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The Early Premiership of Lord Liverpool 1812-15

palma non sine pulvere

James M. A. Inglis

PhD

The University of Edinburgh



To
Rachel & Joanna

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Abstract

Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool KG (1770-1828), was First Lord of the Treasury and Prime Minister for almost fifteen years in the early nineteenth century. He survived in the premiership for longer than all but two of his predecessors and longer than all of his successors, at least so far. Liverpool is, however, one of the most overlooked and underestimated of Prime Ministers. Norman Gash's book is the first and so far only modern biography of Liverpool. This study, however, is less than three hundred pages in length, is based on only seven of the hundreds of volumes of the Liverpool Papers in the custody of the British Library and is far from exhaustive in its use of printed sources. There is evidently considerable scope and need for further research on the subject of Liverpool's life and career especially during the period of his premiership and based on a trawl through all the manuscript sources now available. This doctoral dissertation seeks to examine Liverpool during his early premiership between 1812 and 1815, one of the least studied but most significant periods of both Liverpool's life and career, and his administration, from the point Liverpool succeeded to the highest office to the resettlement of Europe after the long war with France. The opening section aims to place Liverpool in his historical context. There is a particular emphasis here on an analysis of the political system that Liverpool was required to master. Liverpool's early life and career before he rose to the premiership is the focus of the next section. The main body of the thesis is divided into two parts. One part examines Liverpool during his early premiership in a mainly chronological style and is concerned almost entirely with the issues of war and peace, and the other part seeks to examine a number of major themes that are most satisfactorily looked at in isolation from the main narrative. For example, one chapter covers the premier's relationship with the monarchy.

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I would also like to thank the staff at the National Archives for their help in tracking down sources, M. J. Bosson of the Harrowby Manuscripts Trust for granting me access to the papers at Sandon Hall and the church of St. Mary the Virgin in Hawkesbury for giving me permission to view the memorial to Lord Liverpool.

Arthur Aspinall (1901-72) died before I was even born, but without the assistance of the printed primary sources that he edited it would have been a much more difficult task to produce this doctoral dissertation.

Kenneth Wilson Swan, my colleague and friend, never complained when I brought up Lord Liverpool in conversation. Fraser Keir, my brother-in-law and fellow historian, read an early draft. And finally, I would like to thank my parents for their love and support. I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my two sisters.

Preface

I love history. I have done ever since I was introduced to the subject at primary school and I constructed a motte-and-bailey castle out of cereal packets, matchsticks and glue, and my mother bought me a Ladybird Book on William the Conqueror. I never doubted for a moment when I was growing up that what I wanted to do was study history for a career, but it was not until I was sixteen that I came across Lord Liverpool when my teacher handed out a short article on him by Eric Evans.¹ I remember being intrigued by this Prime Minister who for no apparent reason had been forgotten by the world. I thought no more about it at the time, but about a year before I graduated from university I happened to read the biography by Norman Gash. My interest in Lord Liverpool returned and one sentence in particular stuck in my mind: 'One day, perhaps, the life of Lord Liverpool will be written as it deserves to be, on the basis of the massive archival material now available and on a scale that will require more than a single volume.'² I was inspired by this statement and I hope that this doctoral dissertation will serve to take us one small step nearer to that goal.

¹ Eric Evans, 'The Premiership of Lord Liverpool: Another Long-Serving Prime Minister', *Modern History Review*, 1, 4 (1989-90), 13-14.

² Norman Gash, *Lord Liverpool* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), p. 6.

Introduction

Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool KG (1770-1828), was First Lord of the Treasury and Prime Minister for almost fifteen years in the early nineteenth century.¹ To be quite precise about it, Lord Liverpool was Prime Minister for 14 years and 308 days, from 8 June 1812 to 12 April 1827. He survived in the premiership for longer than all but two of his predecessors and longer than all of his successors, at least so far.² He served as premier for longer than Salisbury (1885-6, 1886-92 & 1895-1902), Gladstone (1868-74, 1880-5, 1886 & 1892-4) and Thatcher (1979-90), and he resigned in the end not as a result of a political crisis but on account of his personal health.³ At his appointment to the premiership, Liverpool was also younger, at the age of 42, than all but five of his predecessors and younger than all of his successors.⁴ Moreover, his premiership was far from uneventful. Liverpool was Prime Minister at the time of the revocation of the Orders-in-Council, the War of 1812, the end of the Peninsular War, the Congress of Vienna, the Hundred Days, the battle of Waterloo, the exile of Napoleon to the island of St. Helena, the passage of the Corn Laws, the abolition of Income Tax, the protest of the Luddites, the suspension of *habeas corpus*, the Peterloo Massacre, the Six Acts, the death of George III, the Cato Street Conspiracy, the Queen Caroline Affair, the coronation of George IV, the suicide of Viscount Castlereagh, the return of George Canning to the Foreign Office and the reunification of the Pittites. Liverpool was Prime Minister in war and peace,

¹ Norman Gash, 'Jenkinson, Robert Banks, second earl of Liverpool (1770-1828),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H. C. G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (60 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xxix, 983-90.

² Walpole (1721-42) and Pitt (1783-1801 & 1804-6).

³ Salisbury was Prime Minister for 13 years, Gladstone for 12 years and Thatcher for 11 years and 209 days, from 4 May 1979 to 28 November 1990.

⁴ Pitt was 24 at his appointment to the premiership, Grafton was 33 (1768-70), Rockingham was 35 (1765-6 & 1782), Devonshire was 36 (1756-7) and North was 37 (1770-82). Blair was 43 (1997-).

prosperity and depression.⁵ Furthermore, he was served by one past and six future Prime Ministers.⁶ Liverpool's government was a ministry of all the talents. And before he became Prime Minister, he was appointed to each one of the three secretaryships of state in turn.⁷ Liverpool is, however, one the most overlooked and underestimated of Prime Ministers.⁸

Of course all Prime Ministers fade from view after they leave office, but there is something rather unusual about the extent to which Liverpool has been forgotten by the world since he lost his grip on power. Liverpool had a major paralytic stroke on 17 February 1827. He was immediately certified politically if not actually dead by his contemporaries.⁹ Some politicians instantly and entirely removed any thought of him from their minds. John Wilson Croker, the Secretary to the Admiralty, noted in his diary on the day that Liverpool fell ill: 'I dined at the Speaker's second official dinner, where there was not only no grief, but not even a decent pensiveness. In short, no one seemed to think or care about poor Lord Liverpool.'¹⁰

Liverpool died a little over eighteen months after he resigned on 4 December 1828. Nobody bothered to discover what his last words had been. By the time of his death, very few people in the political jungle who had known Liverpool personally seemed to have much time to spare for this fallen statesman. His body was accompanied at the start of the journey from the capital to its final resting place in the

⁵ Norman Gash, 'The Earl of Liverpool', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 283-97.

⁶ Addington (1801-4), and Canning (1827), Goderich (1827-8), Wellington (1828-30 & 1834), Peel (1834-5 & 1841-6), Aberdeen (1852-5) and Palmerston (1855-8 & 1859-65).

⁷ Liverpool was Foreign Secretary (1801-4), Home Secretary (1804-6 & 1807-9) and Secretary of State for War (1809-12).

⁸ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 1-7, 248-55.

⁹ *The Formation of Canning's Ministry February to August 1827*, ed. A. Aspinall, Camden, 3rd Ser. (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1937).

¹⁰ *The Croker Papers 1808-1857*, ed. Bernard Pool (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1967), p. 101.

country by a smaller escort than that which had travelled with his first wife's coffin back in 1821.¹¹ Of his former cabinet colleagues, only Viscount Sidmouth sent his carriage to join the procession. On 18 December Liverpool's body was laid to rest in the family vault at the church of St. Mary the Virgin in Hawkesbury, Gloucestershire.¹² It was not for about thirty years that a stone was finally placed on the wall of the church to mark the spot where the man who had been Prime Minister when the battle of Waterloo had been fought was buried.¹³ Furthermore, this memorial was not erected by a grateful nation or grieving friends but by a distant cousin, Sir George Samuel Jenkinson, 11th Bt. (1817-92).¹⁴ No statue has ever been erected to commemorate the life of Liverpool.¹⁵

Liverpool continues to be strangely overlooked to this day. There is not a single location in London where a Blue Plaque has been placed to identify Liverpool's dwellings. Liverpool's utterances and jottings are invariably not thought worthy of inclusion in a dictionary of quotations. Liverpool's name is not usually included on lists of great Britons. Books detailing this island's story are published without a single reference to Liverpool. Simon Schama presented a landmark BBC television series called *A History of Britain* in 2000 and produced a multi-volume work to accompany it.¹⁶ Liverpool is not mentioned at all. Even his political descendants, the Conservatives, make virtually no attempt to correct this oversight.¹⁷

¹¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 250.

¹² <www.hawkesburyhistory.co.uk>
<www.hawkesburylocalhistorysociety.co.uk>

¹³ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 250.

¹⁴ Henry Lyttelton Lyster Denny, *The Manor of Hawkesbury and Its Owners* (Gloucester: John Bellows, 1920).

¹⁵ <www.english-heritage.org.uk>

¹⁶ Simon Schama, *A History of Britain* (3 vols., London: BBC, 2003).

¹⁷ There is one honourable exception to this trend: David Willetts, *Modern Conservatism* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 5, 8-10.

Conservative¹⁸ politicians, especially these days with apparently interminable, all too regular and hotly contested leadership races, frequently claim inspiration from past Pittite and Tory figures, but they seem totally reluctant to place Liverpool on a pedestal.¹⁹

The obscurity that has overtaken Liverpool since he ceased to matter in everyday politics is not shared to the same extent by his immediate successor, George Canning.²⁰ Canning served as premier for just 119 days in 1827, from 12 April to his death on 8 August, but his last words were recorded for posterity,²¹ he was buried in Westminster Abbey, a statue was erected in his honour in 1832 and still stands today alongside those of several other political figures on Parliament Square where it was moved to in 1867,²² a selection of his verbal and literary outpourings are often

¹⁸ John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power* (London: Harper Collins, 1999); A. J. Davies, *We, the Nation* (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1995); *How Tory Governments Fall*, ed. Anthony Seldon (London: Fontana Press, 1996); Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, *The Conservative Party* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004).

<www.conservatives.com>

<www.conservativehome.com>

¹⁹ For example, Margaret Thatcher claims in her multi-volume autobiography that she has been inspired by Edmund Burke: Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), pp. 50, 553, 604; Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993).

<www.margaretthatcher.org>

²⁰ Derek Beales, 'Canning, George (1770-1827),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ix, 911-22; Wendy Hinde, *George Canning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Elizabeth Longford, 'George Canning', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 299-312; Norman Gash, 'The Tortoise And The Hare: Liverpool And Canning', *History Today*, 32, 3 (1982), 12-19.

²¹ His famous last words were 'Spain and Portugal': Jonathon Green, *Famous Last Words* (London: Kyle Cathie Ltd., 2002), p. 30.

²² J. B. Seatrobe, *Political London* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2000), pp. 10, 26, 33, 61.

included in dictionaries of quotations,²³ and a Blue Plaque can be found in London at 50 Berkeley Square dedicated to him.²⁴

On those occasions when Liverpool was recalled during the century or so after his death, he was usually not rated highly as a statesman. Liverpool himself did not express much hope of being admired by future generations. He wrote to Henry Hobhouse, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, in 1825: ‘The world will at least give me credit for my ecclesiastical promotions, whatever they may say or think of me in other respects.’²⁵ Liverpool was not the only one to believe that he would receive little credit. Harriet Arbuthnot, the wife of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, stated in her journal a few days after Liverpool’s death that she was admittedly critical of his conduct over the last few years of his premiership, ‘but he was a very honest, upright man & deserves a higher character as a statesman than I dare say History will grant to him.’²⁶

In the nineteenth century Liverpool was generally dismissed as a distinctly second-rate and completely average figure. The most famous exponent of this characterisation was of course Benjamin Disraeli. In 1844 he published *Coningsby* and smeared Liverpool. He described Liverpool’s situation in 1819:

Notwithstanding, however, all this successful mystification, the Arch-Mediocrity who presided, rather than ruled, over this Cabinet of Mediocrities, became hourly more conscious that the inevitable transition from fulfilling the duties of an administration to performing the functions of a government could not be conducted without talents and knowledge. The Arch-Mediocrity had himself some glimmering traditions of political science. He was sprung from a laborious stock,

²³ There are five entries in *Chambers Dictionary of Quotations*, ed. Alison Jones (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1996), and seven in *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, ed. Anthony Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁴ <www.blueplaque.com>

²⁵ *The Diary of Henry Hobhouse (1820-1827)*, ed. Arthur Aspinall (London: Home & Van Thal, 1947), p. 32.

²⁶ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot 1820-1832*, eds. Francis Bamford & The Duke of Wellington (2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1950), ii, 225.

had received some training, and though not a statesman, might be classed among those whom the Lord Keeper Williams used to call “statemongers.” In a subordinate position his meagre diligence and his frigid method might not have been without value; but the qualities that he possessed were misplaced; nor can any character be conceived less invested with the happy properties of a leader. In the conduct of public affairs, his disposition was exactly the reverse to that which is the characteristic of great men. He was peremptory in little questions, and great ones he left open.²⁷

What is less well known is that Disraeli followed this book up with *Tancred* in 1847 in which he refused Liverpool credit even for his ecclesiastical promotions:

The Arch-Mediocrity who then governed this country, and the mean tenor of whose prolonged administration we have delineated in another work, was impressed with the necessity of reconstructing the episcopal bench on principles of personal distinction and ability. But his notion of clerical capacity did not soar higher than a private tutor who had suckled a young noble into university honours; and his test of priestly celebrity was the decent editorship of a Greek play. He sought for the successors of the apostles, for the stewards of the mysteries of Sinai and of Calvary, among third-rate hunters after syllables.²⁸

Disraeli was joined by others who dismissed Liverpool in a similar fashion.²⁹

Lord Brougham praised Liverpool for his mediocrity, his moderation, integrity and honesty, in 1839.³⁰ Walter Bagehot also damned Liverpool with faint praise in 1867 in *The English Constitution*: ‘A Lord Liverpool is better in every-day politics than a Chatham – a Louis Philippe far better than a Napoleon.’³¹ Anthony Trollope implied in *The Prime Minister* in 1876 that Liverpool had served as premier for so long only

²⁷ B. Disraeli, *Coningsby; or, the New Generation* (3 vols., London: Henry Colburn, 1844), i, 155-6.

²⁸ B. Disraeli, *Tancred; or, the New Crusade* (3 vols., London: Henry Colburn, 1847), i, 144-5.

²⁹ Antonio Salieri (1750-1825), composer and conductor, and a contemporary, has been damned by a similar statement. Peter Shaffer produced his play, *Amadeus*, in 1980. Salieri was accused of the murder of Mozart in 1791 and he was described as the ‘Patron Saint of Mediocrities’; Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus* (London: Samuel French, 1981), p. 72; Volkmar Braunbehrens, *Maligned Master* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993).

³⁰ Lord Brougham, *Historical Sketches of Statesmen Who Flourished in the Time of George III* (2nd ser., London: Charles Knight & Co., 1839), pp. 131-42.

³¹ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1867), p. 32.

because he had not been tested by adversity. One character in the novel surveys the current political scene and states: 'I don't remember such a state of things, - so easy for the Prime Minister, - since the days of Lord Liverpool.'³²

The idea that anyone could retain the premiership for almost fifteen years and yet possess no talent beyond the mediocre, the absolutely everyday, does not carry conviction, and yet Disraeli's judgement on Liverpool was still being taken quite seriously by people in the late twentieth century. N. H. Brasher produced *Arguments in History* in 1968 and devoted the first chapter to a discussion on the subject of Liverpool, 'the Arch-Mediocrity'.³³ Writers continued to emphasise similar qualities to those identified by Brougham and proved reluctant to consider whether there might have been more to Liverpool than the fact that he was apparently 'nice'. Winston S. Churchill, in 1956-8 in *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, highlighted Liverpool's tact, patience and laxity, and failed to probe any further into the secret of his success.³⁴ This unfortunate trend can still be found in works published today.³⁵ 'By turning his brilliant sardonic pen to attacking the leading Conservatives of the first half of the nineteenth century [Liverpool and Peel], Disraeli did a profound and long-lasting disservice to the Conservative party's understanding of its own history.'³⁶

It is not difficult, however, to explain why Liverpool has been treated in this fashion, why he has been both overlooked and underestimated to such an extent and for so long. There are arguably several personal and political factors behind this. Throughout his career, Liverpool steadfastly refused to blow his own trumpet, did not

³² Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (4 vols., London: Chapman & Hall, 1876), iii, 6.

