

THE MIRAGE OF RESTORATION : LOUIS XVIII AND LORD MACARTNEY, 1795-6 : II

by W. R. FRYER, B.Litt., M.A.

PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM¹

IV

We must now attend to the serious business of Macartney's mission. The main theme of the Earl's fortunes in this had been sounded by Louis XVIII before Macartney arrived at Verona. The Earl's principal immediate charge was to advise the King in drawing up his Manifesto. He arrived too late. The Manifesto—known to history as the Declaration of Verona—had been issued three weeks earlier. Macartney readily saw that it was, in some important respects, not such as the British Cabinet desired. In his Declaration, Louis had identified himself with the time-honoured constitution of the French Kingdom and had professed his own "heureuse impuissance" to alter it, even if he so wished. He had, indeed, earnestly emphasized its differences from an irresponsible despotism. He had pointed to the independent judiciary and to the political functions of the *Parlements*. He had admitted that "abuses" had latterly disfigured the true character of the ancient constitution, and had undertaken that the restored monarchy would conscientiously correct these ; though he did not specify them. In the English view, all this made up a very inadequate encouragement to the "coalition of Parties". It was ambiguous, but not in the sense that English policy required. Grenville commented to Macartney that it remained unclear whether Louis was identifying himself with the "feudal" phase of the old French monarchy, or—substantially—with French institutions as they had existed under Louis XIV, or with any particular phase which had occurred between. And the Declaration did not suggest that this uncertainty was one of the issues which would have to be settled, at a happier moment, after consultation between the King and his subjects. (Indeed, Grenville might have added, the Declaration

¹ The first part of this article appeared in the preceding number of the BULLETIN.

envisaged no such consultation, in any form, even for the correction of "abuses"). It was to be feared, concluded the Foreign Secretary, that most people would take it that Louis XVIII was really driving at

an absolute and unqualified Re-establishment of the French Monarchy, such as it existed in its last Stage . . . if the ambiguous Expressions are only used to soften in some Degree the Violence of such a Claim, it is then very necessary that your Lordship should express how different this Idea is from the Sentiments of this Government.

Nor was Grenville entirely happy about the offer of an amnesty which was included in the Declaration. This was held out to all except the Regicides; but Grenville insisted that even they should be left with hope of pardon if they would now render "great Services".¹

Meantime, Macartney had already devoted his first conversations with Louis XVIII chiefly to crying over the spilt milk of the Declaration. The baffling outcome of his efforts vividly appears in his account of them :

With regard to the publication of a Manifesto . . . [the King] has already anticipated our ideas . . . by his proclamation—a paper . . . he had drawn up himself . . . He spoke of this manifesto with such a degree of fondness as almost induced me to suppose him the real parent of the offspring . . . From this circumstance and from its being past recall, it became a matter of great delicacy and embarrassment to make any comments upon it, and the more so as he seemed firmly persuaded that it was composed perfectly in the spirit of the note delivered by your Lordship to the Duc de Harcourt on 22nd June last, yet I thought it my duty to point out to him some parts of it which appeared to be expressed in a manner less eligible than it might have been, and I took the liberty of showing him the sketch of a manifesto . . . a good deal different . . . He read it with great attention,

¹ Grenville to Macartney, 8 September (F.O. 27/45). On the future form of government under the restored French Crown, Grenville had added, after what has been cited in the text : "It has always been thought here that . . . the Hand of a very strong Government, and possibly that of a Government entirely military, may be necessary as an Intermediate Means of restoring a State of legitimate Order, and of fitting the Country to receive the Blessings of a more mild and moderate System. But this has been looked to as an intermediate State only, and no Belief is entertained here that permanent Tranquillity can now be established in France on the Basis of an absolute and arbitrary Monarchy". Louis XVIII could not have found these remarks impressive, for he did not regard the old government of France as "arbitrary", except in its "abuses", which he was determined to correct.

and then said, he was sorry that I had not arrived three weeks sooner, as he might have concerted with me some alterations . . . but at all events he desired me to rest satisfied that from the knowledge he had of the People whom he was to speak to (and here he drew the French Character and compared it with the English in a very lively manner, and with a good deal of wit and pleasantry) he had framed his discourse, and adopted it to the occasion . . .

As to the ancient Constitution of France, he looks upon it with the same veneration that my Lord Coke contemplated our Common Law, the wisdom of ages, the perfection of reason, etc., etc., and he considers it as the only possible form of Government suited to the French Nation, or capable of controlling their impetuosity . . . As to the Feudal rights, the *Corvées*, certain péages, and some ridiculous services, which had been complained of and had been much exaggerated, he did not think it desirable . . . that they should all remain upon the ancient footing, but he thought impartial justice should be dealt to all parties—that those, who were subject to these duties . . . had readily accepted all the benefits to which they were attached . . . and that if they were to be relieved from them, it was but fair that they should reimburse the losers.¹

Louis was, indeed, ready to meet the English suggestion about the Regicides—though he protested that, even pardoned, they could not be permitted to remain in France.² In any case, this concession was of course not mentioned in the Declaration.

¹ Macartney to Grenville, 12 August (F.O. 27/45). Macartney had carried with him a draft Declaration in terms such as Grenville had thought proper for the French King to issue (same file). The English draft differs from the Declaration, as actually issued by Louis, in two chief points: it makes the King say that he will seek the co-operation of his subjects in measures to ensure their future happiness, and it throws out to the Regicides the suggestion that the King would sooner they “evaded”, than actually incurred, their just punishment.

Privately, Macartney criticized the Declaration which Louis XVIII had already issued, on the grounds that it was “rather the declamation of a preacher to his sinful congregation, than a plain impressive discourse from a father to his faulty children, . . . where mutual errors were to be admitted, to be pardoned on one hand, and rectified on the other” (Robbins, citing an unidentified letter, *op. cit.* p. 418). Does this mean that the King should have confessed the past faults of the Crown? The draft which the Earl brought with him does not emphasize this feature.

Louis XVIII's opinion of the English draft was concealed from Macartney, but can be seen in Barante, *op. cit.* p. 91. He thought it “pitoyable” and he also marvels that England should think the lawful King needed Mr. Pitt's consent, and advice, before he addressed his own subjects. For a masterly defence of his own Declaration of Verona see Barante, pp. 78-87.

Macartney's despatches to Grenville show that the Earl had great difficulty in believing that Louis had himself composed his own Declaration. While professing admiration of Louis XVIII's personal talents, the Earl actually underrated them.

² To Grenville, 12 August (F.O. 27/45).

And meantime the case of the Prince de Poix raised widespread doubts about the whole meaning of the new King's amnesty. M. de Poix, hardly a subject for amnesty in any sense, was now dismissed by the new Sovereign from his position as Captain of the King's Guard. His only apparent offence was that, in 1789, he had favoured the union of the three Orders in the States-General. His subsequent devotion to Louis XVI went for nothing. The incident was used by opponents of Louis XVIII to discredit his offer of amnesty. Anxiously prompted by his colleague Wickham, Macartney raised the matter with the King. Louis XVIII responded in terms of pride too much self-assured to dissemble :

He had so little resentment towards the Prince de Poix, he should not be unwilling to employ him in various situations . . . but in a confidential place, as Captain of his Guard, he could not in justice to himself consent to it . . . His heart revolted at any kind of duplicity, and he hoped that the frankness of his conduct . . . would recommend him to every honest man.¹

Macartney returned again and again to the King with questions arising out of the Declaration. We have noted above that Louis impressed the envoy as being, on all those subjects, "much less tinctured with prejudice" than his companions; and he seems to have listened with becoming attention while the envoy "reiterated to him at every favourable moment those sentiments of conciliation which are so necessary to his interests." In November, Macartney believed that British advice was producing its proper results: "the King of France has been gradually relaxing in some points, and is now nearly brought to the disposition that was to be wished."² But after close consideration, it appears that little resulted from all this talk. At one point, Louis left Macartney with the impression that, once restored, he would be prepared once more to summon the States-General.³ But it would be "in their ancient form"—the King

¹ Mallet du Pan in Michel, *op. cit.* i. 309; Wickham to Macartney, 4 October, and Macartney to Wickham, 15 October, both publ. in Wickham, *op. cit.* i. 177-8, 182-3; Macartney to Grenville, 18 October (F.O. 27/45).

² To Grenville, 27 September; to Wickham, passage publ. in Wickham, *op. cit.* pp. 195-6.

³ To Grenville, 27 September.

was no more willing than before to recognize the social revolution involved in the events of 1789. In any case, Louis was only "thinking aloud": he made no promise, even to the British representative, and still less to the French nation. Indeed, if Louis, in this or any other particular, advanced under Macartney's guidance along the road of further concessions, it remains highly significant that he did not manifest these further concessions to the world in the only way likely to command much attention, by embodying them in a new public statement, as an authoritative gloss upon the Verona Declaration. It seems no less significant that Macartney never appears to have pressed for such a new public statement. On this side of his commission, the Earl cannot be said to have overworked the maxim *fortiter in re*.

