Historians have viewed Franklin Pierce’s election to the presidency in 1852 both as a confirmation of the nation’s acceptance of the Compromise of 1850, securing sectional amity and balance, and as a mandate for the resumption of manifest destiny and expansion so vigorously pursued under James K. Polk. Yet within three years Pierce’s policies and measures destroyed that sectional amity and all prospects of immediate expansionism, and nearly destroyed the Democratic Party which had elected him. The chief measures responsible for this turn of fortune were the Kansas-Nebraska Act and attempts to acquire Cuba. Numerous conservative, “Old Fogey” Democrats entered the presidential field in 1855–1856 to preserve the party by blocking Pierce’s efforts to secure renomination. The major contenders included James Buchanan, William L. Marcy, Stephen A. Douglas and George M. Dallas of Philadelphia.

left many involved politicians publicly and privately embarrassed, particularly George M. Dallas.

Dallas, former Vice-President and himself a remote darkhorse candidate in 1852, had accepted the nomination of Franklin Pierce favorably and had campaigned in his behalf. The main thrusts of Dallas' activities had been to refute Whig charges that Pierce was anti-Catholic, to stress his fidelity to the Union and the Constitution, and to articulate his commitment to expansion.²

After the election, when Pierce was selecting his cabinet, Dallas remained in "impenetrable darkness." Although he did not really consider himself under consideration for a cabinet post, Dallas permitted his supporters to solicit such a position in order to undercut the support in Pennsylvania for James Buchanan and James Campbell.³ Dallas' suspicions of his political impotence with the Pierce administration were confirmed before Pierce's inauguration. In February, Pierce spent the night in Philadelphia on his way to Washington. The former Vice-President went to Pierce's hotel and sent his card up requesting an appointment. He left the hotel "somewhat chagrined" when refused admission. Dallas made no further attempt to see Pierce. The announcement of the cabinet, which included rival James Campbell as Attorney General, gave additional confirmation of his position. By his own admission, every person Dallas supported or recommended for a patronage position was "destroyed." The appointment of lifelong arch-rival James Buchanan to the most coveted diplomatic position, Minister to Great Britain, was a final, telling blow. Made so publicly and painfully aware of his lack of influence with Pierce, Dallas became inactive throughout the remainder of 1853, allowing the political tides and currents to settle.⁴

² Dallas to Pierce, June 11, July 4, 1852, Pierce Papers, Library of Congress; Dallas to Berks County Democrats, Aug. 30, 1852, "Daily Memoranda," Sept. 26, 1852, Dallas to the Democrats of Jackson, Miss., Sept. 26, 1852, Dallas Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP); Dallas to …., June 11, 1852, Dallas Papers, Temple University.
³ Dallas to Markoe, Dec. 3, 8, 1852, Markoe Papers, Library of Congress; Thomas Cass to Lewis Coryell, Jan. 24, 1853, Coryell Papers, HSP; J. Glancey Jones to Buchanan, Jan. 29, 1853, Van Dyke to Buchanan, Feb. 1, 1853, Buchanan to George Plitt, Feb. 3, 1853, Buchanan Papers, HSP; Nichols, Pierce, 228.
⁴ Van Dyke to Buchanan, Feb. 18, Mar. 31, 1853, Buchanan Papers; Dallas to Markoe, Apr. 21, July 4, 1853, Markoe Papers.
During his political hiatus American acquisition of Cuba became a major issue. President Pierce at first supported covert means of acquisition, especially William Walker’s proposed filibuster. By March, 1854, however, several factors forced Pierce to shift his policy to an open offer to purchase the island from Spain. The compelling factors included accelerated efforts to “Africanize” Cuba, the *Black Warrior* incident, passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Crimean War and the administration’s loss of faith in the vitality and potential of filibustering to detach Cuba from Spain.  

Unfortunately, Pierre Soulé’s zeal and impertinence as Minister to Spain made him virtually *persona non grata* and nearly broke diplomatic relations. Included in the administration’s efforts to redeem the situation was consideration of a special mission headed by George M. Dallas to purchase Cuba. Long an expansionist, Dallas by this time feared that “instead of the honor of acquiring, Genl. Pierce will forever be reproached for having lost Cuba. . . . The outcry against filibustering has cowed the administration away from the true national policy.” Dallas advocated a vigorous policy very similar to that expounded later in the Ostend Manifesto: “Come we will give its full value—there is the money. Take it or not as you please—but we take the island, openly, and, if needs be, in defiance of all Europe.”