³³ N. H. Brasher, *Arguments in History* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 1-22.

³⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (4 vols., London: The Folio Society, 2003), iii, 283, 290, 327; iv, 4, 15-16, 21, 28.

³⁵ Julian Rathbone, *A Very English Agent* (London: Little, Brown & Co., 2002).

³⁶ Willetts, *Modern Conservatism*, pp. 10-11.

seek enormous fame and fortune for himself and generally avoided the limelight. He seemed to lack what today might be called 'the x factor', and failed to fire the imagination of the political nation and inspire devotion in his contemporaries. He made no attempt to build up a personal following. There were no 'Liverpoolites' as such to carry on his work and commemorate his life after he was gone. He did not write his own self-serving memoirs or have some disciple produce a flattering record of his life and administration.³⁷ Liverpool also managed to avoid becoming a figure of hate during his lifetime. He did not become infamous for some terrible public deed or scandal. He was not generally singled out for attack in the press and rarely featured prominently in caricatures. He did not have a great political and/or personal long-term adversary. His private life was unusually spotless.

Liverpool sat for most of his career and throughout his premiership in the upper chamber, the more easily managed house where there were fewer opportunities for politicians to demonstrate their prowess as speakers and debaters, and less chance to light up the political firmament. He was happy to let his colleagues shine and they have often individually been given the credit for the major achievements of his administration. Liverpool was seriously ill for the last two years of his life and this meant that he was unable to use his final days to do something about his political legacy had he wanted to. His death when it came was not unexpected and did not take place while he was still in the premiership or even still playing an active role in public

³⁷ An anonymous author did write a memoir, but he was not a personal friend, it is not very biased and it is based on Hansard; *Memoirs of the Public Life and Administration of the Right Honourable the Earl of Liverpool, K.G., &c. &c. &c.* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1827).

life. He had no children to oversee his posthumous reputation. His half-brother inherited the earldom, but the title became extinct on his death in 1851.³⁸

Liverpool's departure from the political scene marked in a sense the passing of an age, perhaps even the end of the British *ancien régime*.³⁹ His ministry broke up immediately after his retirement and his three short-lived immediate successors failed to put it back together again.⁴⁰ The age of Tory ascendancy was also ended and an era of Whig dominance succeeded it.⁴¹ Moreover, those two great liberal measures that he had opposed throughout his career, namely Roman Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, were enacted in the years immediately following Liverpool's death.⁴² There is also a regrettable tendency in British politics for long periods of conservative hegemony to be successfully demonised after they have come to an end as dark years of unalloyed misrule and missed opportunities for progressive change, and it is still the case today that writers often focus much more on the apparent shortcomings than the genuine achievements of the Liverpool administration.⁴³

A few attempts, however, have been made to save Liverpool from obscurity and the mantle of mediocrity. A number of books have been written on the subject of Liverpool's government, but of more interest to us are the works of those historians who have sought to focus their attention on Liverpool himself.⁴⁴ Three biographies

³⁸ W. A. J. Archbold, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Jenkinson, Charles Cecil Cope, third earl of Liverpool (1784-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 978-9.

³⁹ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832* (2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 252; William Doyle, *The Ancien Régime* (2nd edn., Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

⁴⁰ Canning (1827), Goderich (1827-8) and Wellington (1828-30).

⁴¹ Grey (1830-4) and Melbourne (1834 & 1835-41).

⁴² The Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 and the Great Reform Act in 1832.

⁴³ There is perhaps one other reason why historians have not flocked to pore over his papers. His handwriting is appalling.

⁴⁴ For example, J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool's Administration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1975).

have been published since Liverpool's death. Charles Duke Yonge was born the year that Liverpool became Prime Minister and he churned out a three-volume study of Liverpool's life and career in 1868.⁴⁵ This study of Liverpool, the only significant one of the nineteenth century, reproduces in full a large number of Liverpool's papers, but it lacks penetrating analysis, an engaging prose style and of course an understanding of the political context provided by more than a century of subsequent historical scholarship.⁴⁶

Sir Charles Petrie, 3rd Bt., published *Lord Liverpool and his Times* in 1954.⁴⁷ He reproduced many documents, overwhelmingly lifted directly from Yonge's multi-volume study. Petrie's short book is highly readable and Disraeli's damning judgement on Liverpool is wholly and convincingly rejected, but this study really just scratches the surface of its subject and it is important to slap a general health warning on Petrie's contributions to the study of the past. Petrie held extreme political views and it would seem that he allowed these to distort his historical interpretations.⁴⁸

Norman Gash's book is the first and so far only modern biography of Liverpool. *Lord Liverpool* appeared in 1984 and Gash undoubtedly succeeded in dragging the former premier out of the shadows and uncovering more about Liverpool's public and private life. This study, however, is less than three hundred pages in length, is based on only seven of the hundreds of volumes of the Liverpool Papers in the custody of the British Library and is far from exhaustive in its use of

⁴⁵ Charles Duke Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G. Late First Lord of the Treasury* (3 vols., London: Macmillan, 1868).

⁴⁶ P. J. Jupp, 'Yonge, Charles Duke (1812-1891),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lx, 806-8.

⁴⁷ Charles Petrie, *Lord Liverpool and his Times* (London: James Barrie, 1954).

⁴⁸ Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), pp. 39, 50, 146, 156, 161, 204-5, 236, 240-1, 268.

printed sources.⁴⁹ As Gash himself readily admits in the introduction to his book: ‘One day, perhaps, the life of Lord Liverpool will be written as it deserves to be, on the basis of the massive archival material now available and on a scale that will require more than a single volume.’⁵⁰

There have also been a small number of works on specific aspects and periods of Liverpool’s life and career. In 1941 W. R. Brock wrote an influential study of the second-half of Liverpool’s premiership.⁵¹ He coined the term ‘Liberal Toryism’ to describe the outlook of the administration in the 1820s and, following Brock, it became customary to view Liverpool’s ministry as reactionary before and liberal after about 1822. This, however, is no longer the orthodox interpretation. The Liverpool ministry arguably did change, but not as significantly as previously thought. This reassessment is particularly well outlined in John Plowright’s recent pamphlet *Regency England*.⁵² Furthermore, Liverpool shares the focus of Brock’s short book with his government.

George D. Knight examined Liverpool’s involvement in the Peninsular War (1808-14) in his unpublished doctoral dissertation in 1976.⁵³ Liverpool’s early career before he became Prime Minister was the subject of Judith F. Brown’s PhD dissertation in 1980.⁵⁴ In 1988 Boyd Hilton published an article on Liverpool’s

⁴⁹ The Liverpool Papers in the British Library include a wide range of documents, from his correspondence on the eve of the battle of Waterloo to a bill for his underwear; British Library, Additional Manuscripts 38477, fos. 307-8.

⁵⁰ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 6.

⁵¹ W. R. Brock, *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism 1820 to 1827* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941); W. R. Brock, *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism 1820 to 1827* (2nd edn., London: Frank Cass, 1967).

⁵² John Plowright, *Regency England* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵³ George D. Knight, ‘Lord Liverpool and the Peninsular War, 1809-1812’ (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Florida, 1976).

⁵⁴ Judith F. Brown, ‘The Early Political Career of Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool 1790-1812’ (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Delaware, 1980).

political arts. He looked at the changes that took place in Liverpool's administration between 1821 and 1823, and this study provided some insights into how Liverpool managed the cabinet and parliament.⁵⁵

There is evidently considerable scope and need for further research on the subject of Liverpool's life and career especially during the period of his premiership and based on a trawl through all the manuscript sources now available. This doctoral dissertation seeks to examine Liverpool during his early premiership between 1812 and 1815, one of the least studied but most significant periods of both Liverpool's life and career, and his administration, from the point Liverpool succeeded to the highest office to the resettlement of Europe after the long war with France. (J. E. Cookson's study of Liverpool's administration before 1822 starts in 1815.) The opening section aims to place Liverpool in his historical context. There is a particular emphasis here on an analysis of the political system that Liverpool was required to master. Liverpool's early life and career before he rose to the premiership is the focus of the next section. The main body of the thesis is divided into two parts. One part examines Liverpool during his early premiership in a mainly chronological style and is concerned almost entirely with the issues of war and peace, and the other part seeks to examine a number of major themes that are most satisfactorily looked at in isolation from the main narrative. For example, one chapter covers the premier's relationship with the monarchy.

⁵⁵ Boyd Hilton, 'The Political Arts of Lord Liverpool', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 38 (1988), 147-70.

Part One

The Political Context

Chapter One

The Labours of the Prime Minister

- The Prince Regent

The stability and survival of Lord Liverpool's early premiership depended to a considerable extent on the Prime Minister's ability to handle successfully several major constitutional factors. It was very important for the premier to retain the confidence and goodwill of George, the Prince Regent. George Augustus Frederick was born in 1762 and the heir apparent was widely acknowledged in his youth as an elegant, intelligent, charming and entertaining man. George III (1760-1820), however, became increasingly exasperated by his son's conduct. (Of course, it was customary for animosity to develop between the kings of the house of Hanover and their heirs.) George, or 'Prinny', was excessively fond of the high life, drinking and gambling, carrying on with his disreputable uncle at Cumberland House, chasing women of all ranks, from prostitutes to princesses; consorting with rakes, associating with politicians thoroughly disliked by the sovereign, especially Charles James Fox; and spending unaffordable sums of money on his London residence, Carlton House. In 1779 he fell madly and briefly in love with an actress who had to be paid off after 'Florizel' tired of 'Perdita', and in 1785 he illicitly and illegally married Mrs. Fitzherbert, a Roman Catholic.¹ The king suffered a brief bout of madness in 1788-9,

¹ Martin J. Levy, 'Robinson [née Darby], Mary [Perdita] (1756/1758?-1800),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvii, 384-7; James Munson, *Maria Fitzherbert* (London: Robinson, 2002); Martin J. Levy, 'Fitzherbert [née Smythe; other married name Weld], Maria Anne (1756-1837),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xix, 874-8.

but in 1810 he descended permanently into the darkness of mental illness and his eldest son was appointed Prince Regent early the following year.²

The Prince Regent contributed greatly to the cultural life of the nation by, apart from many other things, commissioning artworks, but he lacked his father's integrity, steadiness and sense of duty as head of state.³ He also lacked the same courage, determination and energy to replace the head of government when the premier dissatisfied him. Nevertheless, if Liverpool managed to lose the confidence of the crown as he came close to doing in the early 1820s, the Prince Regent was perfectly capable of making the life of his first minister extremely miserable by verbally abusing him to his colleagues, keeping him waiting for interviews, obstructing personnel arrangements, hindering the smooth running of the government machine, flirting with the government's parliamentary enemies and sounding out potential prime ministerial replacements.⁴ During his premiership, Liverpool risked

² John Cannon, 'George III (1738-1820),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxi, 833-53; Ida Macalpine & Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (London: Pimlico, 1991); G. M. Ditchfield, *George III* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); John C. G. Röhl, Martin Warren & David Hunt, *Purple Secret* (London: Corgi, 1999).

³ Steven Parissien, *George IV* (London: John Murray, 2001); George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell popularised the fashion for dandyism, a revolution in dress and reformation of manners, in the early nineteenth century. In reaction to the luxury and fancy dress of the eighteenth century, he favoured a simple, but elegant and exquisite, style. It comprised a finely laundered, decidedly starched, sharply raised, precisely tied and symmetrically creased neckcloth; waistcoat, meticulously tailored coat, pantaloons and highly polished boots or Hessians. He rejected the use of perfume and powder in favour of the bath, projected an air of confidence, practised the art of restraint, perfected 'the cut', observed the rules of etiquette and ridiculed the *faux pas* of other men, high and low. (It is possible that 'Beau' was homosexual.) Brummell was treated as a celebrity, courted in society and befriended by George, the Prince Regent. He turned his wit on the heir to the throne and terminated the relationship in 1812. When he was out for a walk once with the earl of Moira, Brummell encountered the Prince Regent. The Prince Regent acknowledged Moira but ignored Brummell and Brummell asked Moira: 'Who's your fat friend?' He went into exile on the continent in 1816; Philip Carter, 'Brummell, George Bryan [known as Beau Brummell] (1778-1840),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 352-4.

⁴ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 149-91.

losing the goodwill of the Prince Regent not so much because of differences arising between them over major matters of public policy, but as a result of the fallout from the tortuous personal affairs of the dysfunctional royal family.⁵

In 1795, largely in order to secure a financial settlement to pay his debts, the Prince of Wales agreed to marry Caroline Amelia Elizabeth of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. It was a marriage made in hell. Though good-natured and kind-hearted, she was an instant, enormous and perpetual disappointment to George. Caroline had extremely bad personal hygiene, was reputedly not a virgin at the time of her wedding, found it difficult to fit in at court, flouted convention, lacked elegance and refused to submit to her husband's authority. And like her husband, she also lacked good judgement. At the same time Caroline objected to her husband's drunken behaviour on their honeymoon, resented the attempt to foist his mistress, Lady Jersey, on her as a lady-in-waiting and regarded the prince as fat and rude.⁶ George neglected his wife and Caroline became increasingly resentful and wayward. They ultimately separated in 1796.

Caroline moved into her own residence, Montague House, and was rumoured to lead a scandalous lifestyle there. She was suspected of committing adultery and even of giving birth to an illegitimate child. (George Canning was rumoured to be one of her lovers.) This led to the establishment in 1806 of the Delicate Investigation, a secret official commission of inquiry into her conduct. Caroline was criticised for her frivolity in the report, but the king had a soft spot for his daughter-in-law and supported Caroline in the quarrel with her husband whereas the queen sided with her

⁵ Saul David, *Prince of Pleasure* (London: Abacus, 1999); Christopher Hibbert, 'George IV (1762-1830),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxi, 856-64.

⁶ Martin J. Levy, 'Villiers [née Twysden], Frances, countess of Jersey (1753-1821),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lvi, 486-8; M. J. Levy, *The Mistresses of King George IV* (London: Peter Owen, 1996).

son. When the king fell seriously ill and her husband became Prince Regent, however, Caroline's position would come under increasing threat.⁷

Before the separation, the union had produced a child in the form of Charlotte Augusta in 1796. A bright but boisterous girl, she was deeply affected by the continuing hostility between her parents and she grew up in her own separate establishment at Warwick House. Charlotte naturally felt torn between her parents but was not unaware of their individual personal failings: her mother's impropriety and her father's intolerance. George III was very fond of his granddaughter and supervised Charlotte's education, but the heir presumptive increasingly clashed with the Prince of Wales and was destined to become a source of conflict between her parents when her father became Prince Regent.⁸

This unfortunate state of affairs caused ongoing tension and occasional crises in the course of Liverpool's early premiership. In his dealings with the Prince Regent on the subject of his family, the Prime Minister was required to walk a political tightrope. When marital disputes arose he would obviously have to obey the commands of the Prince Regent or face the possibility of losing the confidence of the crown. At the same time Liverpool could not afford to treat Caroline insensitively and play into the hands of the opposition who sided with the Princess of Wales and sought to use the disputes within the marriage to embarrass the government and infuriate the prince. Nor could he trample carelessly over Charlotte's feelings. After all, with the king out of his mind and the Prince Regent not in the best of health, it was entirely conceivable that before too long Charlotte might be queen and Liverpool dependent

⁷ Flora Fraser, *The Unruly Queen* (London: Papermac, 1997); E. A. Smith, 'Caroline [Princess Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel] (1768-1821),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 207-10.

⁸ Judith Schneid Lewis, 'Charlotte Augusta, Princess [Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales] (1796-1817),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xi, 184-6.

on her goodwill. It was therefore in Liverpool's best interest that discord in the royal family was kept to a minimum.