What the Earl could properly claim was that—no doubt partly as a result of his own efforts—at the time of the collision between the Convention and the "moderate" sectional movement at Paris (which ended in Bonaparte's "whiff of grapeshot" on 13 vendémiaire) "much pains" were taken to "inspire the Paris Malecontents with proper ideas of Louis 18"¹; just as, a little later, the instructions given to the Royalist leader Précý, who was to raise the Lyonnais, included conciliatory explanations of the Declaration of Verona.² But all this by no means amounted to a public reinterpretation of the oracle which Macartney had arrived too late at Verona to inspire. Nor did the exiled King in any way intend, informally or formally, to change the essential principles which the Verona Declaration had announced. To let it be known that Louis was serious in his offer of amnesty and that he meant to wield the traditional sceptre in a mild, even in a mildly reforming, temper: this was the only object involved in the "ideas" and "explanations" now put forward, and it was by no means equal to the task of rallying a "coalition of parties" behind the King. Macartney appears in November to have mistaken shadow for substance.

On the whole subject of the future government of France, the

¹ To Grenville, 15 November.

² To Grenville, 16 November. On 18 October Macartney had already explained to Grenville that the King's secret Agents at Paris had been instructed to let it be known, in suitable quarters, that Regicides might rely on "a certain extent" of clemency in return for services at the eleventh hour.

Earl had probably reached the most accurate appraisal of the permanent positions of Louis XVIII and his Court at a slightly earlier point, when he reported :

I have taken every opportunity of combating such Prejudices as appeared . . . to be contrary to . . . your Instructions . . . with as much Delicacy and Address as I was Master of, but notwithstanding all the attention and seeming deference with which they are received, I cannot flatter myself [your] Arguments make all the Impression I desired. There are certain points upon which I never find the French King and his Ministers to vary in the slightest degree. The principal one is what they call the French Government or Constitution, upon which their notions appear to me so vague and confused that it is impossible to give your Lordship any precise answer to your questions about the meaning intended . . . by the expressions of the Manifesto . . . Two days ago the King Himself told me it was intrinsically as little despotic as our own, that its proper and regular form was to be dated from the time of Philip Le Bel, and that the imperfections it was charged with . . . were mere abuses, which no Constitutionalist could be more desirous of correcting than Himself. He added that France being not an Island but a Continental Power and requiring an army of 150,000 or 200,000 to defend its extensive frontier it was absolutely necessary that the Sovereign should be invested with a strong and . . . extensive Authority . . . and that such authority was founded in the ancient laws of the Kingdom. This is the utmost and least unintelligible matter that I have been able to collect.¹

But Macartney went on in the same despatch to convey that, though the explanations of the King and his Ministers struck him as "vague and confused", their inflexible intentions were clear enough :

Their wish, and perhaps their expectation, is to re-enter France and restore the Monarchy without any conditions at all, fully determined at the same time upon a correction of all the abuses which had been justly complained of. And they think that such a measure would emanate [*sic*] with more dignity, simplicity and expedition from the Sovereign himself than from any numerous Assembly . . . composed from their lively and impetuous Nation . . .

Grenville had at an early stage drawn a sombre deduction from the terms of the Verona Declaration and from its publication without benefit of British advice. Macartney's subsequent efforts to put right what had gone wrong in that respect can hardly be said to have rendered Grenville's words out of date ; and they might well stand as a tailpiece to other topics of the Earl's mission also : "it is impossible not to see . . . that while the

¹ To Grenville, 18 October.

King and those who surround Him profess an entire Disposition to be guided by the Counsels of this Country, they are in fact pertinaciously attached to their own Ideas and Systems. ”¹

There remains an impression that Macartney did not handle this part of his business to perfection. He seems to have felt himself somewhat at sea. If the panegyrics of the immemorial Constitution of the Monarchy struck him as vague and confused, however, this may have been because he knew too little about the subject, rather than because his interlocutors were mystifying either themselves, or him. Yet once, at least, he saw clearly enough what their intentions were with respect to the future government of their country ; and why, after this, he should have believed that any real change in the French King’s outlook was occurring is not easy to understand. Nor is it easy to see why he should have complained, as he did, that the exiles did not give him their complete confidence in these matters, when, for all their deferential *obiter dicta*, their real intentions were plain enough. Whatever we make of these questions, the fact remains that on this issue the Earl’s efforts to enforce the policy of England were blunted, perhaps as much by uncertainties on his own side as by the baffling tactics of the Court of Verona. Yet to say this is not to suggest that another envoy might have evoked a different response ; Macartney was undoubtedly justified in claiming that in the last resort Louis XVIII was “ entirely governed by himself ”.

Then there was the question of England’s formal recognition of Louis as King of France. Of course Louis could not compel England publicly to acknowledge him before she thought the moment ripe. But here again, the course of Macartney’s mission hardly ran quite smooth. Long before the Earl could arrive at Verona, the Duc de Harcourt had anticipated the objections of his new King to the English decision to grant formal recognition only when some part of France had risen to make good his claims. Standing Grenville’s arguments on their head, the Duke had rejoined that formal recognition was precisely what was needed to encourage the King’s faithful subjects to come out in their true colours, and to complete the discomfiture

¹ Grenville to Macartney, 8 September (F.O. 27/45).

of the "rebels".¹ When Macartney presented himself at Verona, he found Louis XVIII prepared with all the forces of his address to improve this line of reasoning :

He flattered himself that the formal recognition of his title would soon be added to his other obligations [to the King of Great Britain], which recognition he was by no means solicitous about from any motive of vain ambition (a passion he must be acquitted of by all who knew him) but from a firm persuasion that it would most efficaciously contribute to the success of his cause.—That the Empress of Russia was as ready to acknowledge him as a King, as she had formerly not hesitated to recognize him as a Regent, and that if Great Britain were to join her, . . . the other Powers would follow the example without delay. He seemed to think that till that seal was put upon him by us, his regal existence was incomplete, and neither sufficiently felt by his friends, nor feared by his Foes . . . Till England acknowledged him, neither the Prince of Condé's Army would be properly arranged, nor Marshal Clerfayt's be quickened into the activity which it was capable of . . .²

Grenville had already rebuffed the version of these arguments presented by Harcourt ; and nothing in the fortunes of the French Royal cause during the following several months occurred to make the Foreign Secretary feel that the moment of formal acknowledgement was any more ripe. But the minds of Louis and his Ministers continued to dwell on the subject ; and the conduct of Catherine II gave, at once, encouragement to them, and some uneasiness to Macartney. In August, the Earl reported the arrival at Verona of "an Officer from St. Petersburg with a letter from the Empress of Russia to the King of France, treating him and acknowledging him as such", and announcing that "her Ministers at London and Vienna were instructed to press both these Courts to a speedy recognition of him."³ After this, it is true, there was a long interval before the next favouring gesture from Russia ; and Macartney incidentally revealed his concern over the awkward predicament in which an actual recognition by Russia would place England, when he observed, in mid-November :

Notwithstanding the Empress of Russia's parading letter to the French King . . . I don't find that she has yet taken the steps in consequence that were hoped for . . . Great Britain is the only power that has shown him the slightest attention . . .⁴

¹ Harcourt to Grenville, endorsed by Grenville "June 26" (F.O. 27/44).

² To Grenville, 12 August. Clerfayt, then Commanding in Chief the Imperial forces on the Upper Rhine.

³ To Grenville, 23 August.

⁴ To Grenville, 15 November.

But the Russian action, though tardy, followed before the end of the Earl's mission. When it occurred, it brought no comfort to the exiled King ; it rather contributed to his next misfortune. Louis, by no will of his own, was still at Verona ; and he had completed no arrangements to move elsewhere, when, under pressure from Paris, the Venetian authorities abruptly expelled him. Macartney understood that the Empress's instructions to her envoy at Venice, " to appear publicly as commissioned also to the King of France at Verona ", had given the French Republic one of its motives for bringing pressure to bear on the Venetians.¹

Meantime, the Earl had found Louis XVIII as recalcitrant over this question of his temporary place of residence as he was over the proper line to take respecting the future government of his Kingdom. It was not, indeed, that he had any wish, from the beginning of his reign onwards, to remain at Verona. He told Macartney when they first met that he was anxious to follow his brother, then (it was hoped) setting off, *via* Cuxhaven and Spithead, to join the Royalist revival in western France ; there, the envoy reported, the King hoped " to find a grave or a crown ". Meantime, however, Louis urged that it would be best if he removed himself nearer the same sea-route, by taking station somewhere near Condé's Army (which, unfortunately, the Austrians had not yet placed in such a state as to enable the King to take personal command of it). Macartney cautiously rejoined that such a step involved the responsibility of Austria, rather than that of England ; it was to Rome, or Gibraltar, that he was instructed to direct the King's attention. But Louis, in the most charming manner, swept these suggestions aside. Rome and Gibraltar were even further from where he most wanted to be, than Verona. To reach the west of France from either, he would have to undertake a " tedious and unpleasant " sea journey. This he frankly presented as a serious obstacle : " he had never been at sea himself. " When Macartney tried to persist in the suggestion of Rome, he only attracted a reply worthy of Louis XIV himself : " My Lord, you have certainly