Later in May, on the pretext of arguing cases before the Supreme Court, Dallas went to Washington to consult with his cousin Francis Markoe, a minor leader of the “Young America” movement which sought to displace the “Old Fogey” Jacksonians from political control and to pursue an aggressive foreign policy on European republicanism and territorial expansion. Markoe, a clerk in the State Department, had obtained that position in 1844 through the influence of Dallas, then Vice-President-elect, and Virgil Maxcy,

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5 For a discussion of these events and other efforts by the Pierce administration to obtain Cuba, see especially: Siert F. Riepma, “‘Young America’ A Study in American Nationalism Before the Civil War” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1939); Merle Curti, “Young America,” *American Historical Review*, XXXII (1926), 34-56; Basil Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba, 1848-1855* (New York, 1948); John Claiborne, *Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman* (New York, 1860); Amos A. Ettinger, *The Mission to Spain of Pierre Soulé* (New Haven, 1932); and Learned, “Marcy,” in Bemis, *Secretaries of State*, VI.

6 Dallas to Markoe, May 9, 1854, Markoe Papers.
Markoe's brother-in-law and a close confidant of John C. Calhoun, then Secretary of State. Dallas and Markoe discussed the projected special mission to purchase Cuba during their consultations in Markoe's State Department office. Whether President Pierce, Secretary of State Marcy, or Assistant Secretary A. Dudley Mann joined in these discussions must remain conjecture, but newspaper reports indicated that Dallas was seen leaving Marcy's office. Shortly after he returned to Philadelphia, Dallas indicated his willingness to become more active regarding Cuba if he were named a special commissioner. His language, although vague, suggests that a mission was discussed in Washington.7

Though the proposed commission never materialized, there were widely published rumors that Pierce would appoint Dallas and former Governor Howell Cobb of Georgia to it.8 Dallas' activities and interests regarding Cuba throughout this period, his correspondence, his later shift against the Pierce administration triggered by Pierce's failure to announce the commission, and his presidential boomlet of 1855–1856, so vigorously backed by a similarly alienated "Young America" faction, all substantiate these rumors.

Upset and disappointed at Pierce, Dallas called Cuba "a topic on which it is not my wish to write, speak, or think." He blamed Pierce's timidity on a desire to placate newspapermen and lesser party leaders such as John W. Forney and William L. Hirst, at the expense of prominent Democrats such as himself.9 However, since Pierce continued to maintain that his message to Congress on the Cuban commission would soon be ready, Dallas refused to abandon all hope for its creation. He also began to develop additional rationale for the purchase and annexation of Cuba by comparing it to New Orleans prior to the Louisiana Purchase—"a foreign stranglehold of the worst description."10 In a letter forwarded to Marcy by Markoe, Dallas suggested that the Czar might be induced to intercede and restore working relations between the United States and

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7 Dallas to Markoe, May 25, 1854, ibid.; Public Ledger (Philadelphia), May 25, 1854.
8 Pennsylvanian (Philadelphia), May 27, 1854; New York Herald, May 29, Dec. 22, 1854; Learned, "Marcy," in Bemis, Secretaries of State, VI, 199; Nichols, Pierce, 341; Ettinger, Mission of Soule, 278–279.
9 Dallas to Markoe, June 9, 1854, Markoe Papers.
10 Dallas to Markoe, June 1, 1854, ibid.
Spain, citing the Czar’s “great influence at Madrid, especially among the old haughty and obstinate classes.” Perhaps through the agency of Russia Spain could be brought to see the voluntary sale of Cuba as the most dignified and expedient course.¹¹

By the end of July, Dallas finally realized Pierce had abandoned the project. He then viewed the entire incident as “a perfect model of fizzling out,” and maintained that an “impressive quiet movement, such as . . . a commission” would have accomplished the goal. But that was “something beyond the tiggle-dy priggle-dy taste or capacity of the times.”¹² The most compelling reason for Pierce’s abandonment of the special mission was the disintegration of the Democratic majority’s unity by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The party could not be counted on to appropriate funds for so blatant a pro-southern measure as a special mission to purchase Cuba. Another course would have to be pursued to achieve that purpose, and the culmination of that course was the Ostend Manifesto.

