty of a diplomat to straddle different worlds. Such a career, one imagines, requires less a talent for dissimulation than a certain suppleness of identity. Whatever the requirements, Adolphe de Bourqueney had what it takes. He was sure-footed enough to put together a successful career in the French foreign service spanning four regimes in the midst of the tumultuous nineteenth century.

As the title accurately indicates, *Behind the Diplomatic Curtain* provides not only the first book-length biography of Bourqueney but an insider's view of the management of French diplomacy from 1816 to 1869. On both fronts, Knapp's chronological narrative offers a scrupulously detailed, blow-by-blow account of the making of foreign policy as depicted in Bourqueney's extensive correspondence. Throughout, Knapp is an engaging and judicious guide to the materials of Bourqueney's life: he explores relevant contexts, signals colorful details, and persuasively sympathizes with or criticizes his subject by turns. This is an accomplished book whose considerable achievement is to have solidly established the details, contexts, and texture of Bourqueney's career.

Many will find this a useful book for its summary of a rich trove of once unavailable documents recording information on Bourqueney's interactions with many important diplomats of his age and a host of controversies, mostly involving "Eastern Questions:" disputes with the Ottomans, the Crimean War, and the failure of a Franco-Austrian alliance.[1] Others will take insight and inspiration from Knapp's aim of incorporating the contexts of daily and family life into the largely political and intellectual history of diplomatic affairs, even if this purpose is only incompletely achieved here. Along with the author, one can hope that non-historians will be drawn into the subject by an Epilogue ("He Speaks to Us Today") on Bourqueney's contemporary relevance to the professionalization of diplomacy and the practice of great power politics. Mostly, though, this book will continue to be read by historians for its solid contribution to the historiography in the tradition of a school of research, loosely defined by a common association with Lynn Case, which has attempted to spell out the principles, mechanics, and contexts of French foreign policy in increasing depth.[2]

Who was Adolphe de Bourqueney? For Knapp, Bourqueney's life (1799-1869) was largely defined by his career. In a sense he was born to it. Family connections were the exclusive route into the aristocratic world of the foreign service in the early years of the Restoration. The Bourqueneys, a wealthy noble family established in Franche-Comté since the early seventeenth century, boasted of a lineage extending back to the Battle of Crécy. Through his mother's family, the Rivières, Bourqueney could point to a tradition of diplomatic service for various German states to the French court. His credentials for the era of Louis XVIII were confirmed by the emigration of his father, François-Félix (1761-1846), during the Revolution. It would be interesting to know more about the particular nuances of his family's status and politics before and during the Revolution, but Knapp, understandably enough, has left that large stone unturned.

The right recommendation in an Ultra-royalist salon of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was enough to get young Adolphe's foot in the door and, at sixteen, he became the third secretary of the French minister to the United States. From there the capable Bourqueney would advance with determination up the rungs of the foreign service ladder in a series of different legations until he became a full ambassador. After Washington (1816-19), Bourqueney served in London (1819-23), Bern (1823-24), Paris (1830-35), London (1835-41), Constantinople (1841-48), and Vienna (1853-59). Along the way he collected the series of medals, ribbons, and honors that betokened eminence among the state's functionaries. He also garnered accolades for his competence and effectiveness from both superiors and rivals. "I already loathe Bourqueney," confided Baron de Meyendorff, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, in 1854, "with his superior air, his peaceful utterances, and his high-flown phrases. Nevertheless, he says these things so well, accompanied by looks and gestures, that I am frequently disarmed" (p. 199).