¹ To Grenville, 22 April 1796 (F.O. 27/45).

fulfilled your instructions, and I have expressed my feelings to you upon them." Somewhat nonplussed, the envoy resumed the subject with the Ministers—who, for all he then knew, might have decisive influence in the matter. Now, he thought, was the moment to apply the authority of the protecting Power. Adopting "a more elevated tone", he "told them that, if the King was not advised to chuse Rome, . . . instead of England directing his conduct, he directed hers." Alas for *fortiter in re!* The Ministers raised appeasing voices; but the result was, precisely, that "instead of England directing the King's conduct, he directed hers." Louis was immoveable; and the Ministers professed their incapacity to influence him. It was the Earl who weakened, and it was understood that the Court should arrange to remove to a point near, but not too near, Condé until Grenville authorized its onward movement to Cuxhaven.¹

In the event this question entirely escaped the control either of Louis or of Macartney. Before Macartney even arrived at Verona, the anglo-*émigré* venture at Quiberon had been destroyed by General Hoche.² The British Ministers still hoped that the revival of the Western war by Charette and other indigenous leaders might justify their disembarking Artois in the area. But, as Grenville advised Macartney early in September, it seemed hopelessly premature to plan the conveyance thither of the French King himself. England could not spare him adequate military protection there; and until his cause prospered in the West mainly by its own efforts, she could not risk endangering his life in that region. It would, therefore, be pointless to bring him to Cuxhaven; but, added the Foreign Secretary, his removal *ad interim* to South Germany would probably only further exacerbate the already bad relations between him and the Imperial Court.³ Louis XVIII's courier, however, was meantime at

¹ To Grenville, 12 August 1795 (*ibid.*).

² 21 July 1795.

³ Grenville to Macartney, 8 September (F.O. 27/45). Louis XVIII had meantime addressed himself directly to George III, urging that the Spanish peace with the Republic had rendered Italy unsuitable for his residence, and that, while he took temporary refuge at Pforzheim, the British Government should make early arrangements to take him, via Cuxhaven, to "suivre les traces de son frère" (14 August, F.O. 27/44). *contd. over.*

the Court of Baden, seeking the Margrave's permission for the exiles to reside at Pforzheim, and Macartney—not yet knowing Grenville's latest word on the topic—was being dragged along with this plan. When the Margrave responded, naturally enough in his situation, that he could not grant asylum to Louis without the “Desire or Approbation” of the Kaiser, the exiled Court turned its entreaties to the still less promising quarter of Vienna, and begged refuge at the Emperor's city of Rottenburg on the Neckar; and Macartney agreed to solicit the support of his colleague at the Imperial Court, Sir Morton Eden, for this *démarche*.¹ All in vain: Thugut rejected the request without ceremony,² and at the beginning of October, 1795, even the serenity of Louis XVIII was heavily overclouded:

It seems probable, reported Macartney to Grenville, that we must remain some time longer at Verona, as no place on the other side of the Alps is opened to receive us, and the only place on this side of them which might be proper for us [Rome], innumerable objections are started to. This unpleasant Position, together with the Difficulties made in England . . . to convey the King to the Vendée, seems to have discomposed him a good deal. I had an affecting conversation with him yesterday, before we went to dinner, when he lamented to me his unfortunate situation, from which, through the Court of London's solicitude for his personal safety, and thro' the Court of Vienna's inhospitality, he saw very little prospect of relief . . . He said that a principal Reason for his desiring to remove into Germany was that he might be near to the scene of action and seize the earliest opportunity of getting into France . . . His involuntary inaction was liable to misconstruction . . ., for, his Brother being now active in the Vendée, it was difficult to explain . . . the reason why he himself was not there also . . . I doubt . . . whether he can long remain in his present state of Stagnation here, for besides that I believe him perfectly sincere . . . and eager to be in action, those . . . attached to him seem warmly solicitous for his Fame . . . and urge the necessity of . . . a junction with his Brother in the Vendée, who, they are apprehensive, may eclipse him.³

On seeing Grenville's despatch of 8 September the King wrote an able and spirited letter to Harcourt for communication to the British Government, arguing that England cared too much for his personal safety, and too little for his “*considération*”; only by his presence on the scene of danger could he earn for the Crown a new and secure place in the heart of the nation (28 September, F.O. 27/44). The British Government, in view of the unpromising developments in Western France, took no more notice of the King's second appeal than of his first.

¹ Macartney to Grenville, 10 September (F.O. 27/45).

² To Grenville, 28 September (*ibid.*).

³ To Grenville, 7 October (*ibid.*). Was Louis XVIII himself influenced, in this matter, by jealousy of his brother? In his letter of 28 September to Harcourt,

This apprehension, indeed, proved groundless. Artois, under British protection, reached the Île d'Yeu, off the Vendéan coast, at the end of September; but, rightly or wrongly, never ventured the mainland. By mid-November, he was on his way back to Spithead, and was soon installed by the British Government at Holyrood, where his creditors could not molest him.¹ In western France, *chouan* bands continued, for several months, to occupy Republican attention, and the British authorities did their best to aid and advise the Royalists. But in the British view, the moment never again drew near when it seemed worth preparing to land either of the Royal brothers on that coast.

Meantime, the wishes of the exiled Court turned the more strongly towards the positive alternative offered by Condé. The Prince was dazzled by the elusive but persistent prospect of marching into eastern France and raising great parts of it in the Royal cause, in collaboration less with the Austrians than with

he earnestly denied such a motive. But it is unquestionable that the *entourages* of the two Princes each entertained an attitude of jealousy towards the other Prince.

¹ Godechot, *op. cit.* p. 278; Grenville to Harcourt 14, August, and subsequent exchanges between Grenville and Artois, 15 August, 16 August, 25 October and 19 November 1795 (all in F.O. 27/44); Grenville to Macartney, 17 November and 29 December 1795 (F.O. 27/45).

Artois was discontented with his relegation to Holyrood and more fundamentally with his still unrelieved liability to molestation by his creditors, which his relegation to Holyrood prevented, but only by placing him at an inconvenient distance from any scene of action on behalf of his own cause. Louis XVIII supported his brother's request that some way should be found to restore him to "personal liberty". Since it appeared that England would take no initiative to that end—a fact which doubtless added itself to the many other scores piling up in the minds of the Princes against the British Government—the exiled Court asked the King of Sardinia (father-in-law, not only to Louis XVIII, but also to Artois) to give *Monsieur* a "Diplomatic Character" in his own Service; and, at Louis XVIII's request, and believing that Grenville would be quite content to have it so, Macartney wrote to his colleague Trevor at Turin, endorsing this proposal. The Court of Turin, which had already failed to recognize Louis XVIII, now with even greater timidity declined to help Artois out of his scrape. It was then proposed to ask the Russian Empress to oblige, instead; Macartney commented: "I think I know that Great Lady too well to doubt of her complying with the Request. It would be a fine Decoration for her Diplomatic archives of Muscovy to inroll a presumptive Heir of the French Monarchy in her list of *Poslannicks*" (= emissaries). (Macartney to Grenville, 6 January 1796, 31 January 1796 (F.O. 27/45)).

his Republican opponent, General Pichegru, Commander in Chief of the Army of the Rhine and Moselle, whose expected, though long-postponed, defection to the Royalists was to open the way, not merely to local, but to decisive successes for the King's party.¹ With this great hope in view, Condé was anxious to secure, in good time, the presence of Louis at his own Headquarters.² As the prospects of the Western theatre faded, while Pichegru—perhaps purposefully—mishandled the Republican offensive on the Rhine front, and presented the Austrians, if they would undertake a winter campaign, with the chance of launching a counter-invasion of France,³ the attractions of a Royal migration to Condé's Headquarters increased; and Macartney once more found himself contemplating a move to south Germany with some sympathy—though he doubted whether it would actually be undertaken during the winter:

The situation of the unfortunate Prince, near whom I reside, is so melancholy that it were to be wished a more eligible one could be found for him, as till that time his mind will be continually distracted . . . Were the season less advanced, I should not by any means be certain but that in some hasty moment he might adopt the Prince of Condé's proposal and join his Army in the character of a french private Gentleman. The Court of Vienna has treated him with so little complaisance that I doubt whether he would now think himself obliged to stand upon terms of ceremony with it in such a matter; and I confess that, since the late turn of Affairs in Germany, I do not see why the Emperor should shut the gates of Rottenburg against him . . .⁴

The Earl, mindful of Grenville's view "that no step of this kind should be taken without the concurrence of the Court of Vienna", and having little hope of any such concurrence, "endeavoured to preach patience"⁵; but by the end of November he was himself carried up on a great new tide of optimism, gathering from

¹ Codechot, *op. cit.* 282 ff.