At Marcy’s suggestion, Soulé invited James Buchanan, the Minister to Great Britain, and John Y. Mason, the Minister to France, to meet in Ostend, Belgium, to exchange opinions and suggestions on Cuba and draft a formal despatch of their conclusions. Marcy hoped this would achieve the same results as a special commission. The trio met in mid-October, 1854, amid great publicity and foreign observation. After three days they moved to Aix-la-Chapelle to obtain greater privacy and to satisfy Buchanan’s desire to travel. The Ostend Manifesto was largely the work of Soulé, “softened and pruned by the severe judgment of Buchanan.” It recommended an immediate effort to purchase Cuba for up to $120,000,000, and suggested that the United States would be justified in wresting the island from Spanish control if the offer were refused.¹³

Neither the American nor the Spanish governments officially recognized or acknowledged the Ostend Manifesto. But the press, the public, and politicians on both sides of the ocean were well

¹¹ Dallas to Markoe, July 10, 1854, ibid.
¹² Dallas to Markoe, Aug. 7, 1854, ibid.
¹³ Dallas Diary, Mar. 19, 1855, University of Pennsylvania. This account is based upon a conversation between Dallas and Soulé on the latter’s return from Spain and runs directly counter to most accounts which credit Buchanan with the leading role in drafting the Manifesto.
aware of its existence and its general conclusions because of the
glare of publicity surrounding the meeting and information leaked
by members of "Young America" in Europe. Dallas gave renewed
attention to Cuba in mid-November during talks with Senator
John M. Mason, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.
The Philadelphian still adhered firmly to his earlier plan, now
adopted in the Manifesto, to make an offer, then take the island if
refused. Yet he doubted the wisdom of the Manifesto itself. Pierce's
best course, thought Dallas, would be to assume the initiative in a
paper by Marcy, not to borrow it "from a conclave of subordi-
nates." 14 Certainly, the fact that the Ostend conference superseded
any actions his special mission may have taken added to Dallas'
resentment and criticism.

The primary reason for the Dallas-Mason talks was the impact
of Cuba and the Manifesto on the fall congressional elections. The
net result of the elections was a resounding defeat for the
Democratic Party with a disintegration of the majority enjoyed in
1852. As the returns began to come in, Dallas, like other "Old
Fogey," old-line machine Democrats, became more concerned over
the future of the party and the Union: "When are we to be stunned
into sobriety?" "These chastisements are really and richly deserved:
but will they make us do any better? Assuredly not." His corre-
spondence repeatedly harps on his belief that the Democratic Party
could be saved if it returned to its traditional support of strict
interpretation and enforcement of the Constitution. When the full
extent of the Democratic congressional defeats was known, Dallas
queried: "Can anyone tell me what has become of the mighty
avalanche of democracy which tumbled F. P. [Franklin Pierce] into
the White House?" 15

The Ostend Manifesto, coming so close on the heels of these
election defeats, the ill feelings engendered by the Kansas-Nebraska
fight, the delays and growing doubts concerning the filibuster expe-
dition, and the rumors and misconceptions concerning the activities
of "Young America" diplomats signaled the low water mark of the
administration's Cuban policy. 16

14 Dallas to Markoe, Nov. 8, 1854, Markoe Papers.
15 Dallas to Markoe, Aug. 28, Nov. 8, 1854, Mar. 15, 1855, ibid.
16 Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, 292-295.
Dallas joined the growing chorus of prominent Democrats urging the repudiation of the Ostend Manifesto and its authors, at least Pierre Soulé. Dallas believed the administration could effectively dissociate itself from the Manifesto and focus all criticism on Soulé by recalling him.  

Although the administration stopped short of recall, its response achieved the same results. Marcy refused to accept any responsibility for the Manifesto and instructed Soulé to resume efforts to purchase Cuba, but to observe moderation in his demands. Soulé, viewing Marcy's response as *de facto* repudiation, promptly resigned.

Dallas later commented: "On this great, if not vital, subject, the mercury has been allowed to sink into the bulb; and now the administration, in order to keep it there, throw all the cold water they can.