- The Cabinet

Another government institution that Lord Liverpool was required to grapple with during his early premiership was the cabinet. To a certain extent the workings of the cabinet at this time are shrouded in mystery. There is very little official paperwork directly relating to this executive committee for historians to pore over. There was no cabinet agenda and it was fairly unusual for minutes of meetings to be produced. In the course of Liverpool's entire period in the highest office, official minutes were drafted on only seventeen occasions.⁹ Liverpool and his senior ministers, furthermore, were not in the habit of keeping detailed private diaries which might have shed some light on the functioning of the cabinet system. We are not completely at sea here, however. Cabinet meetings were sometimes referred to in private correspondence, the newspapers carried some information about them, and there are a few excellent secondary sources looking at the development of the cabinet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to be utilised.¹⁰ These sources provide us with some idea about how the cabinet system worked and they suggest that the cabinet was an important part of the governing process during Liverpool's early premiership.

According to notices in *The Times*, between 1 January 1812 and 31 December 1815 there were 125 formal cabinet meetings; 36 in 1812, 32 in 1813, 17 in 1814 and 40 in 1815. Summonses could be issued by any cabinet member. Meetings could be

⁹ A. Aspinall, 'The Cabinet Council, 1783-1835', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 38 (1952), 196.

¹⁰ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 1-7; Peter Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 70-106; Hilton, 'The Political Arts of Lord Liverpool'; Aspinall, 'The Cabinet Council, 1783-1835', 145-252.

held on any day of the week, though Saturday was slightly more likely to be chosen than any other day, and they were invariably arranged for the early afternoon.

Ministers assembled on the hour and they usually sat for two or three hours. Meetings were normally held at the Foreign Office and they were well attended. Meetings were not spread evenly over the year. Ministers would gather on a fairly regular basis during the parliamentary session and more frequently, perhaps every day and even more than once a day for a short period, in the midst of a crisis. Cabinet did not take place often during the recess unless the government found itself in a sea of troubles. Again according to *The Times*, in 1813 there were six cabinet meetings in February but only one in September. By comparing the incidence of cabinet meetings with the chronology of events at home and abroad between 1812 and 1815, it would seem that ministers usually assembled in response to problems, such as treaty negotiations and legislative proceedings, rather than to plan ahead; though the latter strategy was not unknown. A meeting of the cabinet could result in immediate action being taken by the government. *The Times* records several meetings during Liverpool's early premiership ending with the dispatch of messengers to the continent.

Appointing cabinet members was a task that required some skill on the part of the premier. Liverpool had to take into account a whole host of factors when putting together his cabinet in the course of his early premiership. He needed administratively talented individuals to run such demanding offices as the home office. (Several positions such as that of Lord President of the Privy Council were more ornamental in nature.) Retention of experienced men was important, but it was also necessary to bring forward the leaders of the future. The Prime Minister wanted figures from both houses of parliament and representatives of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. He also required the assistance of men who were accomplished

parliamentary speakers, who had significant political followings and who exercised electoral influence. It was still thought to be important that the landed classes were well represented in the cabinet, though not to the total exclusion of men from humbler or different backgrounds. The feelings of his colleagues and the Prince Regent towards certain individuals could not be ignored. The full range of opinion among the government's parliamentary supporters would need to be provided for so that both liberals and those of a more reactionary persuasion would occupy seats around the cabinet table. It was particularly important, for example, that politicians on both sides of the argument over Roman Catholic emancipation received appointment to the cabinet. The premier also wanted to include potential rivals for his job and his close political allies. He also had to face the fact that it was not generally easy to make changes to the make-up of the cabinet without the consent of those implicated in the reshuffle. To try to sack or move someone against their will, or indeed to overlook a minister's pretensions to a certain job, had obvious political dangers.¹¹

Having put together his top team, it was Liverpool's other major task to keep it together. This could be done by avoiding discussion of explosive issues, ensuring a full and frank exchange of views between members, giving a lead on how to proceed on a given issue and intervening to resolve personality clashes and political arguments around the cabinet table. The Prime Minister required what is now popularly known as people skills.¹²

- Parliament

It was vital for Liverpool to retain the support of a clear majority in parliament in order to remain as Prime Minister. An arithmetical but small majority was simply not

¹¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 126-247.

¹² Pp. 123-7.

enough.¹³ The House of Lords had a membership of 396 in 1828.¹⁴ It was an important forum for debate throughout Liverpool's career, but, in practice, the government of the day could usually rely on the backing of peers if the administration enjoyed the favour of the crown due to the nature of its membership and the influence exercised by the monarchy and the ministry in the upper chamber.¹⁵ It was not so easy for the government to secure the lasting favour of the House of Commons, however. From 1801 there were 658 Members of Parliament.

By the time of Liverpool's early premierships, contemporary observers had begun to classify the overwhelming majority of MPs as either for the government or in support of the opposition. A list compiled in 1813 identified 383 'ministerialists' and 202 'opposition' MPs.¹⁶ It has also been argued that a two-party system, Tories versus Whigs, gradually came into existence between 1783 and 1832.¹⁷ Others, however, have queried this analysis and it would appear that the composition of the House of Commons in the first half of the second decade of the nineteenth century

¹³ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 3.

¹⁴ Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform*, p. 197.

¹⁵ For example, numerous peers were attached to the royal household, the bishops looked to the regime for preferment and the representative peers were chosen via elections managed by the government.

¹⁶ R. G. Thorne, 'Appendices', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ed. R. G. Thorne (5 vols., London: Secker & Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1986), i, 373.

¹⁷ Frank O'Gorman, *The Emergence of the British Two-Party System 1760-1832* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982); Frank O'Gorman & Peter Fraser, 'Party Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century (1812-32)', *The English Historical Review*, 102, 402 (1987), 63-88; Austin Mitchell, *The Whigs in Opposition 1815-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); B. W. Hill, 'Executive Monarchy and the Challenge of Parties, 1689-1832: Two Concepts of Government and Two Historiographical Interpretations', *The Historical Journal*, 13, 3 (1970), 379-401; B. W. Hill, *British Parliamentary Parties 1742-1832* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985); B. W. Hill, *The Early Parties and Politics in Britain, 1688-1832* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

was rather more complex than one might think.¹⁸ There were different types of government friends. The administration could rely on the support of the office-holders, such as ministers and senior members of the royal household, in the lower chamber.

Government friends would also include most of those MPs who considered themselves as Pittites. (The word ‘Tory’ continued, certainly until the late 1810s anyway, to be used mainly as a term of abuse and even in the 1820s supporters of the administration proved reluctant to adopt the label to describe their political leanings.)¹⁹ William Pitt ‘the Younger’ became Prime Minister in late 1783. George III had always detested the previous administration nominally headed by the duke of Portland, but actually dominated by Lord North and Charles James Fox, and actively sought its demise. With the king’s help and through his own quite remarkable talents, Pitt established his supremacy in parliament and applied himself in the late 1780s to placing the national finances on a sound footing after the ravages wrought by the War of American Independence (1775-83). The younger Pitt’s first ministry lasted for over seventeen years. Throughout his time at the top of British politics, Pitt himself did not seek to form and lead a party to sustain himself in power. He described himself as an ‘Independent Whig’. It was estimated in 1788 that he enjoyed a small personal

¹⁸ Peter Fraser, ‘Party Voting in the House of Commons, 1812-1827’, *The English Historical Review*, 98, 389 (1983), 763-84; O’Gorman & Fraser, ‘Party Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century (1812-32)’; J. C. D. Clark, ‘A General Theory of Party, Opposition and Government, 1688-1832’, *The Historical Journal*, 23, 2 (1980), 295-325; R. G. Thorne, ‘Introductory Survey’, in *The History of Parliament 1790-1820*, i, 1-355; *English Historical Documents 1783-1832*, eds. A. Aspinall & E. Anthony Smith (Vol. 11, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959); Eric J. Evans, *Political Parties in Britain 1783-1867* (London: Methuen, 1985); Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform*, pp. 240-329; Stephen M. Lee, ‘Parliament, Parties and Elections (1760-1815)’, in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing for the Historical Association, 2002), pp. 69-80.

¹⁹ James J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

following of 52 MPs, and he invariably looked to the party of the crown (186), independents (108) and a number of unattached groups (43) in the House of Commons to provide him with a clear majority.²⁰ Members and supporters of the administration, being in government together for so long, being led by an inspirational figure, surviving major crises, and having to respond to an international event as cataclysmic as the French Revolution and to fight a highly demanding war, were however bound to establish a certain *esprit de corps*. Friendships were formed and enmities shared. The government, moreover, came to be seen to stand for a number of fairly evident interests backed by most parliamentarians and a silent majority in the country: the defence of the Church of England, respect for the position of the sovereign, law and order, defence of property, opposition to radical reform at home and, of course, a patriotic war against French revolutionaries abroad.²¹

After Pitt's death in 1806, his colleagues promptly left government, but they soon began to act increasingly as a unit in opposition to the new administration imposed upon the king and they trooped back into office the following year after the collapse of the unsatisfactory alliance between the Grenvillites and the Whigs. Although the office of Prime Minister changed a number of times between 1807 and 1812, there was a remarkable continuity of personnel in senior office. Several politicians who had served Pitt in government continued to occupy some of the great offices of state throughout this time. Nine members of Liverpool's cabinet in 1812 had served as cabinet ministers in Pitt's second administration between 1804 and

²⁰ Thorne, 'Introductory Survey', in *The History of Parliament 1790-1820*, i, 346.

²¹ J. P. W. Ehrman & Anthony Smith, 'Pitt, William [known as Pitt the younger] (1759-1806)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 470-97; William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger* (London: Harper Collins, 2004); Michael Duffy, *The Younger Pitt* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); Peter Douglas Brown, 'William Pitt 'The Younger'', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 211-33; Eric J. Evans, *William Pitt the Younger* (London: Routledge, 1999).

1806. Eight members of Liverpool's cabinet in 1812 had served in Portland's cabinet between 1807 and 1809. Eleven members of Liverpool's cabinet in 1812 had served in Perceval's cabinet between 1809 and 1812. Seven members of Liverpool's cabinet in 1812 had sat in cabinet during these three administrations. It is estimated that there were about 150 Pittites in the House of Commons in the years immediately following Pitt's death.²²

The Pittites after 1801, however, were divided to a significant extent by attachment to different prominent individuals. There was a Pittite mainstream, a substantial nucleus of individuals who had served Pitt and supported each administration that donned his mantle after his death, but there were others who, though they could claim a general adherence to the Pittite outlook, banded into factions and would not necessarily support the government even though it was led by a former colleague. Of particular interest to students of Liverpool's early premiership are the Canningites. George Canning served as a junior minister in both of Pitt's administrations and became Foreign Secretary when the Pittites returned to office under Portland in 1807. In 1809, however, he left the government and led a small group of friends in parliament. Before the dissolution of parliament in late 1812, there were fifteen Canningites in the House of Commons.²³

The administration could also look for support to a large extent from those MPs who occupied parliamentary seats controlled by electoral patrons. The government itself was the patron in a small number of seats and through its management of the elections in Scotland and Ireland the administration could also traditionally expect the backing of a majority of the 45 Scottish and 100 Irish MPs. A

²² Hill, 'Executive Monarchy and the Challenge of Parties, 1689-1832', 397.

²³ A. Aspinall, "'The Canningite Party'", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Ser., 17 (1934), 177-226.

large number of seats, possibly well over 300, were controlled by patrons in the form of peers and commoners, and it would seem that a majority of them would customarily support the government and call upon their clients to follow their lead.²⁴

Finally, the ministry could also hope to receive the votes of the independent country gentlemen, the one hundred or so MPs who mainly sat for counties in England. They shared many of the government's concerns in the 1810s, including a defence of the established church, and saw it as their duty to support the king's ministers, but they were perfectly capable of voting against the administration on occasion when they saw their own vital interests threatened. Country gentlemen defended the landed interest and focused on issues such as falling corn prices and increases in taxation.

The opposition was also an amalgam of groups. There were the Whigs who, it is generally accepted, behaved more like a political party than the Pittites. They began to develop a corporate identity after 1760 in opposition to what they saw as the excessive political influence of the monarch. This was enhanced in the 1780s in response to the controversial circumstances surrounding Pitt's elevation to the highest office. In the early 1790s first Edmund Burke and subsequently most of the more conservative Whigs headed by Portland abandoned Fox and joined forces with Pitt to resist the threat of radicalism at home and revolution abroad, and clearer blue water appeared between the platforms of the government and the fifty or so MPs who still rallied to Fox in the later 1790s.²⁵ The Whigs championed a measure of moderate parliamentary reform, supported religious toleration and opposed the war with France.

²⁴ Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform*, p. 253.

²⁵ David Wilkinson, 'The Pitt-Portland Coalition of 1794 and the Origins of the 'Tory' Party', *History*, 83, 270 (1998), 249-64.

In 1797 the Whigs decided to secede from parliament and chose not to return altogether until Pitt's fall from power at the start of the new century.²⁶

Earl Grey, who came to lead the Whigs after Fox's death in 1807, adopted a more moderate line on the continuing hostilities with France and parliamentary reform. He could support a war against Napoleon, a man apparently determined to conquer not liberate, but he still felt free to criticise the government for the particular military strategy followed and tactics adopted. By taking this stance on the war and avoiding incitement of the political reform issue, Grey hoped to maintain his alliance with the Grenvillites who backed the war and opposed radicalism.²⁷ The Grenvillites entered into an uneasy opposition coalition with the Whigs in 1804 even though they had supported Pitt until his resignation in 1801. The political faction headed by Lord Grenville was made up of twenty-two occupants of seats in the lower chamber in 1808.²⁸ In the years after Fox's death, it is thought that there were about 150 Whig MPs.²⁹

There was a substantial number of MPs who were generally inclined for a variety of reasons to back the government of the day in normal circumstances, but this support could not be taken for granted and much effort on the part of the administration was needed to get these troops through the division lobbies. Liverpool did not possess the modern techniques of party discipline that would become available to his successors in the late nineteenth century. At most all he could ask for from

²⁶ L. G. Mitchell, 'Fox, Charles James (1749-1806),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xx, 609-22; L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (London: Penguin, 1997); L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party 1782-1794* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)..

²⁷ E. A. Smith, 'Grey, Charles, second Earl Grey (1764-1845),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 811-19; E. A. Smith, *Lord Grey 1764-1845* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1996).

²⁸ James J. Sack, *The Grenvillites 1801-29* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1979).

²⁹ Hill, 'Executive Monarchy and the Challenge of Parties, 1689-1832', 397.

supporters of the government was a generally favourable disposition towards the ministry. He could not demand their unstinting allegiance, but he could rely to some extent on their natural inclination to stand by the king's ministers and desire to avoid the cost and inconvenience of going to the polls that might result if the administration fell. Liverpool could also distribute patronage to win the backing of parliamentarians. The spoils available to the government in the early 1810s had been curtailed somewhat by demands for economical reform in the late eighteenth century and by Pitt's policy of saving money.³⁰ For example, Burke's Act of 1782 placed restrictions on the government's ability to use public money to shore up its parliamentary position and government contractors were disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons in the same year. Burke's Act, Crewe's Act and Clerke's Act, all in 1782, were but the start of a long process, continued by Pitt's efforts to economise on useless posts, that restricted the extent of crown patronage that could be deployed to influence the conduct of MPs. Nevertheless, although there were fewer posts at his disposal, Liverpool could still strengthen his base in the legislature through the judicious distribution of offices, honours, ecclesiastical appointments and other favours. Acts of kindness and consideration to groups or individuals in parliament by the premier could help him to maintain support. Patronage, however, was not enough to manage parliament. It was essential for the Prime Minister to ensure that the government provided both houses of parliament with able speakers who were willing to rise to the despatch box in all political weathers, who had a clear grasp of the details of government business, who could persuasively explain the administration's case and

³⁰ Archibald S. Foord, 'The Waning of "the Influence of the Crown"', *The English Historical Review*, 62, 245 (1947), 484-507; Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Philip Harling, 'Rethinking "Old Corruption"', *Past & Present*, 147 (1995), 127-58; W. D. Rubinstein, 'The End of "Old Corruption" in Britain 1780-1860', *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), 55-86.

who could convincingly defend the ministry from opposition attacks. It was also important for the government to encourage its friends to attend parliament and to have each house led by a minister who could competently supervise proceedings and had some skill when it came to the operation of parliamentary tactics. The Speaker of the House of Commons could exercise influence over the outcome of debates and it was therefore useful for the premier to have a good relationship with him. It was not unknown for the Prime Minister on occasion to call meetings of key government supporters to gauge their opinion and seek their approval in certain matters before taking them officially before parliament. Liverpool could also secure his majority by seeking to make new friends for the government in the legislature. The most obvious way in which he could do this was to court his former colleagues and fellow Pittites, the Canningites and the Grenvillites. There was also nothing, however, to stop the premier from attempting to convert Whigs to the government's cause if the opportunity to do so arose. It was vital that whatever was actually going on inside the government and no matter what disasters might have befallen the country, that the premier appeared confident and in control of events.