² See, for instance, Condé's letter to the bishop of Arras, 10 September 1795 (copy in F.O. 27/44). Condé there argues that Louis XVIII could not hope to recover his throne except sword in hand. But he is not only urging the claims of the Camp over the mock-Versailles at Verona; he is obviously concerned also to urge the claims of his own camp.

³ Codechot, *op. cit.* p. 292; Macartney to Grenville, 10 December (F.O. 27/45), adverts to signs, about the middle of November, that an invasion of France by Wurmser and Condé was then in contemplation.

⁴ To Grenville, 15 November (F.O. 27/45).

⁵ To Grenville, 28 November (*ibid.*).

various quarters. Not only did Austrian successes against Pichegru suggest that Condé could now easily be launched into eastern France, but there were encouraging reports of general disaffection in France from the new Directorial Government, and great expectations that Précý's planned uprising at Lyons would prove a brilliant and spreading success. Royalist leaders inside France united with Wickham and with Trevor (at Turin) to urge that Louis XVIII's presence on the German frontier was just what was now needed to ripen and combine all these developments. Macartney was thus "induced, in concurrence with Mr. Wickham and Mr. Trevor, and at their pressing instance, to renew the attempts at Vienna to obtain a temporary refuge for the King of France in the neighbourhood of the Brisgau." He wrote once more to Eden, and also "by another Channel" to Thugut directly. He took occasion to emphasize to the Imperial Court that cordial relations between it and Louis XVIII were to their mutual interest, and never more so than at that moment. Reflecting that Louis XVIII's "good nature" was "not inferior to his sensibility", the Earl felt that his own intervention might even now not be too late to promote a real and invaluable *rapprochement* between Habsburg and Bourbon.¹

It was not only by intercessions at Vienna that Macartney tried to prosper these autumnal hopes. On 15 November the Imperial Commander in Chief in the West, Field Marshal Count Wurmser, apparently determined upon an Austro-Royalist invasion of eastern France, had sent to Condé the text of a proclamation which the Prince was to publish, "sans y rien changer", as soon as the *émigré* corps reached the French side of the Rhine. Condé objected to the text and appealed to Louis XVIII. The King called the British envoy to the table and "pressed" him for his advice "without any complimentary preface or reserve." The Earl brushed aside Condé's objections as finical. He argued that the Austrian text at all events laid one Royalist ghost: the fear that the Imperialists would claim for themselves part or the whole of Alsace; and insisted that "the

¹ To Grenville, 28 November (*ibid.*). Cf. his comments of 10 December (*ibid.*).

great point for the King was once to get a footing in France, to obtain which for him, the Prince of Condé was to take the shortest way, without stumbling at any difficulties or delicacies." Louis, overruling some of his own advisers, agreed with the Earl.¹ But Macartney was labouring in vain. By mid-December it was becoming very doubtful whether the Imperialists could or would carry either their own forces or Condé's across the Rhine in winter conditions.² The hope of a great Royalist rising in the Franche Comté again began to recede (and Pichegru on his side did no more to lend them practical encouragement). The contemporary news of the shattering defeat suffered on the Riviera by the Imperial General de Vins³ was no more encouraging⁴; indeed, Macartney found himself once more joining with Trevor in pressing the Imperial Court to send substantial reinforcements—and a better Commander—to the Alpine front as the only likely means of staving off a Sardinian capitulation to the Republicans, and an extension of the war into North Italy.⁵ The Imperial decision to conclude a winter armistice with the Republicans on the Rhine front (21 December) put a final end to the phase of autumnal optimism; and after all this, it was of little importance that the Viennese Government also again refused to authorize Louis XVIII's residence in south Germany.⁶

This point marks the end of Macartney's efforts to solve the problem of Louis XVIII's place of residence. The King himself, with hope triumphant over experience, exhorted the

¹ To Grenville, 10 December (*ibid.*).

² To Grenville, 13 December (*ibid.*).

³ At Loano, 23-25 November, at the hands of Schérer, Commanding in Chief the Army of Italy.

⁴ Wickham's hopes of the great uprising at Lyon had already been gravely compromised by the seizure, by the Republicans, of papers revealing something of Royalist designs there (Mitchell, *op. cit.* p. 63). But the event of Loano must in any case have damaged those prospects.

⁵ To Grenville, 13 December (F.O. 27/45). Macartney added: "The new Poison of French Principles has already much infected the Minds of People in this Part of the World and threatens totally to corrupt them. Even under this inquisitorial Government I have observed a Freedom of Speech exercised with Impunity, which a few Years since would have incurred a Halter or a Dungeon. The State of Venice as well as others have indeed by their Acknowledgement of the French Republic not a little contributed to this Mischief . . .".

⁶ Copy of Flachslanden's letter to Harcourt, 16 December (F.O. 27/44).

Earl in January 1796 to inform London of the many strong reasons leading to the conclusion that both the Royal brothers should now be disembarked in Brittany or Poitou. The Earl contented himself with passing on the King's reasonings to Grenville, without comment of his own.¹ Of course Grenville's ears were deaf. It thus resulted that, though Louis had successfully withstood the advice on this subject which Macartney had been commissioned to urge upon him, he had himself been unable to impose his own views, either on England or on Austria; and Macartney had been condemned to play an entirely frustrate part between forces which he could not control. It was the French Republicans who finally broke the deadlock at Verona.

It was the question of indemnities for the Allies when the French Monarchy should be restored which commanded the greatest share of Macartney's interest at Verona, and called out his most strenuous attitudes and conduct. It engaged his personal conviction that in Europe France had been too far extended, even before the recent conquests of the Republic; and his lusty appetite for British expansion in the colonial areas of the world. His interest in the question was, perhaps, so great that it taxed his powers of conciliation. *Fortiter in re* here came into its own; there are grounds to fear that the efforts of the Earl's suavity failed to counterbalance it.

It appears very early in the Earl's reports home what an acutely painful subject this was at the Court of Verona. All French people, he observes, of whatever party, inside or outside the country, "took fire" at any suggestion of a dismemberment of traditional French possessions. Many Royalists actually hoped

¹ To Grenville, 31 January 1796 (F.O. 27/45). In the same despatch Macartney related Louis XVIII's very gracious comments on the news that the British Government was now prepared—on certain conditions—to negotiate for peace with the French Republic: "He must always do justice to the Candour and frankness with which your Lordship's sentiments had been communicated, and . . . however severely he should feel the loss of our support, as being that which he principally relied on, he never could forget what we had hitherto done and were still doing for him. It was too pleasing a recollection for him easily to part with, and notwithstanding the present gloom, threw a ray of hope upon his mind, that lighted him to look forward to better days". However much Louis really meant this, he no doubt found it the easier to say, since he did not think that England would find the Republicans prepared to accept England's conditions.

that some of the Republic's conquests would be retained by the restored Monarchy ; the Verona Court disclaimed such ambitions, but it soon became obvious that a reduction of France below her status in 1789 was just as unpalatable there as in any other French circle.¹ Even Louis XVIII's mildness and courtesy only half concealed, on this subject, great sensitiveness : especially with respect to the pretensions of the Kaiser, but to some extent also about those of England.

Complaining of the slowness of the Court of Vienna, the King dropt that it was perhaps owing to his silence, with regard to what might be expected from him in case of success. I seized the opportunity of saying, that he must be sensible how natural it was for a power that expended its blood and treasure in his service to look forward to some compensation . . .

To this, even on a diplomatic subject, sickening display of hypocritical euphemism, Louis replied in words which conveyed a firm refusal to be hurried into " explanations " and a subtle distinction between one Ally and another :

I understand you perfectly, he replied, and there can be no doubt of it, but that compensation must be settled by negotiation and discussion at a future day, and my friends may then rely upon finding me perfectly disposed to act with Justice and equity.²

A few weeks later, the envoy had formed the impression that Louis and his advisers would not try to refuse some indemnity to England, in the West or the East Indies or both ; but he now knew in detail their bitter reaction to Imperial ambitions on the borders of France herself, which contributed greatly to the bad relations which had long prevailed between the exiled and the Habsburg Courts. The French Royalists had certainly little reason to love Austria, which had treated them with scant respect ever since the failure of the Allied-*émigré* invasion of France in 1792 ; which had openly claimed French territories in the Allied advances of 1793 ; and which since that time was making little effort with its own armies, and none with that of Condé, to press the war against the Republic. The French King, reported the envoy, complaining to Vienna about the

¹ To Grenville, 27 September 1795 (F.O. 27/45).

² To Grenville, 12 August 1795 (ibid.).

apparent Imperial lack of interest in the war, had openly asked the Kaiser to come to the point and name the price of his aid, if that were the unmentioned obstacle :

The latter is silent but his expectations are guessed at and the King's language thereupon is that nothing could have so fatal an effect upon his affairs as an engagement or the slightest suspicion of an engagement on his part to any material cession of Towns or territory, as it would equally revolt all Frenchmen whomsoever, whether Royalist or Republican . . .¹

And the King went on to denounce outspokenly the omnivorous and immoral appetite of the Viennese Court. Austria was one of the Powers which had wickedly and foolishly "stripped a helpless neighbour and parted his garments among them. The facility with which the House of Austria had been accommodated in Poland was likely to lead her to similar projects elsewhere . . ." The exiles suspected the Habsburgs of coveting Alsace and Lorraine, besides, more recently, Venice ; as well as of planning to give up the Belgian provinces (when recovered from the Republicans) to one of the Archdukes, while the Kaiser took Tuscany into his own monarchy, instead.² The exiled King impressively condemned all these and similar designs as inimical to the interests of all Europe, about which he talked very much as Talleyrand was to talk at the Congress of Vienna.