It was at this point that "Young America" expansionists began to support various Democratic contenders in the hope of finding a president who would favor expansion. One portion of the faction fastened upon Dallas, who had given them succor and aid, had long been identified with expansion, had some national reputation as a former senator, Attorney General of Pennsylvania, Minister to Russia, and Vice-President, and had a compelling desire to maintain the party and the Union. A contender for the Democratic nomination in 1848 and 1852, Dallas was willing to broaden his base by standing as "Young America's" stalking horse against Franklin Pierce and against James Buchanan, the "pre-ordained candidate of our next Baltimore convention."

Dallas ran in 1855 to preserve the Union and the Democratic Party he had helped to organize, guide, and shape since the Jackson years. He knew he had little chance of receiving the nomination in 1856, but hoped to place the party in his debt to some degree and to block Pierce's renomination. Knowledge of the futility of his campaign sometimes prevented him from participating with the degree of energy and activity desired by his supporters. He was well aware of individual backing for him in many parts of the Union but

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17 Dallas to Markoe, Nov. 19, 1854, Markoe Papers.
18 Marcy to Soulé, Nov. 13, 1854, Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, Spain, and Soulé to Marcy, Dec. 17, 1854, Department of State, Diplomatic Despatches, Spain, National Archives.
19 Dallas to Markoe, Mar. 9, 1855, Markoe Papers.
recognized "they merely denote individual opinion, and do not foresee or forestall combined movements." His more serious bids in 1848 and 1852 were, in part, based on similar circumstances and Dallas fully expected the same results.20

Dallas' candidacy was also based upon his growing alienation from, and disapproval of, the Pierce administration and his desire to avenge the humiliation he received because of Pierce's handling of Cuba: "There never occurred in our history a case of an administration so utterly abortive and discredited as that of Genl. Pierce. He has managed by listening to bad and incompetent advisers, by wretched selections of public agents, by weakness of purpose, and by spasms of violence, to lower us all, wound the country, ruin his party, and absolutely crush himself into insignificance."21

The mainstay of Dallas' organization on the national level was his cousin in the State Department, Francis Markoe. Markoe, too, was dissatisfied with Pierce's handling of events, especially Cuba. From his central position, his intimacy with many Democratic politicians, his ties to "Young America," and his entree to the remnants of the Calhoun following by his kinship to Virgil Maxcy, Markoe kept Dallas informed of developments in both domestic and foreign policy and acted as a national campaign manager.

Dallas gained valuable newspaper space through several "Young America" and anti-administration editors. The Washington Sentinel, the so-called voice of the South, was edited by Beverly Tucker, his son-in-law's brother. Tucker repeatedly asked Dallas for aid in editing the Sentinel and regularly incorporated Dallas' views in his editorials. The anti-administration New York Herald also gave Dallas extended coverage. Francis J. Grund, who wrote for the Philadelphia Public Ledger and the Baltimore Sun, favored Dallas over any other Democratic candidate, especially James Buchanan. Grund had first written of the party's debt to Dallas during the Polk administration. The other major links in Dallas' newspaper network were the Harrisburg Keystone, the New Orleans Delta, De Bow's Review, and the New York Journal of Commerce.22

20 Dallas to Markoe, n. d. [1855], ibid.
21 Dallas Diary, Mar. 16, 1855.
22 Ibid., Apr. 14, 15, 19, 20, 1854; July 21, Aug. 29, 1855; George W. Childs to Dallas, Sept. 17, 1855, Dallas Papers, HSP; Judge Perkins to Markoe, Nov. 13, 1855, Markoe Papers.
The discord and shifting policy of the Pierce administration provided Dallas with a most valuable propagandist and link to "Young America" in early 1855. A. Dudley Mann, the Assistant Secretary of State, resigned over policy differences arising from Cuba which had resulted in his repeated clashes with Marcy and Pierce. Dallas counseled Mann on the timing of his resignation, the public reasons given for it, and the best mode for placing the relevant correspondence before the public. Mann devoted his political energies to pushing Dallas for 1856, thereby advancing "Young America's" desire to have an expansionist president and his own desire to strike back at the administration.

By late June, 1855, Mann was "running full gallop into the possible future." He was so sure Dallas would be the next president that he was already making cabinet suggestions. In his diary Dallas modestly commented upon Mann's zeal: "Col. Mann, Col. Mann, you see exclusively through your own spectacles." In July, Mann wrote five articles for the _Journal of Commerce_ under the pen name "Spirit of '76." The fifth recommended Dallas for the presidency and was widely reprinted in other papers. Mann revised the articles and added more biographical material in a campaign pamphlet widely circulated by the Dallas forces. At this early stage in the campaigning Mann contemplated starting a newspaper in Baltimore to further Dallas' candidacy.