- The People

The premier was also required to take into account the opinion of the wider political nation. Of course Liverpool did not live at a time when a government could actually be defeated at the polls, though that is not to say that general elections were of little concern to ministers or that their outcomes were entirely predictable. The electoral system before the Great Reform Act of 1832 was managed, but not easily. To maximise the number of government friends returned to parliament it was necessary for the Prime Minister to take a close interest in the contest. It would have been of

concern to him to go to the country at a time when conditions at home and abroad placed the government in a favourable light and to prepare friendly patrons, loyal candidates and other interested parties for the looming encounter at the poll.³¹

The middling orders could bring pressure to bear on a government in a number of ways in the early nineteenth century. They could present petitions on national affairs to parliament.³² Respectable opinion expressed through such channels could have a significant impact on the government's agenda. An extensive campaign of public petitioning in early 1816 played a major part in the defeat of the administration's proposals to continue with the income tax.³³ It was an accepted practice for the government to be lobbied by vested interests and pressure groups such as trade associations, financial chambers, urban bodies and religious organisations. The Bank of England, the East India Company and the Church of England are examples of particularly influential organisations. The poorer sections of the community were not entirely without influence, however. The commonest way for the lower classes to make their voices heard in politics was through crowd demonstrations and riots.³⁴

³¹ Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Frank O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England: 1760-1832', *The Journal Of Modern History*, 56, 3 (1984), 391-429; John A Phillips, 'The Structure of Electoral Politics in Unreformed England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 19, 1 (1979-81), 76-100; John A. Phillips, 'Popular Politics in Unreformed England', *The Journal of Modern History*, 52, 4 (1980), 599-625; John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

³² Peter Fraser, 'Public Petitioning and Parliament before 1832', *History*, 46 (1961), 195-211.

³³ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 126-48.

³⁴ H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

Chapter Two

The Main Issues of the Day

- War with France

The most important issue of the day in the early nineteenth century was war with France. In 1789 the French Revolution was welcomed by many in Great Britain. Charles James Fox compared it to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and reacted with joy to the fall of the Bastille: ‘How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world!’¹ (Pleasure was also to be had by some of course at the sight of the old enemy being torn apart by revolution.) The fall of the *ancien régime* in France was not expected to lead to war and William Pitt ‘the Younger’ predicted quite a long period of peace for Britain in his budget in 1792.² Edmund Burke was one of the few to be wary of the revolution in France.³ He published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790, and, in it, he presented a critique of events in France and a defence of the constitution in Britain, and he predicted a threat to the security and stability of Europe. The government was not unduly alarmed, however, until the abolition of the monarchy in France and the French offer of fraternal assistance to foreign revolutionaries in 1792. It was outraged by the execution of Louis XVI and annexation of Belgium in 1793. It was also concerned for the independence of the Netherlands. Citizen Chauvelin, the ambassador from Paris, was expelled from Britain following the execution of the king in 1793 and France was prompted to declare war on both the British and the Dutch on 1 February. Pitt called the nation to

¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 140.

² Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution 1785-1795* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997); Jennifer Mori, ‘The Political Theory of William Pitt the Younger’, *History*, 83, 270 (1998), 234-48.

³ Paul Langford, ‘Burke, Edmund (1729/30-1797),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 820-41; Stanley Ayling, *Edmund Burke* (London: John Murray, 1988); Ian Hampsher-Monk, ‘Edmund Burke’s Changing Justification for Intervention’, *The Historical Journal*, 48, 1 (2005), 65-100.

arms in a speech to the House of Commons on 12 February 1793, when he declared his determination to halt the spread of revolution and to restore the balance of power on the continent.⁴ Britain entered the Revolutionary War and formed the First Coalition with Prussia and Austria.⁵

The war with France, however, proved to be more of a desperate struggle than Britain had expected at the outset of the contest and she was to be engaged in combat with revolutionary forces on the continent for over twenty years. The British failed to land a blow on the French in Flanders in 1794, and France occupied the Netherlands and concluded a treaty with the Prussians in 1795, but Britain did seize a number of colonies in the West Indies, such as Tobago in 1793, and retained the support of the Austrians with the promise of a loan in 1795. The French terminated the negotiations for peace with the British and defeated the Austrians in 1797. The defeat of the French by Nelson at the battle of the Nile in 1798 restored British spirits and persuaded Russia to enter into an alliance with Britain in 1798; followed by Austria joining the Second Coalition in 1799. Britain and Russia landed a force in the Netherlands in 1799, but Britain was forced to evacuate before the end of the year and Russia decided to leave the alliance. Napoleon returned from his expedition to Egypt

⁴ *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803.* (36 vols., London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-20), xxx, 345-97.

⁵ In the course of the wars with France, parliament was graced by the presence of some of the greatest figures in political history, but it was also a period that was enlivened by some great painters, architects, novelists, caricaturists, designers and poets, such as John Constable (1776-1837), John Nash (1752-1835), James Gillray (1757-1815), Herbert Minton (1793-1858), and William Blake (1757-1827). Jane Austen published *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813. It was the age of revolution, but also the age of romanticism; Iain McCalman (ed.), *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

and Austria was defeated by him at the battle of Marengo in 1800 and left the Second Coalition in 1801.⁶

Britain enjoyed a brief respite of peace in 1802-3 before her entry into the Napoleonic Wars. Nelson secured control of the seas for the Royal Navy at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, but Napoleon defeated the Austrians and Russians at the battle of Austerlitz and Austria made peace with France. Prussia entered the war in 1806 only to be defeated at the battle of Jena. In 1807 the Prussians and the Russians also made peace with Napoleon at Tilsit. When Pitt, the Prime Minister, received news of Austerlitz in 1805, he turned from a map of Europe and stated: 'Roll up that map; it will not be wanted these ten years.'⁷

Although Napoleon was now at the height of his powers on the continent, the British refused to sue for peace and eventually managed to open a new theatre of the long war with the French in the Iberian Peninsula. In 1807, having neutralised the Austrians, humbled the Prussians, befriended the Russians and contained the British, and having expanded his empire and changed the balance of power on the continent, Napoleon turned his attention to Portugal. Portugal had stayed out of the Napoleonic Wars so far, but she had continued to trade with Britain and to aid the Royal Navy, and ceased to pay an indemnity to France consented to by Portugal in the wake of the War of the Oranges of 1801 with Spain. Jean Andoche Junot was issued with an order to invade. John, the Portuguese Prince Regent, was forced to leave the country for Brazil. Lisbon was entered and Portugal was conquered. This of course had required the co-operation of Spain, but she was an ally of France from 1796.

⁶ Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The French Revolutionary Wars* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001); Todd Fisher, *The Napoleonic Wars (1): The Rise of the Emperor 1805-1807* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001).

⁷ *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 293.

Having defeated the Portuguese, however, Napoleon also started to take an interest in the conquest of Spain. The emperor, dissatisfied with the performance of the Spanish in the war and hostile to the royal house of Bourbon, decided to interfere in the internal affairs of his ally. Charles III presided over the enlightenment, *Ilustracion*, of Spain, but he died in 1788, and from 1792 Spain was ruled *de jure* by the nice but dim Charles IV and *de facto* by Manuel De Godoy. De Godoy was immoral, limited in ability and hated, and he did not get on with Ferdinand, the heir to the throne and puppet of the *grandeza* or aristocracy, and Spain was forced in the late 1790s and early 1800s to endure imperial decline, military defeat, economic downturn and natural disaster. Ferdinand was arrested by the *Godoyistas* in 1807 for his part in a conspiracy. He was pardoned, but Napoleon was persuaded to intervene in the affair, and to restabilise the government and regenerate the country. Joachim Murat was issued with an order to march on Madrid in 1808. Charles IV was forced to abdicate and Godoy was placed under arrest by the *Fernandinos* in Aranjuez. (This was the first military coup or *pronunciamento* in the history of Spain.) Ferdinand VII was put on the throne by the *Motín de Aranjuez*, but Napoleon summoned both Charles IV and Ferdinand VII to his presence in Bayonne for arbitration of the dispute and then handed the throne to his brother, Joseph. There was resistance to the French from the *Madrilènes* in the *Dos de Mayo* and it spread out from the capital. The Spanish rallied to the cause of Ferdinand VII, *el Rey Deseado*, resisted the appointment of Joseph, *Tío Pepe* or *el Rey Intruso*, formed an army, started *la Guerrilla* and asked for help from the British. Britain entered the Peninsular War in 1808 and enflamed 'the Spanish Ulcer' that ultimately did so much damage to

Napoleon's power and reputation.⁸

- Roman Catholic Emancipation

Roman Catholic emancipation was another important issue in the early nineteenth century. In the course of the eighteenth century, some of the restrictions on the rights of Catholics that had been imposed since the Reformation and the establishment of the Church of England, and that had been enhanced after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 were repealed. For example, Catholics were permitted to inherit, buy and lease land, and to practise at the bar. Catholics in Ireland, a majority of the population on the island, were granted the right to vote for Members of Parliament to sit in the parliament in Dublin in 1793. None the less, at the end of the eighteenth century, it continued to be the case that Catholics could not sit in either the Dublin or the Westminster parliament or hold important offices in the government, judiciary or military. It appeared to be quite unjust in the opinion of some in Great Britain to deny a man his full political rights on account of his religion, but others, steeped in tales over the centuries of evil-doing by Catholics, such as Protestants put to the stake by 'Bloody' Mary I (1553-8), the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the Popish Plot of 1678, the despotism of James VII & II (1685-8) and so on, and convinced that Catholics could never be entirely loyal to the British state because of their allegiance to the pope, continued to hold to their anti-catholic prejudices. In 1780 there was a violent reaction

⁸ Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War* (London: Allen Lane, 2002); Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Napoleonic Wars (3): The Peninsular War 1807-1814* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002); Charles J. Esdaile, *Fighting Napoleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

in London, in the form of the Gordon Riots, against parliament's decision to pass a measure of relief for Catholics in 1778.⁹

Catholic emancipation was also an issue that would divide the Pittites and could destroy a government that was made up of Pittites if it was raised in parliament and handled without due care. By the end of the 1790s, the Prime Minister was convinced of the need to bring Ireland under the control of London to deal with the recent violent unrest on the island and to counter the threat of invasion by the French. The Irish parliament was abolished and the Dublin legislature was subsumed within the Westminster parliament from 1 January 1801. William Pitt proposed the emancipation of Catholics, to permit them to take up seats in the new united parliament of Britain and Ireland in London. He hoped this would win their support for the Union and he pointed out to worried Protestants that while Catholics made up a majority of the population in Ireland they were a clear minority in the United Kingdom. Their emancipation therefore would not swamp the House of Commons with Catholics nor place the constitution and the Church of England in any danger. George III refused to countenance the grant of full political rights to Catholics and Pitt resigned as premier. A fault-line in the Pittites was opened up by this crisis with some, such as George Canning and Lord Grenville, siding with Pitt over the issue and others, such as the earl of Eldon, opposing the emancipation of Catholics as a matter of principle. Compromise over the issue was just about impossible. It would be Liverpool's lot as premier in the 1810s and 1820s to try to prevent the issue from

⁹ Colin Haydon, 'Gordon, Lord George (1751–1793),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11040>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

arising, gaining any momentum, forcing a confrontation, provoking a dispute and tearing his administration apart.¹⁰

- Tension with the United States of America

Another significant issue in the early nineteenth century was tension between Great Britain and the United States of America, in particular over 'free trade and sailor's rights'. In the wake of defeat at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and the abandonment of plans for the invasion of England, Napoleon hoped to bring Britain to the negotiating table by seriously damaging her economy by restricting her trade with continental Europe. This policy was promulgated by the Berlin Decree in 1806 and the establishment of the Continental System, and the imposition of a 'paper blockade', a blockade that he could not enforce, on the British Isles. (Napoleon followed this up with the Milan Decree in 1807.) Britain retaliated with the Orders-in-Council in 1807 and placed a blockade of her own on ports under the control of France. Neutral merchant ships, in theory at least, had to pay a levy to the British if they wished to trade with the French. The USA objected to this interference in the operation of free trade and struggled in vain between 1806 and 1810 to force the British and the French to repeal their respective measures. Napoleon offered to repeal his decrees in the Cadore Letter in 1810 if either Britain revoked the Orders-in-Council or the USA adopted a policy of non-intercourse with Britain. (This was just a ploy by the emperor to embroil the USA in a conflict with Britain. Napoleon had no intention of keeping

¹⁰ Wendy Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); J. H. Hexter, 'The Protestant Revival and the Catholic Question in England, 1778-1829', *The Journal of Modern History*, 8, 3 (1936), 297-319; G. I. T. Machin, 'The Catholic Emancipation Crisis of 1825', *The English Historical Review*, 78, 308 (1963), 458-82; G. I. T. Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 To 1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); G. F. A. Best, 'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 8 (1958), 105-27.

his word and repealing his decrees. In fact he promulgated a further secret order, the Trianon Decree, in 1810, extending the Continental System and seizing American ships in French hands.) Britain refused to back down. In 1811 the USA passed an Act of Congress, ceased to trade with Britain and escalated the crisis for the government in London. Manufacturers and merchants in Britain, distressed by the state of the economy and concerned about the effects of non-intercourse on trade, campaigned in favour of the revocation of the Orders-in-Council and politicians in opposition, such as Henry Peter Brougham (1778-1868), used the issue to undermine the administration in parliament. There was agitation over the issue in Birmingham in particular, led by Thomas Attwood.¹¹

The issue of 'sailor's rights' was also a source of friction between Britain and the USA. During the wars with France, the Royal Navy exercised the right to stop and search neutral merchant ships, and to impress any British deserters on board, but it also seized sailors with no record of prior service in the RN and some who were citizens of the USA. The USA saw this as an insult to its sovereignty. The issue came to a head in 1807. His Majesty's Ship *Leopard* attempted to stop and search the United States Ship *Chesapeake*, a man-of-war, just off the coast of Virginia. The Americans refused to comply. The British fired and a number of sailors on the American ship were either killed or wounded. The American ship surrendered and those suspected of being deserters were removed. The government in London disavowed the action of stopping and searching of a neutral war ship. It also punished

¹¹ Michael Lobban, 'Brougham, Henry Peter, first Baron Brougham and Vaux (1778-1868),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vii, 970-80; Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham 1778-1868* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986); D. J. Moss, 'Birmingham and the Campaigns Against the Orders-in-Council and East India Company Charter, 1812-13.', *Canadian Journal of History*, 11, 2 (1976), 173-88; Clive Behagg, 'Attwood, Thomas (1783-1856),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ii, 890-3; David J. Moss, *Thomas Attwood* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

the officers in charge, offered compensation and returned a few of the deserters. This dispute was settled in 1811, but the argument over 'sailor's rights' was not resolved because impressment from neutral merchant ships did not stop. The crisis passed in 1807, but it boiled up again in 1811. Ordered to deter the practice of forced impressment, the USS *President* clashed with HMS *Little Belt*. The Americans celebrated this retribution for the affair of 1807, but the British accused the USA of aggression and the Americans issued an apology.

There was tension between Britain and the USA at this time for several other reasons. An attempt was made to settle a number of the differences between the British and the Americans, and a treaty, the Monroe-Pinkney Treaty, was signed in 1806, but it was not ratified by Congress and the opportunity for an accommodation was missed. The American ambassador to the Court of St. James' was recalled in 1811 and he was replaced by just a *chargé d'affaires*. By such actions, the Americans increased the tension and stalled any dialogue with the British.