Macartney had no choice, however, but to pursue the subject of indemnities for Austria. Apart from its wish to stimulate Imperial ardour in the current struggle against the revolutionary Republic, the British Government thought that Austria ought to be left, at the victorious end of the war, with territorial gains from France : not, indeed, on the upper Rhine, but on the Franco-Belgian border. Not only must the Belgic provinces be won

¹ To Grenville, 27 September (*ibid.*) Louis added : "Nothing specific should therefore be now promised or even whispered, but they who have fair claims upon him may rely upon all just and reasonable returns. They will naturally flow from his gratitude . . ." Observe how little this language committed the King, even in principle, to make any concessions to Austria.

² Thugut certainly had designs on Venetia, which he soon partially gratified by arrangement with Bonaparte (Treaties of Leoben and Campo-Formio, 1797). But Imperial interest in the Belgic provinces had declined since it had become clear that England would not support the long-cherished Austrian design to exchange them for Bavaria.

back from the French, they must be enlarged, beyond the boundaries of 1789, to give the Kaiser a better frontier there against future French aggression.¹ Macartney was more than willing to develop this topic at Verona. Believing, as he did, that the borders of France had indeed been spread too far for the safety of others, even before the conquering career of the Republic,² he displayed all too much enthusiasm for this part of his mission. He never obtained any satisfaction. The prospect, unpromising when he began, actually deteriorated.

This is not entirely the Earl's fault. It was partly the result of further unfortunate conduct, on the part of the Austrians, both in this question, and in others which became connected with it. The Kaiser's refusals to authorize the residence of the exiled King at or near Condé's Headquarters were inevitably ill-taken at Verona, where it was suspected, quite naturally, that the Imperialists, far from wishing for a speedy restoration in France, wanted to prolong the "anarchy" of the Revolution, so that France would "dwindle into a dangerless and impotent neighbour", all the less able to withstand the aggrandizing designs of the Habsburgs.³ When the exiled Court sent the Bailli de Crussol, one of its most influential members, on a special mission of requests to Vienna, he was coldly rebuffed by Thugut on every one of his requests when he paid what was meant to be his courtesy call.⁴ These requests included the plea that Madame Royale, the surviving child of Louis XVI and of Marie-Antoinette, whose release from imprisonment at Paris was then being discussed between the Court of Vienna and the French Directory, should be placed, not, as the Austrians evidently planned, in the custody of her mother's family, but in that of her paternal uncle at Verona.⁵ Not only was this refused, but Crussol was plainly asked, at the same moment, "what

¹ Grenville's Instructions to Macartney, cited above.

² To Grenville, 15 November 1795 (F.O. 27/45).

³ To Grenville, 15 November.

⁴ To Grenville, 7 and 28 September (F.O. 27/45).

⁵ The Imperial Government had already twice in effect refused a similar plea (Macartney to Grenville, 7 September, *ibid.*). Crussol's requests for Imperial recognition of Louis XVIII, and for permission for the exiled Court to reside at Rottenburg, were now also refused (Macartney to Grenville, 28 September).

compensation the House of Austria could expect from the French King, if restored?"—a question which Crussol, of course, evaded, but which only inflamed afresh the suspicions of the exiles.¹ The Verona Court now speculated darkly about the sinister designs of the Imperial Court with respect to Madame Royale,² as well as on French territory; and indeed viewed all these as parts of a single nefarious scheme.

Macartney was no doubt very much relieved, in the midst of these complications of mutual ill-feeling, to observe, from the terms of the proclamation which Wurmser forced upon Condé for unamended issue when the Prince reached French soil, that this document at least proved the Imperialists to have abandoned their pretensions upon the former German provinces of France; and he successfully urged this point upon Louis XVIII. But meantime he was himself urging the Verona circle to recognize the principle of compensation to Austria on the side of the Low Countries. In mid-November, he retailed to Grenville a conversation he had then recently had on these matters with the bishop of Arras. His account of it is very instructive. The bishop had been expatiating on the desirability of a future alliance between the Kingdom of France and—not Austria, but—England. Macartney ("as he had so fair an opening") promptly put to the bishop "the justice of compensation to England"; and, when he found the bishop prepared—in principle—to admit this, at once went on to press "the necessity of other sacrifices to other Powers": including the very Power, whose alliance the bishop thought France ought to eschew in time to come:

¹ To Grenville, 15 November.

² Macartney gathered that they feared Madame Royale was to be married—perhaps for the sake of her claims, if not to France itself, then at least to Navarre, where the Salic law had not prevailed—to one of the Archdukes. It appears—but not in Macartney's correspondence—that the Imperial Court may have entertained, at one moment, the idea of claiming, as her dowry in that event, not indeed Navarre, but Alsace and Lorraine (Barante, *op. cit.* p. clxxxv). Louis XVIII, on his side, was bent upon fulfilling the plan of the girl's murdered parents, to marry her to her cousin the Duc d'Angoulême, elder son of the Comte d'Artois. Macartney's despatches home relate several further developments of the imbroglio over Madame Royale, which obviously commanded obsessive interest at Verona.

I did not conceal from the Bishop my own opinion that by various accidents of success in negotiation and in War, France had been aggrandized and enlarged perhaps beyond its real interests and that one of the many arguments with us for persevering in the war against the French Convention was an indesistible resolution never to suffer any mention of their wild project of extending themselves to the Rhine . . .

What was the outcome of the conversation?

I must not dissemble from your Lordship, nor from myself, that any cessions or renouncement of ancient acquisition in favour of the House of Austria will be a matter of hard digestion.¹

A few days later, amid the optimistic forecasts which then beguiled the Court, the envoy discussed with Jaucourt the possible terms of the final peace settlement. Nothing daunted by his exchanges with the bishop, the Earl broached again the question of the Belgian frontier :

It dropt from [M. de Jaucourt], reported the envoy—as though in surprise—that France could never consent to give . . . the Emperor . . . Lisle and Valenciennes.

France, said Jaucourt, might conceivably sacrifice Givet and Condé ; but she would always need the two better-known places, for her own security. Far from deriving any pleasure from this modestly concessive reply, Macartney commented to the Foreign Secretary :

I doubt much that the Court of Vienna would be satisfied with such adjustment and I am not perfectly clear but that, notwithstanding all the French Buckram of an intangible boundary, both Lisle and Valenciennes, or at least one of them, might be dismembered from her.²

If the attitude which he thus expressed on paper showed through in his conversations with the Ministers of Louis XVIII, it is only too obvious what must have been the effect which he produced upon their minds—especially when we recollect that the conduct of the Imperial authorities was constantly making worse, by various new acts of unfriendliness, the already bitterly hostile temper of the exiled Court towards their Habsburg ally.

It is, at all events, clear that Macartney never brought the

¹ 15 November.

² To Grenville, 28 November.

French Royal circle to anything like such an ostensibly concessive attitude towards Austrian pretensions as to those of Great Britain. He persuaded his hosts to "moderate" their language on the subject of Austrian conduct and deserts,¹ and even to make a new attempt to regain a friendly footing at Vienna. But Vienna threw away the belated olive-branch as soon as it was offered; and thus the Earl's labours—none too skilful—in this part of the field came to a vain conclusion.

Even Macartney's advocacy of the claims of England does not seem to have been so successful as he tried to present it. It was so, perhaps, superficially. No doubt, in converse with the agent of the Power which alone seemed willing and able to do much for them, the exiles avoided any too overt sign of repugnance at the notion of paying its services with a colonial possession or two. No doubt the exiles found it, in any case, less painful to contemplate colonial cessions than to promise away portions of their fatherland. But it is clear, from Macartney's own reports, that they felt some real repugnance even to that; and there are indications which suggest all too clearly that the Earl, for all his charm of manner, did not approach the subject with much insight or delicacy. He wrote to Grenville on this topic in the style of a stout-hearted creditor's bailiff, and of a robust British imperialist. "No French Royalist can conceal from himself the right we have acquired in this war to carve for ourselves such portions of the French West Indies as may be most suitable to our immediate interests and our future security." The remains of the French East Indies, too, he thinks, might be worth consideration, and would be easily given up by the French Court. He sees no objection to a permanent retention of Corsica—though he knows that the French Royalists take a different view; and, following this track of thought, hints that, should England finally keep Corsica, she might well find it easy and convenient also to take over the island of Sardinia from Louis XVIII's father-in-law.² Here again, if Macartney talked in similar strains to the exiled Ministers, the effects he produced cannot have been very happy. And there is some evidence that

¹ To Grenville, 31 January 1796 (F.O. 27/45).