In an effort to weaken Buchanan's presidential drive, Dallas, through Markoe, suggested to Marcy that negotiations with Great Britain concerning fishing rights off the North Atlantic coast be conducted in Washington and that Buchanan's requested recall be delayed a year. Marcy's willingness to adopt these suggestions resulted from his involvement in the fishing negotiations as well as

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23 Dallas to Markoe, Jan. 7, 13, 16, Feb. 3, 1855, _ibid._; Dallas Diary, May 12, 1855.

24 Dallas Diary, May 12, 15, 16, 18, 1855.


26 Dallas Diary, July 21, Aug. 16, 1855; Dallas to Mann, Sept. 7, 1855, Dallas Papers, HSP.

27 Mann to Dallas, Aug. 16, 1855, Markoe to Dallas, Aug. 22, Sept. 5, 1855, _ibid._; Dallas Diary, May 15, 1855.
his own presidential hopes and his resentment at Buchanan's "disingenuous double-dealing, impudent fault-finding &c." Whether by neglect or intent, Buchanan remained on the shelf in London for more than a year longer than he desired.

In mid-April, Thomas Clemson, John C. Calhoun's son-in-law and heir to much of the Calhounite influence, approached Dallas concerning the presidency. Clemson assured Dallas the South was eager for his nomination: "No one else could arrest the downward tendency of moral and political action." Dallas noted in his diary that he frankly told Clemson he "would not cross the gutter to step into the White House." He further noted that he held "no sort of friendship" with the new breed of politician whose only goal was "the base and bold pursuit of money" at the expense of the nation. Dallas expressed doubt that the South supported him as actively as Clemson intimated. Certainly it had not recognized his services in the past and he had seen no significant changes. In June, Clemson repeated his efforts to bring Dallas out as a southern candidate. Dallas politely indicated he was not available. Already being actively supported by "Young America," Dallas could not afford to be considered a Calhounite-Southern Rights candidate as well. That would jeopardize potential northern support and make him the target of free soil-abolitionist attacks. Whatever southern support he had was tied to "Young America," not Thomas Clemson.

That Dallas was not seeking to alienate the South from his cause, merely to be master of his own campaign, is clearly seen in his role in Philadelphia's Fourth of July celebration of 1855. Dallas, his nephew Robert J. Walker, and Judge James Burnside prepared resolutions for the celebration. The key resolution called for Pennsylvania, in the event of the dissolution of the Union, to "adhere to the Confederacy of the South, as the section true to its plighted faith [the Constitution]." Dallas predicted this resolution would "produce an immense impression in every slaveholding state, and might have the effect of awing abolitionists into silence, if not backward movement.... The project is... in substance purely national & patriotic." In his own remarks to the gathering, Dallas reinforced this idea. He sought, as he put it, to "help the sentiment by a word

28 Dallas to Markoe, Jan. 13, 1855, Markoe Papers.
29 Dallas Diary, Apr. 18, June 22, 1855.
or two." Such a sentiment, perhaps understandable in 1860–1861, seems extreme for 1855, but not when viewed within the context of recent events. The nation was in the midst of civil turmoil and bloodshed in Kansas, abolitionists and Southern Rights extremists were galvanizing their sections, and there were already predictions that war was inevitable. Everywhere Dallas looked the men, institutions, and ideas he had supported throughout his political career were being deprecated and rejected. In such extreme times, extreme measures were necessary to restore reason and order.

The remainder of the summer of 1855 was spent in coordinating the efforts of his supporters across the nation, providing newspapers with proper materials and views, and with distributing the "Spirit of '76" articles and other campaign materials. In Washington, Markoe discussed Dallas' candidacy with Jefferson Davis (suggested by many as Dallas' running mate), John W. Forney, Beverly Tucker, Judge John Perkins, and any lesser figure who would listen. Dallas and Markoe were confident of firm support in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas.