The Americans longed for physical expansion and coveted the land of Canada. They also resented the aid given to the aborigines by the British since the American Revolution. This was a matter of particular concern at the time because of the outbreak of conflict on the frontier in the west. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, 'the Prophet', of the Shawnee sought to build a confederation of tribes to resist the demands of the Americans in 1805. The Americans clashed with the Indians at the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. The natives were defeated, but the British were suspected by the Americans of inciting them to take up arms.

For the Republicans, the party in power in Washington DC in the early nineteenth century, war with Britain was about Anglophobia, defending the independence of the country, protecting the institutions of the republic, uniting the

party, riding a wave of patriotism and crushing the opposition at home, the Federalists. The dozen or so War Hawks in Congress in 1811, such as Henry Clay, had not had the opportunity to fight for their country and show their ability in the War of American Independence (1775-83). They dominated the proceedings in the legislature and proposed a series of resolutions to prepare the USA for a 'Second War of Independence'. James Madison, the President of the USA, also saw war with Britain as a way of strengthening his position in the party and the country, and securing his return to the White House in 1812.¹²

- The Economy

Lord Liverpool lived and led the country at a time of great economic, political and social change. It was a time of substantial demographic growth and considerable urban expansion. The population of England increased from 7,740,000 in 1791 to 9,491,000 in 1811.¹³ The population of Edinburgh increased from 85,000 in 1791 to 108,000 in 1811 and the population of Glasgow increased from 62,000 to 101,000 over the same period.¹⁴

Liverpool came to power in the midst of agrarian change, more evolutionary than revolutionary, that saw the enclosure of land and widespread adoption of other

¹² Carl Benn, *The War of 1812* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002); Paul F. Boller, *Presidential Campaigns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Francis D. Cogliano, *Revolutionary America 1763-1815* (London: Routledge, 2000); Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1989); Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1962); Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969); George Brown Tindall & David Emory Shi, *America* (4th edn., New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997); Donald R. Hickey, 'The War of 1812: Still a Forgotten Conflict?', *The Journal of Military History*, 65, 3 (2001), 741-69; Allen Weinstein & David Rubel, *The Story of America* (London: DK, 2002).

¹³ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State* (3rd edn., Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 512.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 515-17.

improvements in agriculture. Some 4000 enclosure bills were introduced to parliament between 1750 and 1850 and about half of them were passed in the course of the wars with France. Thomas William Coke (1754-1842) was famous for the promotion of land enclosure and crop rotation on his estate at Holkham.¹⁵ In 1793 the Board of Agriculture was set up by the government to give a lead on the subject of improvement under Sir John Sinclair, 1st Bt., as President and Arthur Young as Secretary.¹⁶

Liverpool was born when industrial production began to experience significant change and growth. It involved the use of new energy sources, such as coal and steam, and an advance in the production of iron and steel. James Watt entered into a partnership with Matthew Boulton to produce the steam-engine in 1775 and Henry Cort patented his process of 'puddling and rolling' to improve the manufacture of iron in 1783-4. The Industrial Revolution also involved the invention of new machines and introduction of new methods of work, such as the factory, and developments in transportation and communication. James Hargreaves patented the Spinning Jenny in 1770 and Samuel Crompton improved on it with the Mule in 1779. Robert Owen moved to New Lanark in 1800. John Loudon McAdam (1756-1836) designed a process to improve or 'macadam' the construction of roads.¹⁷ Thomas Telford (1757-1834) also applied his mind to the improvement of roads.¹⁸ Travel by road became quicker and safer. The journey from London to Edinburgh in 1830 was made in one

¹⁵ J. V. Beckett, 'Coke, Thomas William, first earl of Leicester of Holkham (1754–1842),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5831>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

¹⁶ Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture (1793-1822)', *The English Historical Review*, 74, 290 (1959), 41-69.

¹⁷ Brenda J. Buchanan, 'McAdam, John Loudon (1756–1836),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17325>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

¹⁸ Roland Paxton, 'Telford, Thomas (1757–1834),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27107>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

and a half days. The Grand Junction Canal from Birmingham to London was completed in 1805 and the Grand Union Canal was finished in 1814. A steamship, *The Comet*, was designed by Henry Bell in 1812. A train, *Catch-Me-Who-Can*, was demonstrated by Richard Trevithick in 1808 and the railway from Liverpool to Manchester was opened in 1830. (William Huskisson was the first victim of a train accident. He was run over by the *Rocket*.)¹⁹

Liverpool was also a witness to an important development in the world of public finance. The wars with France cost an enormous amount of money. The government spent £16,323,000 on average a year between 1786 and 1790. It spent £75,580,000 on average each year between 1806 and 1810.²⁰ To pay the bills, William Pitt increased both government loans and taxes, and, in 1799, he introduced the property or income tax at a rate of two shillings in the pound on income over £60 a year.

- The Reform of Parliament

The 1790s witnessed a great revival of political radicalism. The parliamentary reform movement in Great Britain was revitalised by the establishment of the constitution of the United States of America in 1787, the centenary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the campaign by Dissenters or Nonconformists between 1787 and 1790 for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and of course the French Revolution in

¹⁹ Simon Garfield, *The Last Journey of William Huskisson* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002).

²⁰ Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State*, p. 496.

1789.²¹ A number of Whigs in parliament commemorated the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille in July 1790, established the Society of the Friends of the People in 1792 and presented motions in favour of a moderate reform of parliament in both 1793 and 1797. Radicals out of parliament in the 1790s established new organisations, such as the London Corresponding Society in 1792, recruited new members, adopted new tactics, such as the National Convention in Edinburgh in 1792-3, and proclaimed new aims.²² Thomas Paine produced his *Rights of Man* in two volumes in 1791-2, criticised the aristocracy, supported the right of all men to vote, advocated the abolition of the monarchy and outlined a plan to tax the rich to help the poor. Thomas Spence advocated the abolition of private property in land and votes for women, and reproduced a selection from the works of other radicals in his *One Penny Worth of Pig's Meat: Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* between 1793 and 1795. (A group of his disciples, the Spenceans, hoped to carry on his work after his death and joined in plots, such as the Cato Street Conspiracy to assassinate the cabinet in 1820 led by Arthur Thistlewood.)²³

The cause of political reform was strengthened in 1789 by the erection of the Tree of Liberty and the proclamation of *Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!* on the other side of the English Channel, but it was weakened in the mid-1790s by the rise to power of

²¹ The parliamentary reform movement was stimulated in the 1760s by John Wilkes (1725-97) and strengthened by Christopher Wyvill (1738-1822), but the end of the War of American Independence (1775-83), the restoration of the economy and return of stability in politics led to a sharp drop in support for political radicalism in the later 1780s.

²² An agenda for political reform was drafted by a group of extreme radicals in 1780: universal manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, equal sized constituencies, the secret ballot, the abolition of property qualifications for MPs and the payment of MPs. This programme, the six points, was regarded as extreme by reformers in the 1780s, but it was widely adopted by radicals in the 1790s.

²³ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 149-70; Malcolm Chase, 'Cato Street conspirators (act. 1820),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58584>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

Robespierre, and the violence and anarchy of the Terror, as the symbol of the French Revolution became *Madame la Guillotine*.²⁴ It was also attacked by the forces of conservatism, damaged by a wave of patriotism that swept the country after Britain went to war with France, and repressed by government actions. Conservatives in the 1790s defended the constitution and challenged the arguments, activities and associations of the radicals. The Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers was founded by John Reeves in 1792 and *The Anti-Jacobin* magazine was published with government support in 1797-8. Ministers proposed a series of measures to crack down on radicalism, such as the Two Acts in 1795, the suspension of *habeas corpus* (1794-5 & 1798-1801), and bringing a number of radicals to trial for treason or sedition. A number of radicals, frustrated by the government, turned to plotting revolution. Edward Marcus Despard was executed in 1803 for his part in a plot to stage a *coup d'état*. It is possible that the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797 also had a political dimension.

The parliamentary reform movement lost its momentum before the turn of the century, but a combination of financial pressure, economic distress, military incompetence and political scandal led to a revival of interest at the end of the first decade of the new century. Radicals in the early nineteenth century moderated the ideology of the cause however and returned to the objectives of the era of the American Revolution. There was now less emphasis on the universal natural rights of man, and more on an appeal to the ancient constitution and economical reform. William Cobbett (1763-1835) denounced the spread of corruption in the pages of his *Political Register*, and John Cartwright helped to set up the Hampden Club in London

²⁴ Hugh Gough, *The Terror in the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); John Hardman, *Robespierre* (Harlow: Longman, 1999); D. G. Wright, *Revolution and Terror in France 1789-1795* (2nd edn., London: Longman, 1998).

in 1812 and continued to tour the country with his petitions in support of political reform, a cause that he had been a part of since the 1770s.²⁵ Sir Francis Burdett, 5th Bt., was encouraged to stand as an independent at Westminster in 1807 and was elected to parliament. He presented a motion in favour of reform in 1809 but received the support of only 12 MPs. The issue of political reform did not force its way to the top of the agenda in the course of Lord Liverpool's early premiership as the nation emerged victorious from the war.²⁶

- The Abolition of the Slave Trade

The early nineteenth century was also a time of important social development. The abolition of the slave trade was championed in parliament by William Wilberforce and a bill to bring this about was passed at last in 1807. Wilberforce set out in politics as a friend of William Pitt, but committed his life to God in the mid-1780s, produced *A Practical View* in 1797, worked to reform the Church of England, advocated the revitalisation of Christianity, and determined to end the slave trade and promote the cause of emancipation. He believed that emancipation would be an act of redemption both for the slaves and the abolitionists. It would be right to free the slaves from inhumanity, but emancipation would also be an act of atonement for sin for the

²⁵ There was a growth in the size of the media in this period. For example, the number of newspapers in print in London between 1783 and 1830 rose from 19 to 55: Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform*, p. 332; Naomi Churgin Miller, 'John Cartwright and Radical Parliamentary Reform, 1808-1819', *The English Historical Review*, 83, 329 (1968), 705-28; Rory T. Cornish, 'Cartwright, John (1740-1824),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 400-3; Ian Dyck, 'Cobbett, William (1763-1835),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5734>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

²⁶ H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985); H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977).

abolitionists and so protect them from the wrath of God.²⁷ Wilberforce continued to lead a group of evangelicals, the Saints or the Clapham Sect, in parliament, encouraged Britain's continental allies to adopt the cause of abolitionism and promoted the conversion of India to Christianity.²⁸

²⁷ There was also a significant rise in the number of Dissenters or Nonconformists, such as Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Britain. The number of Methodists rose from 96,000 in 1800 to 145,000 in 1810. The number of Anglicans and Episcopalians only rose from 577,000 to 599,000 over the period: Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State*, p. 445.

²⁸ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); John Wolffe, 'Wilberforce, William (1759-1833),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lviii, 879-87; G. F. A. Best, 'The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Journal Of Theological Studies*, 10, 1 (1959), 63-78.

Part Two

The Rise of Lord Liverpool to the Premiership

Chapter Three

The Early Life of Lord Liverpool

1770-90

- The House of Jenkinson

Robert Banks Jenkinson, later second earl of Liverpool, was born in London on 7 June 1770. He was fortunate enough to be born into the political establishment although his family began its rise to power in trade during the sixteenth century.

Anthony Jenkinson was the first in the family to find a fragment of fame and fortune. He came from Bristol and was in league with a son of John Cabot (c. 1451-98), the explorer.¹ His son, Henry Jenkinson, was a merchant and he acquired further commercial interests in London, but it was Anthony Jenkinson's grandson who really put the family on the map and brought it to the attention of the crown.²

This grandson, also called Anthony Jenkinson, was an adventurer. He opened up trade routes to, and diplomatic relations with, the east from as early as 1546. He sailed across the Caspian Sea and travelled as far as the city of Bukhara, in modern Uzbekistan, in 1558-9. He was, in fact, the first Englishman to make the perilous journey through that hostile region, in order to reach Central Asia, though not the first European.³ Elizabeth I gave Anthony Jenkinson command of her ship, *Aid*, in 1565, with orders to prevent the fourth earl of Bothwell from landing in Scotland and providing Mary, Queen of Scots, with support in the struggle against her nobles. She also gave him orders to clear the North Sea of pirates. Anthony Jenkinson was

¹ David Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian (c. 1481/2-1557),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ix, 382-6.

² Denny, *The Manor of Hawkesbury and its Owners*.

³ This was Marco Polo (1254-1324).

described by Humphrey Gilbert, the explorer, as a man of rare virtue in *A Discourse of a Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia* in 1566.⁴ Ivan IV Groznyi ('the Terrible'), the first tsar of Russia, raised with Anthony Jenkinson in 1567 at the beginning of the *Oprichnina* the possibility of him seeking asylum in England if he was deposed by his subjects.⁵ Anthony Jenkinson was granted a coat of arms in 1569 and he returned from his last trip to the east in 1572. His quite remarkable exploits were chronicled by Richard Hakluyt in 1589 and 1598-1600.⁶ Anthony Jenkinson continued to be of service to the crown, however, being appointed to a number of commissions set up to examine the prospect and results of further explorations overseas and serving on a sensitive mission to Emden in 1577. He died in 1611.⁷

His descendants used their mercantile wealth to purchase land in Walcot, Oxfordshire, and Hawkesbury, Gloucestershire, and they rose up through the ranks of society. One of them was knighted in 1618 and his son was honoured with a baronetcy in 1661. The motto of the now gentrified and well connected Jenkinson family was *pareo non servio* (I obey, I do not serve). Sir Robert Jenkinson, 2nd Bt., married into the family of Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), befriended the second earl

⁴ Rory, Rapple, 'Gilbert, Sir Humphrey (1537-1583),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 176-9.

⁵ Andrei Pavlov & Maureen Perrie, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: Pearson Longman, 2003); Isabel De Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry & Robert O. Crummey (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1968).

⁶ Anthony Payne, 'Hakluyt, Richard (1552?-1616),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiv, 496-8;

⁷ *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and Other Englishmen*, eds. E. Delmar Morgan & C. H. Coote (2 vols., London: The Hakluyt Society, 1886); John H. Appleby, 'Jenkinson, Anthony (1529-1610/11),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 971-3; Margaret B. Graham Morton, *The Jenkinson Story* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1962).

of Clarendon and left the considerable sum of £15,600 to his children, not including his heir, when he died in 1710.⁸

The Jenkinson family supported the crown, but managed to avoid a fatal involvement in the constitutional arguments that tore the country apart during the seventeenth century. They became major figures in local government and represented the constituency of Oxfordshire in parliament between 1689 and 1727. They readily adopted a high Tory position in these years and staunchly defended the established church. The third baronet voted against the impeachment of Henry Sacheverell, the notorious high-church cleric critical of ministerial toleration of Protestant Dissenters, and he entertained him in the course of his triumphal progress through the county in 1710.⁹ The third baronet won the admiration of Thomas Hearne, at least in the pages of his diary.¹⁰ The Jenkinson family may also have expressed sympathy for Jacobitism and support for the restoration to the throne of the house of Stuart. The name of the fourth baronet was included on a list passed to the Old Pretender, the king over the water, in 1721 of those who could be expected to rally to the Stuart cause in the event of an invasion. Despite achieving some local political influence, no member of the Jenkinson family who became a Member of Parliament stood out from the

⁸ *The House of Commons 1660-1690*, ed. Basil Duke Henning (3 vols., London: Secker & Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1983); *The House of Commons 1690-1715*, eds. Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley & D. W. Hayton (5 vols., London: Cambridge University Press for the History of Parliament Trust, 2002); *The House of Commons 1715-1754*, ed. Romney Sedgwick (2 vols., London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the History of Parliament Trust, 1970).

⁹ W. A. Speck, 'Sacheverell, Henry (bap. 1674, d. 1724),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlviii, 520-3; Geoffrey Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973).