² To Grenville, 27 September 1795 (*ibid.*).

he did talk to them in such strains. Not only did he promptly respond to the Bishop's suggestion of an Anglo-French alliance with a statement of England's prior claim to compensation, in a manner which suggests a very impatient appetite,¹ but he also had an exchange of words with the Maréchal de Castries, which seems to show that his whole approach to this subject was an unhappy one. The Marshal and Macartney were discussing the likelihood that Spain, having reached not only peace, but a *rapprochement*, with the French Directors, would now declare war on England. The Marshal very pointedly suggested that, if this happened, England might very conveniently conquer Porto Rico from Spain. He then "added with a smile that it might make us less unreasonable in our claims upon the French West Indies."²

At all events the Earl never obtained anything closer to a formal promise of indemnities for England than for Austria; and though he never seems to have admitted it, even to himself, his management of the issue of compensations, for Austria and even for England, can only have tended to complicate, rather than promote, the object of his efforts. An old opponent of French power and pretensions, he revealed too plainly an anxiety to reverse, not only the conquests of the Republic, but even, in part, those of the Crown; and he betrayed an itch to acquire new territories for Great Britain which must have made him appear an insular counterpart of Thugut. But it is only fair to note that the British Ministers seem to have found no fault with this, any more than other, features of his conduct at Verona.

In addition to all these matters, Macartney had been instructed "to correspond, on all subjects that may require it", with other British representatives on the Continent. Accordingly we find him keeping up connections, more or less frequent, with all those of his diplomatic colleagues who were concerned with different aspects of the war against the French Republic. Their letters to him contain many points of interest for the historian of the times, though they are not, for the most part, so closely related to the Earl's own activities as to justify citation here. Macartney

¹ To Grenville, 15 November.

² To Grenville, 27 September.

pursued this correspondence conscientiously, though he found it extensive and burdensome beyond his expectations.¹

V

After all this, it is not surprising to find that, before the end of the year, Macartney was disenchanted with his situation. The exiled Court seemed destined to remain exiled. The particular duties with which he had been charged found no successful termination. He was burdened with paper-work and pestered by *émigrés* whose one resource was persistence. In December, he told Sir George Staunton that he was looking forward to being "regularly relieved."

How soon that may be, I am not as yet able to say, but I trust it is not very distant, as my situation is neither pleasant nor lucrative, and considering the places I have already filled elsewhere, not very eminent.

He had, he went on, "not hinted anything of this to his Employers".² But, as early as mid-November, he had taken a step which certainly implied that he did not consider the continuous presence of a British representative at Verona to be necessary. He asked the Foreign Secretary's permission to take leave, at about the turn of the year, "for a month or six weeks at farthest" in order "to make a little tour". He added, conscientiously, "but I by no means wish for this indulgence, if you

¹ Macartney's management of the question of indemnities unavoidably reminds one of the apparently very odd judgement passed on the Earl by Sir N. Wraxall—that he lacked "amenity of manners, ductility and powers of conciliation". Perhaps there was a little truth in it sometimes.

Grenville's despatch of 26 February 1796, expressing "Approbation" of all Macartney's efforts, is noted more fully below.

Macartney's correspondence with diplomatic colleagues involved Craufurd (at the Headquarters of Condé), Trevor and Jackson (at Turin), Wickham (at Berne), Eden (at Vienna), Hamilton (at Naples) and Drake (at Genoa). Fairly numerous letters of theirs to him survive in the British Library and at the Public Record Office, Belfast. One or two of his letters to Wickham are printed in Wickham, *op. cit.* The Earl's dismay at the weight of all this correspondence can be seen in his letter to Staunton (20 December 1795, *cit. supr.*). Both that, and his subsequent letter to Staunton (10 January 1796, also cited above), illustrate the Earl's interest in the publication of his account of China—an interest which he had little immediate opportunity to pursue.

² Macartney to Staunton, 20 December.

think of any business likely to occur here, that might be affected by my absence. ”¹

Grenville’s mind was moving in the same general direction. On 17 November, almost at the same time as Macartney wrote for leave, the Foreign Secretary was writing to tell him that “ nothing was left for the present but to endeavour to reconcile the mind of Louis the Eighteenth to the hard lot which Necessity had thrown upon Him ”. And when Macartney’s request for a long holiday came to hand, Grenville replied that he saw no objection.² Clearly, it did not require the permanent presence of a British representative at the exiled Court to reconcile Louis XVIII to his hard lot ; unless matters took a rapid and unexpected turn, it was likely that Macartney would be withdrawn before much longer, whether he took a holiday or not. Dundas, about the same time, was already thinking of Macartney as a proper person to send as governor to the latest British conquest abroad, the Cape of Good Hope.³

No doubt very soon after he asked for leave, Macartney momentarily changed his opinion of the situation of the exiled Court, when it fleetingly appeared possible that a successful winter invasion of France and a great Royalist uprising in the Eastern provinces might soon supervene. In his despatch of 17 November Grenville had discounted such possibilities ; but not, of course, with any intention of discouraging his envoy’s attention to them if they seemed to ripen while he was still at his post. We have already seen that Macartney did what he could to improve the sudden hopes of great progress by those means. But the gleam of hope faded as rapidly as it had arisen ; and by the time the Earl received Grenville’s permission to take his holiday, matters were as stagnant at Verona as ever. The turn of the year was then well past ; and it was only towards the middle of February 1796 that the Earl finally set off.⁴

¹ To Grenville, 15 November (F.O. 27/45).

² 29 December.

³ Robbins, *op. cit.* p. 441, claims that Dundas “ nominated ” Macartney “ without consulting his inclinations in the matter ”.

⁴ On 8 February Macartney “ troubled ” Grenville “ with one letter more before he set out upon his excursion ”. A little later Grenville conveyed to the Earl the King’s “ Approbation ” (“ amply deserved ”) of “ the Zeal and Intelli-

Macartney now took full advantage of his opportunity for what he seems to have regarded as a kind of belated grand tour. He travelled as far south as Naples, and he was away from his post for nearly two months. Only on 11 April did he advise Grenville that he had just returned to his station. He added: "nothing occurred here which could affect the Public Service . . . I found this little Court nearly in the same situation that I had left it." This was almost the last date at which Macartney could have written the latter sentence. His holiday proved indeed to be the beginning of the end of his mission. But any intended move by the British Government to recall its representative was forestalled by the enemy. Two days before the Earl announced his return to Verona, the Venetian Government had yielded to renewed pressure from Paris and had decided to expel Louis XVIII and his adherents from its territory. On 13 April Louis was formally advised that the Most Serene Republic could no longer offer him asylum.¹

Before we proceed to the final episode, both of the exiled King's and of the Earl's residence at Verona, we must say what can be said about Macartney's "tour". He was always interested in sight-seeing, and of course he found a particularly congenial resort for this in Italy. He had, indeed, made two other tours before the longer one for which he had requested leave: he had visited Padua and Venice, and he had also been as far afield as Bologna and Florence. He had written admiringly of the "museums" of these latter cities, compared with which he thought "our museum in Great Russel Street . . . quite a paltry collection in many essential parts". At Florence, too, he had heard "the most satisfactory lecture in anatomy, of four or five hours" from the great Fontana.² But in the new

gence manifested throughout Lord Macartney's *Conduct and Correspondence*" and advised him that no new instructions seemed to be called for (26 February, F.O. 27/45). This appears to be all but a notice of impending recall.

¹ To Grenville, 22 April (*ibid.*).

² Robbins, *op. cit.* pp. 423, 429; and Macartney to Staunton, 20 December (*cited above*).

On Felice Fontana, physiologist, protégé of Leopold, Italian patriot, see *Enciclopedia Italiana*. Macartney explains to Staunton (*loc. cit.*) that at Florence he met "young Lord Holland" and found him to be "a great friend, and

year he travelled much further, to Naples, calling at both Rome and Florence on his return journey.¹ One of his Italian correspondents later expressed admiration at the activity which he displayed, in visiting "tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau, d'ancien et de moderne".² But there is little direct evidence, whether as to what he saw, or as to what he bought. We know more about the happy impression which the noble tourist made upon people whom he met. At Naples, he left behind not only a *surtout*—subsequently restored to him by Sir William Hamilton—but also the regrets of the Neapolitan Royal pair that he could not have stayed longer. At Rome, he attracted "the most sincere esteem and regard" of the French King's aunt, Madame Victoire, as well as those of the Comte de Chastelux and his wife, who later "never ceased making every inquiry in their power after the person whom they call the guardian angel of their King."³ He also drew from his own correspondent there, Miss Ellis Cornelia Knight, a grateful reference to the time which he had "unremittingly dedicated to the benefit of others."⁴ Macartney's own letters throw a little further light upon his stay in Rome; he noted with admiration the firmness and dignity of Pius VI at that moment, in rebuffing, as though he had been a Roman of a nobler age, the first menacing demands ("impudent and ridiculous requisitions") of the French Republic.⁵

favorite of Fontana". The Earl describes the third Lord Holland, then about twenty-two, as "a remarkably clever, and agreeable young man. He is a little bit of a Democate, but few people argue *so right* as he does on the *wrong side* of a question.—I don't think him likely to return soon to England [continues the Earl, very characteristically], and I hope he will not, as he is in a course of much greater improvement where he is, than he could possibly be at White's or Brookes's".