Bourqueney's public success was shadowed by a private life whose recurrent crises Knapp sympathetically highlights. Bourqueney married late to Alix de Juigné. He was forty-five; she was twenty-four. Her mother recorded Alix's initial reaction to their first meeting: "Alix does not find him handsome--and he isn't. He is very ordinary looking, but he is filled with spirit and everyone who knows him says he is a good man" (p. 138). Her family was not wealthy but was well connected and legitimist: her mother was a lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette, and her father emigrated in both 1792 and 1830. The couple honeymooned in Rome and obtained a personal audience with the Pope. Over the next thirteen years, they would have five children before the sixth died in childbirth along with Alix. The surviving children suffered injuries (including a kick from a horse) and illnesses (cholera and typhoid fever), and three would not outlive their father. Beyond Bourqueney's personal life and the stages of his career, Knapp's book offers some significant insights into the structure of the institutions and the daily functioning of French foreign policy. One of the argumentative theses in the book is that French foreign policy was shaped by more than kings, emperors, and their ministers. In particular, Bourqueney's papers tend to show the importance of diplomats in the field and the political director at the Foreign Office in the daily formulation of policy. Distance and the slowness of communication gave nineteenth-century ambassadors considerable leeway for independence. Bourqueney's complicated private discussions occasionally seemed to go beyond simple indiscretion.

At another moment, Bourqueney appears to have deliberately misinterpreted his directives (p. 154). The personal rapport between the major diplomats in a capital could become decisive in these circumstances. Moreover, Knapp makes plain the unreliability of official correspondence written for the eyes of a larger public--especially as the influence of the legislature and newspapers gained ground in the 1840s--while private correspondence carried a more honest, at times opposite, version of events (see pp. 83-84, 99). Knapp also finds room to reinforce his negative evaluation of Napoleon III, whose "treachery, stupidity, and willfulness" (p. 289) undermined the Concert of Europe, and his mostly positive take on the role of the Austrian minister Buol.[3]

Intriguingly, Bourqueney's correspondence also gives a taste of the everyday life of a diplomat. Diplomatic pouches, for example, led a secret life, transporting the latest fashions (p. 25), gourmet food (p. 39), or contraband products such as "brandy, tobacco, grooming items, dolls, books, fabric, gloves, shoes, boots, perfume, cheese, truffles, and grouse" to be sold for profit (p. 142). We learn something of Bourqueney's finances: the expenses of lavish entertainments and the necessary graft and creative bookkeeping that sustained the lifestyle (pp. 70-71, 140-45). The diplomatic corps were commonly thrown together and tended to form a community that coalesced in moments of personal tragedy and festivity (p. 200). This world apart could also include less elevated amusements. Memorably, Bourqueney itemizes the dissolute tastes of his nemesis, Édouard de Moustier, whose library at Bern contained pornographic books such as *L'Arétan*, *Postier de Chartreux*, *Thérèse philosophe*, and *Quarante manières*, among others. In the same letter, Bourqueney further alleges that, "I saw you show off these obscenities in your drawing room before ten people, boasting that you hadn't brought any other books with you. I have seen you pass playing cards around which can only be bought in the worst quarters of

the Palais Royal, each one of which, when placed before a light, gives off an image which makes the modest blush. I saw you display packets of condoms [redingotes anglaises] in your salon and inflate them under the nose of the Bavarian minister" (p. 41).

To the extent that Knapp's narrative focuses on Bourqueney's diplomatic career, the evolution of his political ideas seems less central. Another sort of biographer would be tempted to make more of the crucial transformation of the young legitimist, who had once been described as an "Ultra of the new world" (p. 21), into an Orléanist. Although his fervent commitment to Catholicism never appears to have wavered, Bourqueney moved into the liberal opposition in the late 1820s and so helped prepare the way for the July Days of 1830. The sources of this change of heart are imprecise and, to be fair, Knapp does treat the variety of possible explanations. On the one hand, there was the pull of new ideas. Bourqueney lived abroad in the more democratic United States, Great Britain, and Switzerland. He could be counted as a member of the influential "Generation of 1820" who sought to redefine French culture and politics.[4] Perhaps more decisive though was a push in the form of a scandal in which Bourqueney's fell out with his superior at Bern, the aforementioned marquis de Moustier, "an Ultra among Ultras" and by all accounts a difficult personality. In this struggle (which Knapp argues may also have possibly precipitated the fall of Chateaubriand as foreign minister), Bourqueney's contacts at court, patrons in the legitimist salons, and allies within the foreign service could not prevent his eventual firing. Without a position, Bourqueney joined Chateaubriand as a writer for the *Journal des Débats*, where he remained from 1826 to 1835 during a critical period of the articulation of the "Aristocratic Liberalism" that became known as Orléanism.[5]