¹⁰ Theodor Harmsen, 'Hearne, Thomas (bap. 1678, d. 1735),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxvi, 156-60; Theodor Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000).

crowd and left an indelible mark on British history, at least not until the late eighteenth century.¹¹

- The First Earl

Robert Banks Jenkinson's father, Charles Jenkinson, was born in 1727, and he inherited the family title and estates from Sir Banks Jenkinson, 6th Bt., in 1790, though by then he had already made a mark for himself in the world. His own father was a soldier, who fought with distinction at the battles of Dettingen in 1743 and Fontenoy in 1745, but he made little provision for the advancement of his children. With no choice but to make his own way through life, Charles Jenkinson abandoned a brief ecclesiastical career for a prolonged political one. He carefully solicited the patronage of a succession of men and ultimately in 1761 he entered the service of the third earl of Bute, who arranged for him to be elected to parliament that year. He stuck with Bute during the latter's difficult premiership in 1762-3.¹² He became attached and was devoted to George III, and he took a leading place among those men in parliament, loyal above all else to the interests of the crown, who became known as the King's Friends. He was thought by his contemporaries to have enormous influence over the king. George III exchanged letters on the death of Charles Jenkinson, in which the king paid tribute to his integrity and fidelity.¹³

Charles Jenkinson enjoyed a distinguished political career. He was sworn into the Privy Council in 1773, served as Secretary at War between 1778 and 1782, and, in 1786, he received a peerage and became Lord Hawkesbury. Also in 1786, he became

¹¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 9-10.

¹² Karl Wolfgang Schweizer, 'Stuart, John, third earl of Bute (1713-1792),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, liii, 173-9; Karl W. Schweizer (ed.), *Lord Bute* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988).

¹³ *The Later Correspondence of George III*, ed. A. Aspinall (5 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962-70), v, 160.

President of the Board of Trade and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and he sat in the cabinet from 1791 until 1804. In 1796 he was promoted to an earldom.¹⁴

(Robert Banks Jenkinson was known by the courtesy title of Lord Hawkesbury from that time.) Charles Jenkinson was very cautious and calculating. He earned a degree of respect from his contemporaries for his political ascent and abilities if not much genuine affection. Joseph Farington recorded in his diary the observation of an artist on meeting the peer: ‘Lord Liverpool, He also visited, who gave him an acct. of his life. – N. Dance thinks him a common kind of man, whom luck & perseverance have made.’¹⁵ There was at least an element of truth in this assessment of Robert Banks Jenkinson’s father.

Charles Jenkinson was not an outstanding parliamentarian and he much preferred to bury himself in detailed government deskbound work that took him behind the scenes of public life and along the corridors of power. He was capable and very knowledgeable, about economic matters in particular. Lord North described him in a letter to George III in 1779 as the fittest person to have sole direction of the finances of the nation.¹⁶ He produced several authoritative literary works on a range of issues, including *A Treatise on the Coins of the Realm; in a Letter to the King* in 1805. This treatise was republished a number of times, even as recently as 1968.

Robert Banks Jenkinson’s father did not neglect his private interests whilst in pursuit of public influence. He acquired a select collection of minor posts which brought him a comfortable income from the salaries attached to them. He purchased

¹⁴ He was privileged to receive the earldom of Liverpool on account of his support for the slave trade.

¹⁵ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, eds. Kenneth Garlick *et al.* (17 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1978-98), ii, 639.

¹⁶ *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783*, ed. John Fortescue (6 vols., London: Macmillan, 1928), iv, 264.

the lucrative office of Clerk of the Pells in Ireland in 1775, for example. In 1769 he married Amelia Watts, whose father had made a vast fortune from a close association with Clive 'of India' and the East India Company, and the massive extension of commercial interests in India in the wake of the victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757.¹⁷ It is of interest that her mother, and therefore the second earl of Liverpool's maternal grandmother, was in fact Eurasian.¹⁸ This somewhat unusual aspect of Liverpool's ancestry was not much remarked upon in society and did not arouse discernible racial prejudice.¹⁹ Amelia Watts died not long after giving birth to Liverpool in 1770. Charles Jenkinson married again in 1782 and had another two children. He spent his final years as an aged invalid before he died in 1808.²⁰

- School

Although Robert Banks Jenkinson lost his mother just after he was born, he was not deprived of female attention and gentler influences while he was growing up. Women from both sides of the family demonstrated a concern for his welfare. He often stayed with his paternal grandmother at the Cornwall family estate in Priors Barton.²¹ He

¹⁷ H. V. Bowen, 'Clive, Robert, first Baron Clive of Plassey (1725-1774),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, 166-76; Robert Harvey, *Clive* (London: Sceptre, 1998); Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London: Constable, 1974).

¹⁸ Geoffrey Moorhouse, *India Britannica* (London: Paladin, 1984), p. 136; Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Calcutta* (London: Phoenix, 1998), p. 42.

¹⁹ Liverpool was not ashamed of his ancestry and was prepared to take an interest in the welfare of his family in India during his early premiership: B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 133-57; Add. Mss. 38410, fos. 293-8, 318-23, 364-77; Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 19, 28-31, 41-3, 45-6, 47; *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830*, ed. A. Aspinall (3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), i, 337-8.

²⁰ *The Jenkinson Papers 1760-1766*, ed. Ninetta S. Jucker (London: Macmillan, 1949); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 8-11; John Cannon, 'Jenkinson, Charles, first earl of Liverpool (1729-1808),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 973-6; *The House of Commons 1754-1790*, eds. Lewis Namier & John Brooke (3 vols., London: Secker & Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1985).

²¹ William Hunt, rev. Clare Wilkinson, 'Cornwall, Charles Wolfran (1735-1789),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiii, 466-7.

even attended school there, but his formal regular education, which included dancing lessons with Monsieur Du Rosel, commenced at Albion House in Fulham. Jenkinson was a healthy boy, though he was diagnosed in 1781 with worms, and prescribed a course of enemas and aloes by Du Rosel!²²

In 1783 Jenkinson was placed in the care of Samuel Berdmore, the able headmaster, at Charterhouse, then in London and built on the site of a medieval plague pit.²³ His father was an Old Carthusian. Charles Jenkinson was very ambitious for his son and took a keen interest in his welfare and education. This is evident from a demanding, though also loving, letter young Robert, ‘My dear Bob’, received at school from his father in 1784. This letter is worth quoting at length:

I send you the enclosed letter, which I received from Sir Banks Jenkinson a few days ago, as you will see by the latter part of it how much we are all of us interested in your welfare; and I hope it will serve as an inducement to you to pursue your studies with great industry, as you will thereby secure to yourself the affection and support of every part of your family. You are so far advanced in your Latin and Greek that I have no doubt that by the time you leave the Charterhouse you will be properly master of those two languages; but I wish you at present to pay great attention to your exercises, in which you are not very forward, and I have on this head but one piece of advice to give you, which is, that you should not be satisfied in doing your exercises just so as to pass without censure, but always aim at perfection; and be assured that in doing so you will by degrees approach to it. I hope also that you will avail yourself of every leisure moment to apply yourself to algebra and the mathematics: you will thereby attain not only a knowledge of those sciences, but by an early acquaintance with them you will acquire a habit of reasoning closely and correctly on every subject, which will on all occasions be of infinite use to you. The hours which are not employed in the manner before mentioned you will give to the reading of history and books of criticism, and here the knowledge you have of the French language will furnish you with many excellent books. I would wish you for the present not

²² Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 11.

²³ He defended the Corn Law in the House of Lords on 15 March 1815 and stated: ‘and he had been educated in a school where he had been taught highly to value the commercial interest’; *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time* (41 vols. London: T. C. Hansard, 1812-20), xxx, 177; Anthony Quick, *Charterhouse* (London: James & James, 1990) Thompson Cooper, rev. S. J. Skedd, ‘Berdmore, Samuel (1739–1802),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2187>, accessed 24 Feb 2006> <www.charterhouse.org.uk>

to read any novels, as they will only waste your time, which you will find not more than sufficient for the pursuit of more useful and important studies. What I have just pointed out to you are the principal objects you should have in view; but believe me, in addition to all these it will be necessary that you should pay proper attention to your person. Every failing in this respect creates disgust, or exposes a man to ridicule in such a manner as to defeat the advantages he would otherwise derive from his parts and learning, or other accomplishments of greater importance. You will recollect the advice I have of late repeatedly given you on this subject, and I am sure you will attend to it, for you are just at the age when improper manners and tastes are acquired, which will become habitual if they are not now corrected. My letter is a long one: I am persuaded, however, that you will impute all I have written to the affection I bear you. Believe me, that the principal happiness I shall expect to enjoy in the decline of life is that which I shall derive from your prosperity and eminence. If I mistake not, there are others of our family who, like me, look forward with anxiety to the figure you will hereafter make in the world, and feel themselves interested in the character you will bear. It is my earnest wish and firm persuasion that we shall not be disappointed. Lady Cope and your cousins desire their love to you.²⁴

Jenkinson's affectionate father initiated his son into the world of politics at an early age. While he was still a boy, Jenkinson was introduced at home to several eminent public figures, including Lord Thurlow,²⁵ Edmund Burke, and William Pitt 'the Younger'.²⁶

- University

In 1787 Robert Banks Jenkinson matriculated under Cyril Jackson, the Dean, at Christ Church, Oxford. Jackson was widely renowned and highly respected for his reform of Christ Church, which under him became the college, both academically and politically, to go to in the late eighteenth century.²⁷ His father asked the Jubb family to look out especially for his son. George Jubb was a professor at the university and a

²⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 6-8.

²⁵ G. M. Ditchfield, 'Thurlow, Edward, first Baron Thurlow (1731-1806),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, liv, 715-20.

²⁶ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 11-13.

²⁷ W. R. Ward, 'Jackson, Cyril (1746-1819),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 470-3; E. G. W. Bill, *Education at Christ Church Oxford 1660-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

friend of the family. He offered to find a suite of rooms for Jenkinson. (He died of gout at the end of the year.)²⁸ Anne Jubb promised to love Jenkinson as if he was her own son.²⁹ She acknowledged his ‘extraordinary abilities’ in a letter in 1786, and Jenkinson was soon acknowledged at university as being highly intelligent and extremely pleasant.³⁰ George Canning, a university friend, described him as ‘very clever and very remarkably good-natured’.³¹ Jenkinson was impressive, but he was also somewhat arrogant. Lady Stafford wrote about him after a visit to his father’s house:

Mr. Jenkinson was at Home, from Oxford – he is well educated, well informed, and sensible. To you, *you know* I always say freely what I think, I will therefore tell you, that if he had been my Son, I should have wished him to be more inclined to listen to what the Chancellor and Mr. Pitt said, than to express his own Ideas upon Politicks, Government, and Commerce, which did not appear to be the case, with him; but he spoke well, and his Language was good, and it was obvious that he had really a great Deal of Knowledge. I have a Notion that at Oxford, if they are good Scholars, they contract High Ideas of themselves, which wear off when they come to live with the rest of the world.³²

Jenkinson worked very hard at university. He performed to a satisfactory level in the college examinations on Herodotus in his first year. He read ancient texts, including Plato, and Livy was perused for relaxation!³³ Jenkinson read modern works as well, including Mitford’s *The History of Greece* (1784-1810). Herbert Croft, the author, permitted Jenkinson to borrow other books from him, including a book by

²⁸ E. J. Rapson, rev. John D. Haigh, ‘Jubb, George (1717-1787),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxx, 810.

²⁹ Liverpool was informed of her death on 25 February 1814 and she was described in the letter as a ‘grandmother’ to him: B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 26-7.

³⁰ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 13.

³¹ Hinde, *George Canning*, p.17.

³² *Lord Granville Leveson Gower (First Earl Granville)*, ed. Lady Granville (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1916), i, 8.

³³ Winston Spencer Churchill wrote in his autobiography in 1930: ‘Mr Gladstone read Homer for fun, which I thought served him right.’ *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 88.

David Hume (1711-76), the philosopher.³⁴ Jenkinson accepted and acted upon the criticism he received from his tutor, and sought to please his father. John Frank Newton, another university friend, recollected in 1828:

When at the University, he was not only a first-rate scholar, but he had confessedly acquired a greater share of general knowledge than perhaps any under-graduate of that day. He was an excellent historian, and his attention had been directed so early by his father to the contending interests of the European nations, that intricate political questions were already familiar to his mind.³⁵

He was industrious, and also rather serious. He did not fritter away his entire annual allowance of £200 in the course of his first year. He completely avoided frivolity, and indeed absolutely anything that might just conceivably have adversely affected his future prospects, and he mixed with only a small group of close friends, including Lord Granville Leveson-Gower.³⁶ Jenkinson reflected in 1824, 'I had the good fortune of living in a very quiet and orderly set.'³⁷ Jenkinson and Canning were friends at university and even became known as 'the Inseparables'.³⁸ He spent his first Christmas at university with Lord Henry John Spencer (1770-95) at Blenheim, but politely refused to take part in the Marlborough family's amateur dramatics.³⁹

Jenkinson allowed himself one slightly rebellious diversion at university, but even then only for a short time. He was a leading member of a debating society. He was joined by Canning, William Drummond,⁴⁰ Charles Goddard,⁴¹ Newton and

³⁴ W. P. Courtney, rev. Rebecca Mills, 'Croft, Sir Herbert, fifth baronet (1751-1816),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv, 241-3.

³⁵ John Frank Newton, *Early Days of the Right Honorable George Canning, First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer* (London: 1828), p. 15.

³⁶ K. D. Reynolds, 'Gower, Granville Leveson-, first Earl Granville (1773-1846),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 118-19.

³⁷ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁹ G. Le G. Norgate, rev. Stephen M. Lee, 'Spencer, George, fourth duke of Marlborough (1739-1817),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, li, 837-8.

⁴⁰ Muriel E. Chamberlain, 'Drummond, Sir William, of Logiealmond (1770?-1828),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xvi, 993.

Spencer. They wore a uniform of a distinctive brown coat with velvet collar and cuffs. The letters D, C, P and F, representing those great orators, ancient and modern, Demosthenes, Cicero, Pitt and Fox, were emblazoned, intricately entwined, on the buttons. The group met in secret and discussed current affairs. Jenkinson's lifelong political attitudes were already determined and clear by then. It was usual for him to speak in defence of William Pitt's government.⁴² Canning often spoke against him. He admitted in 1788 that these encounters were for him at least a preparation for when they would meet again in public life:

What my reasons for first becoming a part of the institution were, I protest I cannot at present call to my mind. Perhaps I was inflamed by the novelty of the plan, perhaps influenced by your example; perhaps I was not quite without an idea of trying my strength with Jenkinson. Connected with men of avowed enmity in the political world, professing opposite principles, and looking forward to some distant period when we might be ranged against each other on a larger field, we were perhaps neither of us without the vanity of wishing to obtain an early ascendancy over the other.⁴³

- Paris

Robert Banks Jenkinson's father made the necessary arrangements for his son to visit the continent before he graduated from university. Monsieur Boutin, an acquaintance, was asked to welcome young Jenkinson to Paris in 1789. Jenkinson used the opportunity to improve his French and to see the sights of the capital, including the Tuileries palace by the Seine where the royal family would soon be held under house arrest.⁴⁴ He was also introduced into polite society, and given lessons in fencing and

⁴¹ W. M. Jacob, 'Goddard, Charles (1769/70-1848),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 540-1.

⁴² John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Years of Acclaim* (London: Constable, 1984).

⁴³ Newton, *Early Days of the Right Honorable George Canning, First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer*, pp. 20-1.

⁴⁴ Deborah Cadbury, *The Lost King of France* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003).

horse riding. He learned about the fine arts as well. It is possible that Jenkinson was presented to the royal court at Versailles.

The young gentleman impressed his host. Boutin confirmed that Jenkinson was intelligent and pleasant. He found Jenkinson to be shy and reserved, but also sensible and wise. Another Frenchman made some positive remarks about Jenkinson. Monsieur Barthélemy wrote, ‘Sa Modestie et la Simplicité de ses Manières font un Contraste très intéressant avec la fermeté de son Caractère. Son Coeur est excellent, sa Conduite a été parfaite.’⁴⁵ (‘His modesty and simplicity of manner, form an interesting contrast to the firmness of his character. He has an excellent heart and his conduct has been perfect.’)⁴⁶

One of the sights seen by Jenkinson while he was resident in Paris is worthy of particular note considering his chosen career. He bravely witnessed the storming of the Bastille prison on 14 July 1789. It is unclear what impression this dramatic and violent event had on the young man, but it would be unlikely to have left him sympathetic to revolution. He remembered it, however, since he brought up the experience in a speech to parliament in 1819.⁴⁷ He wrote to his father at the time: ‘How this matter will end it seems more and more difficult every day to determine.’⁴⁸ In fact, the violent forces unleashed by the French Revolution would not be ultimately contained, until Jenkinson was Prime Minister and Napoleon was defeated at the battle of Waterloo in 1815.