It was on this journey to Florence, apparently, that Macartney took Albertini, much to the latter's satisfaction (Albertini to Macartney, 12 May 1796, Belfast P.R.O., Macartney MSS., D. 572, vol. 6, letter 2).

¹ Robbins, *op. cit.* p. 433.

² Albertini, 12 May 1796 (*cit. supr.*).

³ Hamilton to Macartney, 9 March 1796 (Belfast P.R.O., Macartney MSS. D. 572, vol. 17, letter 86).

⁴ To Macartney, 13 August 1796 (*ibid.* D. 572, vol. 13, letter 18). Chastelux was Louis XVIII's agent at Rome.

⁵ Macartney to Sir R. Worsley, British Minister at Venice, 14 April 1796 (copy, B.L. Add. MS. 36811, fol. 178; Macartney to Grenville, 22 April, F.O. 27/45). B.L. MS. 36811, fol. 180, is a note of the French demands at Rome: the Pope must recognize the French Republic, acknowledge its annexation of Avignon, etc., and send the Apollo Belvedere to Paris.

This Directorial initiative at Rome was one of the first rumblings of the storm which was just about to break over Italy. Another had been heard at Venice, immediately before the envoy left Verona on his holiday. The Earl had not taken it very tragically, any more than had the Venetian authorities themselves. It took the form of a protest from Paris against the sheltering, on Venetian territory, of the French Pretender and other *émigrés*, conspiring against a government with which Venice professed friendly relations. The Venetians had decided not to disturb the *émigrés*, and did not expect that the French Directors would seriously resent that determination. Macartney had commented that the French Republic had no reason to resent the claimant's living at a place where his enemies could observe everything that he was doing.¹

But matters turned out very differently. The Directors had authorized for the spring campaign of 1796 a great double offensive against Austria, to force her out of the war and so put a final end to the hostile coalition. The Kaiser was to be attacked both in Germany and in Italy. On 2 March Bonaparte was appointed Commander in Chief of the Republican Army of Italy. No-one could know the extent of the success which Bonaparte was to win in Italy; but the Directors began to anticipate in their diplomacy the dominance in Italy which they hoped soon to establish by military power. First Venice, then the Pope, heard the voice of Paris. Both thought to ignore it. To Venice, on the eve of Macartney's return to Verona, the voice spoke again. The resistance of the Most Serene Republic promptly collapsed. On the afternoon of 13 April, without any warning of the turn things were taking, the exiled Court received the visit of Macartney's friend, the Marquis Carlotti, charged by one of the Secretaries of the Council of Ten, who had just arrived in Verona, to explain that "the Comte de Lille" and his adherents must quit Venetian territory "within as few days as possible".²

In the final scene at Verona, Macartney found himself on stage but with no very effective lines to speak, and in an action

¹ To Grenville, 8 February (F.O. 27/45).

² To Grenville, 22 April (*ibid.*); Macartney to Worsley (14 April, *cit. supr.*).

where he felt quite out of place. Louis XVIII replied to the Venetian ultimatum with what was "considered by those about him as a sublime effusion, and a noble assertion of his dignity, and by those to whom it was addressed as an unreasonable Rhodomontado." He did not speak with the advice of the British envoy, who indeed himself considered the Royal answer an unreasonable rhodomontado. The Head of the House of France said, in brief terms, that he would go; but that he must first insist on striking out, from the Golden Book of the Most Serene Republic, the entry of his family's name, and that he would take away with him the suit of armour which Henri IV had once presented to the Venetian State. This reply, commented the Earl, "had the effect that Rhodomontados usually have upon weak persons": Venetian fear of the Directory was for a moment balanced by the thought that exiled Kings sometimes recover their Kingdoms. The Venetians vainly asked the King to desist from symbolic actions which would proclaim the final rupture of friendship between Venice and the French Crown.¹

Macartney, out of humour with all parties, "regretted that the Republic of Venice did not think fit to communicate to himself, through Sir Richard Worsley, the earnestness she felt for the King of France's speedy removal"; he felt that he would "probably have been able to accomplish her object for her without *éclat*, ill-humour, or delay."² But one cannot but wonder whether Louis would have responded any more meekly to the Earl's mediation, than to Carlotti's direct demand. Certainly he now declined any amendment to his original reply: "Je persiste dans ma réponse d'hier. Je me la devais. Je ne puis oublier que je suis Roi de France."

The Earl now found himself offering further advice to the King in one of those conjunctures where the King was "entirely governed by himself". Louis determined to set off, across the St. Gothard pass, to join—at last—the Prince de Condé. Mac-

¹ To Grenville, 22 April.

² Ibid. To Worsley, 14 April (cit. supr.). Macartney had noted that after all, "for a long time past it had been the King's most earnest desire to change the place of his residence". But clearly, it was one thing for Louis to move elsewhere of his own free will, quite another to be summoned to leave, at the bidding of his rivals at Paris.

artney urged upon him the unwisdom of doing this, unless he had first made sure, not only of "an eligible abode" in south Germany, but also of the approval "of his best Friends". Would not the King best take temporary refuge, meantime, in Parma, or at Bologna? Louis—no doubt very politely—swept all these observations aside. He had, he replied, already advised King George III, the Russian Empress, and the Kaiser of his intentions. He was quite sure that England and Russia would approve. He did not say, but doubtless thought, that even the Court of Vienna, in his new circumstances, and provided it were given no chance to raise objections beforehand, would acquiesce at last in what it had so long refused. In reply to the Earl's alternative suggestions the King added that he had "an inveterate aversion to reside in the Papal dominions", distrusted the Duke of Parma, and found the prospect of the campaign in North Italy unpromising.¹

Louis reasoned better than his British counsellor. If he were to reach south Germany, the only practicable course was to tell the Powers firmly that he was going there, and then go; a request for British approval would simply have been referred to Imperial approval first, and that would not have been forthcoming. And, whatever the risk of his not finding an "eligible abode" in south Germany, it was far less serious than the risk of lingering in north Italy. Louis XVIII's misgivings about the campaign there proved to be highly justified. A month later, Bonaparte was in Milan; and presently the rulers of the very places where Macartney had urged Louis to seek temporary refuge were signing armistices, or capitulations, with the invaders. It is ironical that Macartney, having urged Louis XVIII to linger in north Italy, was himself receiving at London, only a few weeks later, congratulations from his Italian friends on his having left the area just in time.²

Unable, on this occasion, too, to persuade the French King to accept his advice, Macartney nevertheless gave the Court such

¹ To Grenville, 22 April. Note that Louis had not asked the Earl's advice beforehand on any of the steps he was taking.

² From Carlotti, 11 May, and from Albertini, 12 May (Belfast P.R.O. Macartney MSS., D. 572, vol. 13, letter 15, and vol. 6, letter 2).

help as he could in carrying out its own design ; and notably, he handed over the remaining £2,000 which he had been empowered to advance.¹ Thus, at the end, it was once more the case that, far from Britain's directing Louis XVIII's conduct, he directed hers.

It was on 21 April that Louis XVIII and his companions set out on their northward adventure² ; the next day, Macartney made up his last despatch to Grenville, concluding it with the cryptic announcement : " I propose setting out upon my own journey in the beginning of next week. " He said nothing about his destination. But from a letter he had written to Bute the previous day, it appears that it was to London directly that he was now planning to go.³ He regarded his mission as at an end. It must remain somewhat strange that an envoy should thus bring his mission to a close, without having received any order to that effect from his Minister. But there are considerations which at least relieve the difficulty which the Earl here left for the historian. Both Grenville and Macartney knew that the mission had long since lost any clear purpose. They both knew that Macartney's name was put forward in connection with the now necessary appointment of a Governor at the Cape ; and though the Earl had no wish to go to South Africa, he may well have had private information that the Foreign Secretary was raising no objections to his envoy's release from his current duties. Finally, the French King's decision to join Condé in

¹ Wickham to Grenville, 29 April (F.O. 74/17) describes the arrival of Louis XVIII and d'Avaray at the Headquarters of Condé (where Wickham and Craufurd had just arrived) : " The King . . . spoke . . . in the highest terms of the Earl of Macartney and of the manner in which His Lordship had conducted himself at Verona particularly upon this last unpleasant occasion ". Macartney to Grenville, 19 April (F.O. 27/45) announces the draft of the last £2,000.