To solidify this southern strength Markoe urged Dallas to use any one of several invitations to attend political celebrations as the excuse for a political tour of the South. Markoe viewed the opportunity as a "God Send!" because it would make people realize that Dallas actually was bidding for the presidency and that "he's the very man!" Markoe assured Dallas of a "cordial & gratifying" reception which would place his name "consciously high & produce discussion &c. &c." Dallas never made the tour. He was too busy with his law practice, such blatant campaigning did not fit his political style, the trip would mark him as a southern candidate—a label he was seeking to avoid, and he doubted the trip would in any way improve his chances of nomination. Markoe had no choice but to submit to Dallas' refusal.

Following the Democratic successes in Pennsylvania in the fall elections of 1855, Dallas' political stock rose, much to the dismay of the Buchanan men. They warned Buchanan of the increased ac-

30 Ibid., June 15, 16, 17, July 2, 4, 1855.
31 Markoe to Dallas, Aug. 14, 15, 16, 20, 22, Sept. 3, 5, 6, 1855, Dallas Papers, HSP.
32 Dallas to Mann, Sept. 7, 1855, ibid.
33 Markoe to Dallas, Sept. 10, 14, 1855, ibid.
tivity for Dallas and of the cautious steps being taken to have the new, overwhelmingly Democratic legislature elect Dallas to the United States Senate. Not knowing Dallas refused "to starve on Senatorial pay," they urged Buchanan to "come home soon."  

Dallas' political friends, heartened by the Democratic victories and hopeful for the resurgence of their faction within the party, made preliminary plans to organize a movement to commit Pennsylvania delegates to him. The leaders of the movement were George Smith, a state assemblyman from Dallas' South Ward in Philadelphia, Hugh Mooney, Colonel Robert M. Lee, and John H. Dohnert, all old-line party men. A preliminary caucus was held at the Falstaff House in Philadelphia to plan a town meeting to endorse Dallas' candidacy. They theoretically acted without Dallas' knowledge or consent, but he did exercise some influence and control. He considered the key resolutions "much longer and far more panegyrical than my taste and honesty would have permitted me to write."  

The "Town Meeting of the Friends of George M. Dallas for the Presidency," met on November 1, 1855, and was widely attended, well received, and viewed as a political success. But Dallas placed little confidence in the ability of any town meeting, or of the Democratic Party of the city and state to unite behind him and push him at the national convention in 1856. Instead he predicted that the "jealousies, spites, suspicions, and backbitings which beset almost the entire mass of Democratic partizans in this city" would prevent success.  

As in his previous presidential bids, Dallas received only scattered support from interior Pennsylvania. All told, only seven of the fifty-seven delegates instructed by mid-November, 1855, were committed to Dallas. Buchanan men calmly estimated that "under no circumstances . . . can Mr. Dallas have over 30 votes in the State Convention."  

34 Daniel T. Jenks to Buchanan, Oct. 15, 1855, Van Dyke to Buchanan, Oct. 16, 1855, Buchanan Papers; Dallas Diary, Oct. 11, 1855.  
36 Dallas Diary, Nov. 2, 1855.  
37 Josiah Randall to Buchanan, Nov. 5, 11, 1855, Van Dyke to Buchanan, Nov. 11, 1855, George Sanderson to Buchanan, Nov. 27, 1855, Buchanan Papers.
Buchanan, despite his face-saving assertions that he planned to retire to Wheatland, his estate outside Lancaster, was widely considered the leading candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1856. He was a proven man whose long service had won him obligations from most of the party leaders. It was properly asserted that he had the support of the dominant element in the party in 1852. Furthermore, he was safely removed from the daily political scene by his diplomatic service and was only slightly tarnished by his role in the Ostend Manifesto, a role now being portrayed as a most reluctant one. In 1855 his followers in Pennsylvania began to campaign for him as if he were an announced candidate to prevent the Dallas and the Pierce-federal patronage factions from eclipsing him in his own state. By mid-summer, when Buchanan requested recall, the administration began to ponder over his replacement, and the timing of his return. Buchanan’s candidacy, announced or not, was a factor prolonging the decision.

George M. Dallas was one of those being considered for the London mission. The first indirect overtures to Dallas in mid-May, 1855, were rebuffed as were similar ones regarding possible service as Minister to France. Through A. Dudley Mann, Dallas learned that Pierce planned to remove him as a “Presidential impediment.” In declining diplomatic service, Dallas averred that he could not “stomach the nauseous dose which would make me a subordinate under such an administration; and though diplomacy is far the most attractive sphere of public life, I prefer profound privacy and continued labor to the soil of such contact.”