Although never a revolutionary, one could make more of the argument that the themes of Orléanism were central to Bourqueney's life. Certainly it was the July Monarchy that made his career and Bourqueney's close working relationship with many of the leaders of the July Monarchy, including Louis-Philippe. His notion of a professional approach to diplomacy echoed the era's rhetoric of replacing privilege with merit. His nuanced brand of nationalism sought an end to the isolation of France through a set of alliances between liberal western powers within the Concert of Europe. As the century progressed, these political values would seem increasingly conservative. Bourqueney grew close to the aged Metternich, the latter even becoming a godfather to Bourqueney's son, Clément. But Bourqueney's support for the July Monarchy would remain a touchstone. As one of his sons recalled, in later life Bourqueney would slip off his Orléanist medals before visiting his legitimist in-laws only to pin them on again after he left. After his retirement, mass every Sunday with the duc de Broglie was a continuing sign of his commitment to the cause (p. 279).

Who was the baron de Bourqueney? If a list of categories--Catholic, aristocrat, nationalist, Orléanist, diplomat--does not completely pin him down, the fault lies neither with the redoubtable efforts of the author of this book or the lack of evidence. Moving between worlds, alert to the shifting winds of the times, Bourqueney was ever the mutable diplomat. Consider a complicated moment from 1858. In February, Napoleon III explicitly instructed Bourqueney, his ambassador to Vienna, to repair Franco-Austrian relations damaged by the emperor's apparent indifference. (By July of the same year, Napoleon would meet secretly with Camillo Cavour, the foreign minister of Sardinia, to plot a war against Austria.) Before he left for Vienna, Bourqueney visited with the Prussian ambassador, Hübner, who recorded the meeting in his diary: "Bourqueney leaves tonight for Vienna and is already sporting his travelling outfit, a little bit ridiculous to tell the truth. I love this chubby man, laughing, oozing goodwill, and made to inspire confidence." But--the diarist noted--Bourqueney's eyes gainsaid his easy manner, implying, "Do not put too much faith in us" (p. 263).

## NOTES

[1] The biography rests squarely on careful archival work, especially among the Bourqueney papers long held privately, and the diligent reconstruction of other runs of private correspondence. In an

utterly compelling preface, Knapp recounts the story of the fortuitous survival of the trunk of Bourqueney's papers, the story of the author's serendipitous introduction to the papers through marriage, and the story of the author's inspiring dedication to the project sustained through twenty rejections from publishers. It should be noted that while the strength of the book lies in its archival evidence, its weakness is the integration of recently published scholarship.

[2] Indeed, this work resembles Lynn M. Case, *Édouard Thouvenel et la diplomatie du Second Empire* (Paris: Pedone, 1976); see also, idem, *French Opinion on War and Diplomacy during the Second Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1954). In addition to Knapp, Case's students include Nancy Nichols Barker, William Echard, and Ann Pottinger Saab. The overly selective bibliography contains many negligent omissions including Case's study of Thouvenel; Echard's *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); and, not least, several of Knapp's own previous publications, John M. Knapp, "Un Chef de poste, peut-il avoir mauvais caractère? La Querelle Moustier-Bourqueney à l'ambassade de Berne en 1824," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 1-2 (1983): 108-44; Ann P. Saab, John M. Knapp, and Françoise de Bourqueney Knapp, "A Reassessment of French Foreign Policy during the Crimean War Based on the Papers of Adolphe de Bourqueney," *French Historical Studies* 14:4 (Autumn 1986): 467-96.

[3] See Saab, Knapp, and Knapp, "A Reassessment of French Foreign Policy during the Crimean War."

[4] Knapp does not cite Alan B. Spitzer's study, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[5] Knapp neither pursues the historiography on Orléanism nor cites Alan S. Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

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