² To Grenville, 22 April. The exiles started at 3 a.m., La Vauguyon, " much of His Majesty's figure and corpulence ", impersonating the King in the (only) Royal carriage, the King himself, with d'Avaray, travelling separately " in a light Berlin ". By 7 a.m. the King had cleared Venetian territory and was heading towards the St. Gothard pass. The object of the night ride and the deception, as also of the route through Switzerland rather than through the Tyrol, was " to baffle the impediments that might have been laid by his Creditors or other adversaries ".

³ B.L. Add. MS. 36811, fol. 182. Five days before, Macartney had told Bute that his own future whereabouts were uncertain (ibid. fol. 176) ; so his final decision, to return at once to England, had been reached only *between* the dates of these two letters.

south Germany, taken in the circumstances which then obtained, may reasonably have convinced Macartney that there was no point, even of a merely formal character, in his following the exiled Court thither. Had Louis taken temporary refuge at Parma or Bologna, it might have been a different matter. But Macartney knew how the Imperial Court had tried to prevent the migration of Louis to south Germany; and he may well have argued that, though it could not very well now totally refuse him any longer, still it would only irritate the Kaiser and his Ministers further, if the French King were followed by a British representative, avowedly attached (though privately) to the French Court, and coming to swell the unwelcome arrival of that Court without any invitation, or permission, from the Imperial Government. It was certainly less embarrassing to leave British representation at the exiled Court, once it moved to Germany, to the occasional services of Craufurd and of Wickham, which were also perfectly adequate.¹

¹ Macartney's draft letter to the French King, dated London, 25 July (Belfast P.R.O., Macartney MSS., D. 572, vol. 21, letter 78) shows that the Earl had explained to Louis some time before they both left Verona that a new appointment was being proposed for him at London which he did not want, and hoped to refuse. In thus telling Louis about the Governorship of the Cape, he was no doubt preparing the King for his departure from the exiled Court in the fairly near future. But he had said no more about his departure when the Venetians summoned Louis to leave; he then informed the King that he had just been officially recalled. There seems to be no evidence of such an official recall; this was, apparently, the Earl's way of justifying his own decision to follow the fortunes of the exiles no longer. Louis XVIII's private reaction to this announcement—which was not accompanied by the mention of any successor in the mission—is of some interest: "*si, par un hasard singulier, son rappel n'avait pas concouru, minute par minute, avec mon expulsion de l'Etat vénitien, cette mission m'aurait plus nui qu'elle ne m'a servi; car il aurait mieux valu pour moi n'avoir jamais de ministres, que de cesser d'en avoir*" (Barante, *op. cit.* p. 91).

Macartney's obvious misgivings over the Austrian reaction to the King's move were, in themselves, fully justified. The Austrians did not attempt to debar him from Germany, but they furiously resented his establishment—even without a British representative at his side—at the headquarters of Condé, and even considered abolishing Condé's Army rather than suffer him to remain there. Hence Louis XVIII's withdrawal to Villingen, whence he moved, first to Riegel, then to Blankenburg (Barante, *op. cit.* pp. clxxxvi-clxxxviii and 91). Thus Louis gained nothing, except safety, by crossing the Alps. But, on the other hand, he lost nothing by being forced to quit Condé's Headquarters. The Austrians were in no position, that season, to attempt an invasion of eastern France.

Macartney left Verona about a week later than the Royal party and arrived at London without mishap. He was no longer feeling very well and was inclined to refuse appointment as Governor of the Cape.¹ But a pleasant consolation awaited him for his efforts both past and to come : a Barony in the Peerage of Great Britain.²

APPENDIX

There is, as yet, no well-equipped study of the whole varied career of George Macartney (1737-1806). In 1966 a useful project was framed for the publication of a collaborative volume embracing contributions by Professor Michael Roberts and other historians concerned with Macartney's fields of action ; but this still awaits completion. We are left with the *D.N.B.*, Barrow's *Public Life of Earl Macartney* (London, 1807) and Helen M. Robbins, *Our First Ambassador to China* (London, 1908), the last a work written by a member of Macartney's family and largely based upon his private papers and letters, then still housed at the Earl's residence at Lissanoure in county Antrim. The following are brief pointers to the chief features of historical and personal interest in Macartney's long and instructive career, and in shaping them I am happy to acknowledge important communications about Macartney's family and background supplied to me by Mr. Brian Hutton, my former pupil at Nottingham, more recently of the Record Office at Belfast, and now Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts at the National Library of Scotland³.

¹ Robbins, op. cit. p. 441.

² Portland to Macartney, 24 and 25 May (Belfast P.R.O., Macartney MSS., D. 572, vol. 8, letters 10, 11). Pitt's note to the King on the subject, 24 May (*Later Corresp. of George III*, ed. A. Aspinall, ii. 477) suggests that Macartney's reluctance to accept the Cape had been neutralized by Royal mention of an "intended" British peerage for him—in the motivation of which his services at Verona, recently so highly commended, must perforce have had weight. The note at all events shows that the Earl then asked Pitt that he might be granted his patent without further delay, "in order not to lose his precedence". His wish was gratified, and his patent was issued on 8 June (*Complete Peerage*, G.E.C. and others, iii. 325).

³ In advising me about the family and background of Macartney, Mr. Hutton pointed especially to the article of George Hill in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1st series, ix (1861-2), 1-16 (drawing, it appears, upon notes of the family history compiled by Macartney himself), as well as to the Macartney Estate Papers now in the Public Record Office, Belfast (D/1062/2).

I originally undertook this article as one of the contributors to the proposed collaborative volume on the career of Lord Macartney, and I would like to acknowledge with pleasure the facilities which I then received from Mr. Kenneth Darwin, at that time Deputy Keeper of Records at Belfast, Administrator of the Ulster-Scot Historical Foundation, and editor of the intended volume. Mr. Darwin furnished me with lists of the Macartney MSS. at Belfast and with

Macartney was the great-grandson of a namesake who abandoned his native Auchinleck for Belfast in 1626 and flourished there as a merchant and shipowner, but by no means set his family on the road to aristocratic position. A younger branch of the family later acquired the estate at Lissanoure where the famous George Macartney was brought up and which he later inherited. The property was neither large nor important and it remains unclear how the destined Earl contrived to rise from the expectations of modest gentle status to the levels of fame and rank which he achieved. His handsome appearance, accomplished manners and scholarly tastes no doubt all promoted his strongly marked ambition ; but good fortune must also have played a capital part. Entered at T.C.D. and later reading at the Middle Temple, he certainly did not waste his time ; but it was presumably his friendship with the Foxes which gave his career its first critical impetus. He married Lord Bute's daughter, and as early as 1764 he was knighted and entrusted with commercial negotiations at St. Petersburg, which brought him the personal acquaintance of Catherine II. From 1769 to 1772 he was Chief Secretary for Ireland under the Duke of Grafton's, then under Lord North's Administrations, in which capacity he led the Government's side in the Irish Commons and earned a reputation for firmness no less than for good temper. By 1775 he was embarking upon a different kind of public service as Governor of Grenada, where he made a gallant though unavailing defence against the French in the War 'of American Independence'. But even before this (1776) he had been advanced to an Irish Barony, which by no means satisfied his taste for fame and honours, as the sequel shows.

After a brief detention by the French as prisoner of war, he was appointed, in 1780, Governor of Madras, in time to take further active, and able, part in the struggle against the French "smash and grab raid" on the British Empire. This, together with his "great pecuniary moderation" in the post, and his staunch defence of the principle that even in India, and even in time of war there, the civil authorities must retain supremacy over the military, doubtless explains his being offered the Governor-Generalship in succession to Hastings. But he declined the post, "liking to be employed" and prepared to travel abroad, but not willing to be banished from the centre of power at London for too long a period. Adhering to Pitt, as earlier to Bute and to North, he was as early as 1785 hoping for a British Barony as reward for further public service. Fortune continued to support him ; his next, and most celebrated, adventure carried him to China, 1792-4, recompensed, it might be said, in advance by an Earldom in the

photostatic copies of many of these pieces, a number of which are cited by their Belfast P.R.O. reference numbers in the footnotes above. He and his then colleague Mr. Hutton, moreover, helped me with several more extensive, or more elusive, bibliographical enquiries which I had occasion to open.

For the political background of Macartney's mission to the Court of Louis XVIII, and for its place in British anti-Republican policy, see H. Mitchell, *The Underground War against Revolutionary France*, London, 1965 ; for a general sketch of the mission, Mrs. Robbins, *op. cit.* ch. XIII. It should soon be possible to refer to Professor Douglas Johnson's forthcoming study of *Louis XVIII*, as well as to older works concerning Louis XVIII noted in the first foot-note to this article.

Peerage of Ireland. The British Barony had to wait a little longer, till the end of his mission to Louis XVIII, which forms the subject of this article.

With many agreeable, as well as active, talents, Macartney also illustrated the strongly dominant character of the British administrative "type" in the hey-day of Britain's emergence as a world Power : he was ambitious for his country as well as for himself ; his forcefulness sometimes overruled his more engaging characteristics ; and it occasionally happened, as in his relations with Louis XVIII, that all his powers, whether of force or of charm, were insufficient to the formidable tasks which he assumed.