Unsuccessful in approaching Dallas through Robert J. Walker or Mann, the administration next sent his long-time friend Lewis Coryell. Marcy discussed the matter in mid-September with Coryell who returned to Philadelphia and delivered the offer to Dallas.

Three days after Marcy spoke with Coryell, Pierce approached another relative and close political friend of Dallas, Senator John M. Mason of Virginia. Pierce told Mason he wanted to send Dallas

39 Dallas Diary, May 18, 1855.
40 Ibid., June 30, 1855.
41 Ibid., Sept. 20, 1855.
to London when Buchanan returned but was afraid Dallas would refuse a direct offer. In his diary Dallas confirmed Pierce’s fears: “Mr. Dallas won’t go! That’s very true! I won’t go for the very reason (among weightier ones) that he wants me to go... to remove a supposed obstacle from a given scene.”

Three weeks later Pierce sent Dallas yet another intermediary, Charles J. Ingersoll, a fellow Philadelphia Democrat. Ingersoll brought word that both Pierce and Buchanan wanted Dallas in London. Dallas again refused to consider the matter. As long as there was a chance for 1856 he would not be shifted from the political scene.

On January 24, 1856, Pierce visited Senator Mason’s home in Washington to repeat his pleas of the previous September. He reiterated his desire to have Dallas’ services in London and urged Mason to induce Dallas to accept. Pierce indicated he was going to make a formal offer to Dallas (the first such indication and possibly what Dallas was holding out for all along) and asked Mason to write Dallas urging acceptance. Mason did so, telling Dallas that Pierce “believes the country requires that he should avail himself of you & wishes it to be done.” Pierce himself wrote the next day. In acknowledging the President’s offer, Dallas replied that he was “unwilling to act precipitately on a proposal so important in all its aspects.”

Pierce had made the offer to Dallas without conferring with Marcy, who did not learn of it for three days. This failure to consult with the Secretary of State on the most important diplomatic post substantiates Dallas’ conclusion that the offer was a political one to remove him from the presidential sweepstakes.

Dallas’ decision to accept was just as political, for he realized that his presidential bid had lost energy. Key members of his group were beginning to defect. Political reality showed that Buchanan was unbeatable in Pennsylvania, and if Dallas’ followers were to share in the federal patronage they had better join Buchanan’s band-

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42 Dallas to Mann, Sept. 7, 1855, Dallas Papers, HSP.
43 Dallas to Mann, Oct. 11, 1855, ibid.
44 Mason to Dallas, Jan. 24, 1856, Dallas to Pierce, Jan. 26, 1856, ibid.; Pierce to Dallas, Jan. 25, 1856, copy in Dallas Diary, Jan. 26, 1856.
45 Marcy to Buchanan, Jan. 27, 1856, Marcy Papers, Library of Congress; Marcy to Buchanan, Jan. 28, 1856, Buchanan Papers.
wagon. Richard McAllister of the Dallas Executive Club, long a Dallas supporter, learned of Pierce’s offer and urged Dallas to accept. The contest at Cincinnati would be between Pierce and Buchanan. McAllister recommended that Dallas throw his support to Buchanan, unite Pennsylvania behind him, and insure his nomination. But Dallas could not admit publicly that he had been bettered by his archrival in Pennsylvania for thirty years. The English mission offered a graceful retreat, leaving his supporters free to go over to Buchanan. Pierce, of course, hoped they would be so grateful to the administration for honoring their leader that they would support him, not Buchanan.  

On January 29, 1856, Dallas accepted Pierce’s invitation to become the American Minister to Great Britain. Despite protestations to the contrary from Dallas and leaders of the Dallas Executive Club, his presidential hopes were over. Thus Pierce successfully removed a minor thorn from his side in his unsuccessful quest for the Democratic nomination in 1856. Dallas’ appointment also permitted Pierce to silence one last potentially embarrassing spokesman against his abortive Cuban policy.

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46 Richard McAllister to Dallas, Jan. 29, 1856, Dallas Papers, HSP; McAllister to Dallas Corresponding Committee, n. d., Buchanan Papers.
47 Dallas to Pierce, Jan. 29, 1856, Dallas Papers, HSP.