On his return to Great Britain, Jenkinson continued to be trained for the career in public life set out for him and supervised by his father. John Reeves was engaged

⁴⁵ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, xli, 500.

⁴⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 14.

to instruct him in the law.⁴⁹ In preparation for his lessons, Jenkinson was asked to read Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) and Schomberg's *An Historical and Chronological View of Roman Law* (1785).

Charles Jenkinson chose to read the former work with his son. It was possibly also at this time that Jenkinson picked up some tips from Henry Charles William Angelo (1756-1835) at his fencing academy.⁵⁰ Jenkinson graduated from university in 1790.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Philip Schofield, 'Reeves, John (1752-1829),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvii, 351-2.

⁵⁰ J. D. Aylward, *The House of Angelo* (London: The Batchworth Press, 1953); Malcolm Fare, 'Angelo, Domenico [formerly Angiolo Domenico Maria Tremamondo] (1717-1802),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ii, 154-6.

⁵¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 12-17.

Chapter Four

Member of Parliament

1790-1801

- Rye

The Honourable Robert Banks Jenkinson won the right in 1790 to place not only the letters MA but also MP after his name. His father ensured that Jenkinson was returned to parliament in the general election called that year by arranging for his son to stand for two seats at once.¹ He triumphed at the polls in the pocket borough of Appleby in Westmorland, having obtained the patronage of the earl of Lonsdale on the understanding that he would always vote as his father did, and in Rye. Jenkinson chose to sit for the latter constituency, presumably to avoid the inconvenience of being at the beck and call of the Lowther family. It was calculated that 2,187 people lived in Rye in 1801, though T. H. B. Oldfield, the reformer, estimated in 1794 that only 6 of them had the vote. The votes cast in the seat belonged to members of the Lamb family and they placed them at the disposal of the government in return for its favour. Jenkinson offered the Lamb family several honours in his gift, including the desirable consulship of Lisbon in 1802, during the period he represented the

¹ His father was virtually confined to his home in old age by poor health and in the 1800s he was quite incapable of exercising the kind of domineering influence over his son that he had once done. The first earl, nevertheless, did what he could to help Jenkinson. In 1801 he sent his son and daughter-in-law a Christmas gift of a string of sausages and other edible items. In 1802, rather more significantly, Jenkinson's father covered the bill of £2,596 6s. 6d. for sundry expenses presented to his son by his constituency on top of his usual election costs. The first earl urged his son on in his career in 1804: 'The only pleasure I have is in hearing what is read to me, and in the enjoyment of what I hear of your Publick Conduct.' This letter was sent with a present for Jenkinson's wife of a pineapple; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 45.

constituency of Rye.²

It was decided that Jenkinson would not take up his parliamentary seat while he was still under age. He chose in the meantime to continue his travels, and his education, on the continent, as was the custom in the eighteenth century, by means of the Grand Tour.³ He visited Rome, the Eternal City, and witnessed an eruption of Vesuvius in 1791. He packed in his luggage a selection of books, including some by Virgil and Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-9). It is evident from a letter that he wrote to his father from abroad that he and his family had long ago abandoned any lingering attachment to the lost cause of Jacobitism. Jenkinson passed on a less than complimentary anecdote about the Stuart claimant to the throne.⁴

After returning home, Jenkinson paid a visit to his old college. At least one of his friends was unimpressed by his talents and found him to be arrogant. Lord Granville Leveson-Gower wrote:

Jenkinson has been here for a few days. We were not upon such intimate terms as formerly; there were some traits in his character I heard from different people (Strathaven among others) which inclined me not to look so favourably with regard to him as before, and his excessive importance (unless one is prejudiced in his favour) becomes very disgusting. I do not think his abilities are of the highest class, but a wonderful fluency of words and no share of *mauvaise honte* may cause his making some figure in the House of Commons.⁵

² R. G. Thorne, 'Appleby', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ii, 408-10; J. V. Beckett, 'Lowther, James, earl of Lonsdale (1736-1802),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiv, 625-8; J. M. Collinge, 'Rye', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ii, 471-3; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 17.

³ Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).

⁴ Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Pretender, died in 1788 and his brother, a cardinal, assumed the title of 'Henry IX'. Jenkinson informed his father that the cleric had asked his secretary to read aloud Edmund Burke's recent pamphlet on the French Revolution which he understood included a defence of the church. When the servant, however, reached the part in which Burke defended the Glorious Revolution, the pretender suddenly ended the reading, left the room and had not opened the book since; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 17-18.

⁵ *Lord Granville Leveson Gower (First Earl Granville)*, i, 35.

Certainly, Jenkinson was perfectly capable of being insufferably pompous at this stage in his career. He wrote to George Canning:

I took my Seat a few Days before Parliament was prorogued, & gave a vote on Sheridan's resolution on the Revenue. The great application which you know, I have given to the subject of Finance, & the great extent of Knowledge, & Information, which I have acquired, rendered me a very proper Judge, on a Subject, which has so puzzled some of the ablest & most experienced men of the Day & I fell great Pleasure, in having done my Duty to my Constituents, so completely as in not hazarding for the first Time my opinion, on any Subject, on which I could ever be supposed ignorant.⁶

- MP

Jenkinson delivered his maiden speech to parliament in 1792. He led the government response to an opposition censure motion tabled by Samuel Whitbread.⁷ Catherine II 'the Great' had ordered Potemkin to capture the citadel of Ochakov, in modern Ukraine, on the Black Sea in 1788.⁸ The administration was heavily criticised for advocating a policy of rearmament in the face of this aggression on the part of Russia.⁹ Charles Duke Yonge commented much later: 'Our Parliamentary annals have recorded no maiden speech which made so great an impression.'¹⁰ Jenkinson gave a fine maiden speech, but it was not outstanding. One can assume that he was coached by his father and others for his oratorical debut. He defended the administration

⁶ Brown, 'The Early Political Career of Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool 1790-1812', p. 62.

⁷ D. R. Fisher, 'Whitbread, Samuel (1764-1815),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lviii, 526-9; Roger Fulford, *Samuel Whitbread 1764-1815* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

⁸ Simon Dixon, *Catherine the Great* (Harlow: Longman, 2001); Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001).

⁹ John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Reluctant Transition* (London: Constable, 1983).

¹⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 17.

effectively and explained competently why British interests were threatened by the seizure of Ochakov.¹¹

The Prime Minister, William Pitt ‘the Younger’, was impressed by the performance. He began his own speech summing up the debate with some generous words of praise for his young supporter:

In stating the grounds on which he should have to call the attention of the House, he should endeavour to be as clear and as concise as possible; and notwithstanding the eloquence with which they had just heard one side of the subject maintained, he referred with confidence to the principles developed in the debate of yesterday, in a speech, which was still in the recollection of the House, and which, regarded as a specimen of clear eloquence, strong sense, justness of reasoning, and extensive knowledge, was, he believed wholly unexampled in any public assembly on a first essay, and would have done honour to the most practised speaker or statesman that ever delivered his sentiments within those walls.¹²

It could be argued of course that it was hardly surprising that the premier would publicly and fulsomely express his admiration for a speaker in support of the government which was under sustained and major attack, but Pitt also praised Jenkinson’s maiden speech in a private letter to George III. ‘The Motion was opposed first by Mr. Jenkinson in a speech which went thro’ the whole subject in a manner so masterly both in point of matter and stile as to excite general admiration.’¹³

The younger Pitt was not the only person who expressed his satisfaction at Jenkinson’s first parliamentary performance. Jenkinson’s father received many letters paying tribute to his son. John Moore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, congratulated him. Edmund Burke noted the ‘bright appearance of the Star which rose in the House of Commons on Wednesday night’.¹⁴ Henry Dundas wrote: ‘Your son has just made

¹¹ *Parliamentary History*, xxix, 918-26.

¹² *Ibid.*, xxix, 995.

¹³ *The Later Correspondence of George III*, i, 584.

¹⁴ Brown, ‘The Early Political Career of Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool 1790-1812’, p. 25.

one of the finest speeches I ever heard. Mr. Pitt thinks exactly as I do with regard to it.’¹⁵ Charles Long reported that ‘all parties’ agreed that Jenkinson’s maiden speech had been better than that delivered by Pitt himself.¹⁶ John Robinson commented:

Fully possessed of himself throughout, in a speech considerably above an hour on his legs, he went on without a falter or the least hesitation, through a system of the politics of Europe and a defence of Administration, in a manner of declamation and style of language and debate that was the admiration of all.¹⁷

Dudley Ryder also wrote to Jenkinson’s father, ‘If he had been in Parliament these twenty years, your warmest wishes must have been gratified with so wonderful a proof of abilities and judgment.’¹⁸ Charles Jenkinson was unlikely, however, to have received critical reviews of his son’s oratorical debut from his government colleagues.

A number of members of the opposition were also complimentary about Jenkinson’s maiden speech when they spoke in the course of the debate. It would appear, however, that they did this not just because they were truly impressed by the new speaker. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was one of those who praised Jenkinson in the House of Commons, yet he wrote later: ‘Their side execrably – except your Jenkinson whom we all agreed to puff to enrage Pitt tho’ in fact it remains to be proved whether he has anything in him or not – I think he has tho’ Pitt made a miserable figure yesterday after Fox.’¹⁹

It is difficult to come to a firm conclusion about the reception given to Liverpool’s maiden speech. Perhaps it would be fair to say that Liverpool delivered a

¹⁵ *The Later Correspondence of George III*, i, 584.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *The Letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. Cecil Price (3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), i, 238; A. Norman Jeffares, ‘Sheridan, Richard Brinsley (1751–1816),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25367>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

fine first parliamentary performance, but not one that indicated that he deserved to be placed among the ranks of the greatest parliamentary speakers.

- The Cursus Honorum/The Greasy Pole

Jenkinson was an active and accomplished parliamentarian. He gave his loyalty to the government and was ready to turn out in all weathers to defend it against attacks from the opposition. He acted as a teller for the government in divisions from as early as 1792, sat on committees, joined delegations and facilitated the passage of legislation. He was appointed to a secret committee on political sedition in 1794 and he was entrusted with almost single-handedly carrying a bill through parliament in 1800 dealing with the availability of bread and flour in the capital. Jenkinson socialised in the house that he took for himself near parliament. A number of constituencies, probably impressed by his pedigree and conduct, canvassed him about representing them in the House of Commons. He declined becoming a candidate in Bristol or Liverpool in 1796, and chose instead to stay in Rye for the duration of his career in the lower chamber.²⁰

Although never great, Jenkinson continued in general to be an effective and competent parliamentary speaker. He was no Demosthenes or Cicero, no Pitt or Fox. He did not use grand rhetoric and magnificent gestures. His style was simple. His speeches were clear and judicious, and straight to the point. They were informed, authoritative and persuasive. Jenkinson gave the impression that he knew what he was talking about. He impressed other MPs on occasion with his oratory. William Pitt wrote again about his young friend to George III in 1793: ‘Mr. Jenkinson in a speech

²⁰ D. R. Fisher, ‘Bristol’, in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ii, 167-72; M. H. Port & R. G. Thorne, ‘Liverpool’, in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ii, 228-34.

of uncommon ability and effect moved the previous question.²¹ George Rose also expressed pleasure at his intervention in this particular debate: ‘The previous question moved by Jenkinson after a most incomparable speech disposed of them by 270 to 44.’²²

His parliamentary speeches did not win universal praise, however. One person was quite scornful about an early performance of his and even held him in some contempt. Sir Gilbert Elliot Murray Kynynmound, 4th Bt., a political opponent, wrote in 1792:

Young Jenkinson then spoke and proposed a scheme of his own. It was a set speech, composed and delivered in mimicry rather than imitation of Pitt, but so inferior, and I think so puerile in manner in spite of all the confidence, arrogance, and conceit that could belong to a veteran, that he put me in mind of a monkey brought in to dance on the rope after a principal performer. He will do, however, in the world; for those qualities which make a man odious and unamiable in private life are very successful in public, especially when added to great application, and probably both to ambition and every other branch of the selfish and interested passions. I was, on the whole, disappointed with him, but he is nevertheless an extraordinary boy. He makes more faces than his father, and is so ludicrous in action and grimace that his language has hardly fair play.²³

One speech given by Jenkinson was even widely ridiculed. In 1794 he intervened in a debate on British military blunders to declare that the right thing to do now was to strike at the heart of the French enemy and to march at once on Paris. This strategy appeared amateurish and ludicrous, and Jenkinson was taunted about it for years to come. Every now and again the opposition would attempt to put him off his stride when he spoke by bringing up the ‘March on Paris’.

²¹ *The Later Correspondence of George III*, ii, 8.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot First Earl of Minto From 1751 to 1806, When His Public Life in Europe Was Closed by His Appointment to the Vice-Royalty of India*, ed. Lady Minto (3 vols., London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1874), ii, 4-5.

Jenkinson adopted a position on the most controversial contemporary issues that placed him firmly in the conservative ideological mainstream. He strongly and stubbornly supported the war against France. He spoke against Charles James Fox's pacific proposals in 1793, defended the military expedition to Dunkirk in 1794, and he raised his voice against coming to terms with the French in 1800. He supported the suspension of *habeas corpus*, bills to crack down on sedition and the introduction of income tax. He argued powerfully and persistently against parliamentary reform. Charles Grey's motion in favour of political reform in 1793 was opposed by Jenkinson. Jenkinson spoke in favour of maintaining the slave trade on several occasions.

Jenkinson gradually earned promotion to ministerial high office. He was invited to a government meeting at 10 Downing Street as early in his career as 1792. Between 1793 and 1799 he served as a commissioner on the Board of Control which supervised the administration of India. Karl Anton Hickel painted a detailed picture of the House of Commons in session on 12 February 1793 in 1793-5 and in it Jenkinson can be identified sitting on the government frontbench.²⁴ Jenkinson served as a member of the Board of Trade in 1799. He also became Master of the Mint that year and held this office until 1801. He received a salary of £3,000 per annum and was sworn into the Privy Council.²⁵

²⁴ <www.npg.org.uk>

²⁵ R. G. Thorne, 'JENKINSON, Hon. Robert Banks', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 300-5; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 8-34.

Chapter Five

Foreign Secretary

1801-4

- Cabinet

In 1801, having failed to overcome the fierce resistance of the ailing king to a measure of emancipation for Roman Catholics following the recent union with Ireland and thoroughly exhausted after seventeen years in the highest office, William Pitt ‘the Younger’ finally resigned. Henry Addington, the Speaker of the House of Commons since 1789, dutifully accepted the difficult commission to form a government. He was forced to cobble together a Pittite administration without Pitt and many of his most prominent friends who preferred to leave office with him. Robert Banks Jenkinson, now Lord Hawkesbury, likeable, capable and dependable, and unconvinced of the need for pressing the issue of Catholic emancipation, found himself appointed to the cabinet as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.¹

Although he now occupied one of the most prestigious and powerful ministerial posts in the kingdom, he was in many ways in an unenviable position. He was a senior member of a weak government which was starved of the services, indeed even the support, of George Canning and his friends, which did not have the absolute support of Pitt, Henry Dundas and Lord Grenville, the most talented men in the previous administration, and which was led by an untried premier who had himself not held ministerial high office.² The frail administration was further undermined at the very start by the lack of a forthright demonstration of royal confidence because the king was incapacitated by illness.

¹ Piers Mackesy, *War without Victory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

² Canning wrote: ‘Pitt is to Addington as London is to Paddington.’ *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 74.

Hawkesbury also faced several difficulties at the Foreign Office. His promotion had been sudden, surprising and steep. His youth and inexperience could not be expected to go down too well with the country's diplomatic staff and with the foreign ambassadors in residence in the capital. Hawkesbury would have little room for manoeuvre in terms of policy because the ministry had been founded on the principles of setting aside the fraught issue of Roman Catholic political rights and making peace with France. The war, moreover, was going very badly. The latest grand coalition ranged against France had collapsed, and Russia, Denmark and Prussia had formed the League of Armed Neutrality in 1800, an alliance designed to protect the rights of neutral ships against encroachments by the Royal Navy. In the negotiations, furthermore, he would have to grapple with one of the most formidable statesmen in the world, namely Talleyrand.³

Hawkesbury's credibility, moreover, was undermined from the start by the Russian minister, Vorontsov. Hawkesbury was never very likely to have succeeded in ingratiating himself with Vorontsov because the latter deeply regretted the change of government, was a close friend of the previous occupant of the Foreign Office, Grenville, and vehemently opposed the opening of negotiations for peace. Any chance he had of establishing good relations with Vorontsov was soon lost forever, however, when Hawkesbury inadvertently offended the Russian ambassador and unfortunately aroused his implacable hostility. He did so with an early insistence on observing strict diplomatic protocol and with his ingrained caution which gave an impression of tardiness and even indolence.⁴ For the duration of his tenure at the Foreign Office, Hawkesbury had to contend with the Russian minister constantly running him down.

³ Philip G. Dwyer, *Talleyrand* (London: Longman, 2002).

⁴ Hawkesbury asked for documentary proof of Vorontsov's diplomatic status before dealing with him officially.

George Rose noted the indiscreet, and frankly absurd, remarks made to him by

Vorontsov in 1803:

He assured me, most solemnly, that Lord Hawkesbury is absolutely incapable of transacting common business. ... On the whole, that there is an actual imbecility in his Lordship, as a man of business, which no man can have a comprehension of who has heard him speak in Parliament, or who has read his speeches.⁵

- Pitt and Grenville

Despite these particular problems encountered by the Foreign Secretary, Hawkesbury in many other respects seems to have got off to a flying start in his new career. His instinctive consideration for others and his natural kindness were appreciated by the officials and dignitaries he came across on entering the department. For example, he demonstrated a marked willingness to grant interviews to ambassadors. Hawkesbury, moreover, courted William Pitt's support. He dined regularly and occasionally stayed over with the former premier, and he kept him constantly informed of the progress of the negotiations for peace. Hawkesbury earned a magnanimous tribute from Pitt when the latter got to his feet in the House of Commons not long after leaving the highest office:

Again he would say, that if he saw a noble lord called to the situation of a secretary of state, he was ready to ask, without the fear of receiving any answer that would disappoint him, whether gentlemen on the other side knew any man who was superior to that noble lord; who for the last ten years had more experience of state affairs, and who had given greater proof of steady attention to public business; of a better understanding; of more information; who possessed in a greater degree all those qualities which go to qualify a man for great affairs? He was ready to ask gentlemen on the other side, if they knew any one among themselves who was superior to his noble friend? Let them give him the answer.⁶

⁵ *The Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose*, ed. Leveson Vernon Harcourt (2 vols., London: Richard Bentley, 1860), ii, 46.

⁶ *Parliamentary History*, xxxv, 1114.

Pitt went on to declare that only Charles James Fox was more than equal to his noble friend in capacity for business.

Hawkesbury also cultivated a friendship with Lord Grenville, his distinguished predecessor at the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretary wrote a warm letter to Grenville shortly after receiving his appointment. It had the required effect. Grenville replied, 'There is nobody to whom I should with more pleasure give up the very difficult and arduous situation which I have held than to yourself.'⁷ He brought his successor up to speed with the state of affairs in the department and offered his advice.⁸ He ended his letter, 'Let me know whenever you wish to see me, and be assured I shall always be at your orders, not on the footing of an ex-minister, but on that of a sincere friend and cordial well-wisher.'⁹ Hawkesbury sought to retain the support of his sincere friend and cordial well-wisher. He sent Grenville diplomatic papers for extensive criticism, deferentially asked for his learned opinion and sprinkled his allies with patronage. Grenville's initial goodwill towards Hawkesbury, however, was lost over the terms of peace arrived at in the difficult negotiations with France.¹⁰

- Amiens

Hawkesbury was naturally preoccupied at the Foreign Office with affairs on the continent. In 1801, with victory over the Danes at the battle of Copenhagen and assassination of the tsar, the League of Armed Neutrality broke up. The Foreign

⁷ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick (Vol. 6, Dublin: John Falconer for His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), p. 443.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 443-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹⁰ Grenville also came to resent Hawkesbury for his opposition to the return of the former minister to the cabinet in 1802-3.

Secretary agreed a neutrality convention with the Russians and signed peace preliminaries with Monsieur Otto, the French representative in London. A treaty ending the war was sealed at Amiens in 1802. Great Britain surrendered all of her colonial acquisitions, except Ceylon and Trinidad, and the king renounced his ancient claim to the throne of France, and France promised to evacuate the south of Italy and compensate the house of Orange for the loss of their estates. With the restoration of full normal diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Foreign Secretary received a gift from Napoleon of a fine china dinner-service, and a blue and white enamel snuff-box adorned in diamonds on the lid with the letter N. Hawkesbury was criticised for the terms of peace with France, for giving up too much in the negotiations. The government had retained what it had set out to retain, however, and the treaty was accepted by parliament without much difficulty with most members seemingly willing to accept that the deal agreed by the administration was probably as good as could have been expected under the circumstances. The government had come away from the negotiating table if not in glory then at least without dishonour.

Hawkesbury impressed Members of Parliament with his performance at the despatch box after presenting the Russian convention and French preliminaries in 1801. Isaac Corry wrote, 'Lord Hawkesbury was able and successful in his speech beyond former character.'¹¹ He went on: 'On the Convention Lord Hawkesbury yesterday was excellent: his character in the House of Commons rises daily and justly. His speech was better than that on the peace.'¹² Lord Muncaster also paid tribute to Hawkesbury's oratorical efforts:

¹¹ *The Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester Speaker of the House of Commons 1802-1817*, ed. Lord Colchester (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1861), i, 376.

¹² *Ibid.*, i, 378.

You do not need from me any character of the debate, but I cannot help saying to you that Lord Hawkesbury's was the most chaste speech of a man of business I almost ever heard. ... Lord Hawkesbury was better and more splendid than ever upon the treaty with France.¹³

Hawkesbury was himself so pleased with his speech to parliament in 1802 on the peace treaty with France that there was even some talk of him having it published.

The peace of Amiens did not last, however. Napoleon behaved aggressively towards his neighbours, including advances in Italy and Switzerland, and Great Britain proved reluctant to evacuate Malta without a guarantee of security for the island. The French would not make a sign of good faith and Britain was not horrified at the thought of a return to arms having improved relations with the Russians, reflecting on Nelson's triumphs at sea and enjoying an economic recovery. Diplomatic attitudes hardened, rearmament was authorised and war resumed in 1803. Hostilities reopened with the capitulation of Hanover. The Foreign Secretary survived the ordeal of explaining this turn of events to parliament, though it was a considerable strain on his nerves. James Archibald Stuart Wortley observed, 'His speech was a very good one, and had he not been quite exhausted, would have been very eloquent and fine towards the end of it, but poor fellow he was so tired as almost to have totally lost his voice.'¹⁴

Hawkesbury's speech on this occasion won some admiration even from members of the opposition in the lower chamber. Richard Brinsley Sheridan wrote:

Lord Hawkesbury began the business with a calm, temperate, and sensible speech – and tho' I cannot say at all brilliant or satisfactory (and with bad taste too I thought in two or three of his stale quotations), was upon the whole a judicious, imposing, and statesmanlike Speech.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*, 379.

¹⁴ Caroline Grosvenor, *The First Lady Wharnccliffe and Her Family (1779-1856)* (2 vols., London: William Heinemann, 1927), i, 88.

¹⁵ Walter Sichel, *Sheridan* (2 vols., London: Constable, 1909), ii, 441.

Thomas Creevey agreed, 'Lord Hawkesbury then began and made a very elaborate speech of two hours, containing little inflammatory matter, and being a fair and reasonable representation of his case and justification of the war.'¹⁶

Nevertheless, Hawkesbury could be criticised for having to break a peace that he had agreed only two years earlier. The impression was created that Hawkesbury had not been an entirely successful Foreign Secretary.¹⁷

- The United States of America

Hawkesbury served the government in other areas of policy than its relations with France and in other roles. He sensitively handled the delicate relations with the United States of America. There were several unresolved thorny issues between Great Britain and her former colonies that demanded his attention, such as the Canadian-American boundary. Talks were held with the American ambassador, Rufus King, and conventions were signed in 1802 and 1803 settling their differences on a number of matters. British subjects were provided with compensation for unpaid debts incurred by American citizens before the revolution and the border between New Brunswick and Maine was agreed.

Hawkesbury sought to advance a better understanding between Britain and the USA. President Thomas Jefferson waged a campaign against the Barbary pirates of Tripoli between 1801 and 1805. Hawkesbury placed British bases in the Mediterranean Sea, including Gibraltar, at the disposal of the American armed forces. In 1803 the Foreign Secretary refused to let America's vast land deal with France, the Louisiana Purchase, poison Anglo-American relations. He also instructed Anthony

¹⁶ *The Creevey Papers*, ed. John Gore (London: The Folio Society, 1970), p. 15.

¹⁷ John D. Grainger, *The Amiens Truce* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004).

Merry on leaving to take up his post as British ambassador to the USA that he had no specific orders for him other than to endeavour to cultivate a good understanding.¹⁸

- Leader of the House of Lords

Hawkesbury was of use to the administration as a speaker in the House of Commons. He did this with such effect that in 1803 he was asked to move to the House of Lords with the title of Lord Hawkesbury and to lead for the ministry there against the opposition which had recently been strengthened by Grenville's decision to join it. Robert Hobart, the Secretary of State for War, explained, 'Lord Hawkesbury has a readiness and confidence about him that will be useful in the House of Lords, and which will put the business there upon a footing that will be extremely advantageous to the present administration.'¹⁹ By leaving the lower chamber, Hawkesbury was acting in a loyal and selfless fashion. By accepting elevation to the upper chamber, Hawkesbury was fulfilling the wish of the Prime Minister and raising the odds against his succeeding to the premiership because it was increasingly believed that it was better for the Prime Minister to be in the House of Commons.²⁰

¹⁸ Richard Buel, 'King, Rufus (1755-1827),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxi, 673-4; Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1967); Malcolm Lester, 'Merry, Anthony (1756-1835),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxvii, 921; Malcolm Lester, *Anthony Merry* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1978).

¹⁹ Lord Auckland, *The Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord Auckland* (4 vols., London: Richard Bentley, 1862), iv, 186.

²⁰ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 35-55; Philip Ziegler, *Addington* (London: Collins, 1965); Charles John Fedorak, *Henry Addington, Prime Minister, 1801-1804* (Akron: Akron University Press, 2002); J. E. Cookson, 'Addington, Henry, first Viscount Sidmouth (1757-1844),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, i, 303-11; Philip Ziegler, 'Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 235-49.

Chapter Six

Home Secretary

1804-9

- The Return of William Pitt ‘the Younger’

With the resumption of conflict between Great Britain and France in 1803, the government under Henry Addington fought in vain to retain the confidence of the House of Commons. The administration quite simply did not seem up to the task in hand, waging the war against a very formidable enemy to a successful conclusion. It also appeared somewhat peculiar that William Pitt ‘the Younger’ should be left to languish on the backbenches with the country under threat of invasion. The Foreign Secretary, though he must have been acutely aware of the predicament in which the ministry found itself, remained as loyal as he could be to the Prime Minister. Pitt took private soundings about the possibility of his return to the premiership in 1804 from members of the cabinet. Portland, Eldon, Chatham, Castlereagh, Yorke and Hobart all strongly believed that the administration had to be strengthened by a return of Pitt to the highest office. Pitt informed his old ally, Viscount Melville, that this sentiment was shared by the Foreign Secretary: ‘I believe too by Lord Hawkesbury, but of him I have not heard it so pointedly.’¹ When his majority in the lower chamber fell to low double figures, Addington resigned and Pitt returned to head the new administration.

Pitt implausibly told Lord Hawkesbury that the earl of Harrowby could only accept the Foreign Office on health grounds. It would seem more likely that Pitt sought not to antagonise the Grenvillites further, who wished to see a broad-based national administration, who refused to join the government unless Charles James Fox was included in the arrangement and who had opposed the continental policy of the

¹ *Secret Correspondence*, ed. Lord Mahon (London: Spottiswoodes & Shaw, 1852), p. 28.

previous ministry, by leaving Hawkesbury as Foreign Secretary. Hawkesbury put his own ambition to one side again and fitted in with the arrangement thought best by the Prime Minister, and became Secretary of State for the Home Department. His value to Pitt, nevertheless, was clear. To persuade Hawkesbury to move, to sweeten the bitter pill he had to swallow, he agreed to retain Thomas Wallace, an old university friend of Hawkesbury's, as a commissioner at the Board of Control.²

- The Home Department

As Home Secretary, Hawkesbury was responsible for a wide range of complicated issues. The focus of his attention of course was on the maintenance of law and order. The welfare of the population in the capital was of particular concern to him. He took an interest in even quite small matters in this area. He wrote to the peer in charge of the parks in the metropolis in 1808:

Many persons having been found lately loitering about St. James's Park every Evening after Dark who are known to have unnatural propensities, and to meet there for the purpose of making assignations with each other, as a means of in some degree removing the nuisance I take the liberty of suggesting to your Lordship that Buckingham Gate and the Stable Yard Gate (which are now kept open all night) should be locked at the same time the other Gates of the Park are locked.³

It was his responsibility to keep the peace not just in London but across the country. He monitored the activities of the intelligence service and deployed the army to trouble spots. In 1807 the Home Secretary authorised the interception of correspondence in Bath relating to a number of individuals and concerning the Bank of England, and Hawkesbury, at the request of the magistrates in the city, ordered a unit of cavalry to York in 1808. He also formulated government policy on the trade

² George Stronach, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Wallace, Thomas, Baron Wallace (1768-1844),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lvi, 945.

³ Brown, 'The Early Political Career of Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool 1790-1812', pp. 222-3.

unions and corresponded on this matter with the Attorney-General, Spencer Perceval.⁴ He supervised as well the administration of Ireland after the union of that country with Great Britain in 1801. In 1807 Hawkesbury engaged in a correspondence with the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Sir Arthur Wellesley. They would meet again a few years later when Hawkesbury was Secretary of State for War and Wellesley was Lord Wellington.

As Home Secretary, Hawkesbury was intimately involved in resolving disputes between members of the royal family. He attended upon George III and became very close to the ailing king. It was said of Hawkesbury, after his father had died and he had succeeded to the earldom of Liverpool, in 1809:

Lord Liverpool is now the great favourite at Windsor; last week the King dictated a letter to him in which were these words, which were repeated afterwards by Lord Liverpool, "you are my eyes, and I know I can trust you that I shall not be imposed upon."⁵

The war placed an additional burden upon the Home Secretary. It was his duty to prepare for the possibility of an invasion from the continent. He supervised the recruitment and deployment of the home defence force. In 1805 Nelson died at the battle of Trafalgar. It fell to Hawkesbury to make the arrangements for both a thanksgiving for the great victory and a state funeral. Because he was busy with last minute details on the day of the funeral in 1806, Hawkesbury had his wife escorted round the occasion by a couple of Bow Street Runners.⁶

⁴ *The Early English Trade Unions*, ed. A. Aspinall (London: The Batchworth Press, 1949), pp. 90-105.

⁵ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick (Vol. 9, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1915), p. 333.

⁶ N. A. M. Rodger, 'Nelson, Horatio, Viscount Nelson (1758-1805),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xl, 396-410.

- Speaker and Mediator

Hawkesbury played other roles in the government apart from that of Home Secretary. He carried on leading for the administration in the debates in the House of Lords. Roman Catholic emancipation was raised by Lord Grenville in 1805. Hawkesbury went to quite some length in preparation for the debate. It would be the first time that he had spelt out his view in detail on the subject in parliament. He sought the assistance of John Ireland, a conservative cleric and the chaplain to his father, over his speech.⁷ Hawkesbury opposed a grant of political rights to Roman Catholics, but he did so on the basis of reasoned not bigoted argument. He simply explained that as long as Roman Catholics refused to swear an oath acknowledging the king's supremacy there was no alternative other than to deny them political emancipation. Hawkesbury's speech was printed as a pamphlet.

Hawkesbury also acted as a mediator for the administration. He brought about a temporary reconciliation between William Pitt and Henry Addington. Hawkesbury got in touch with the former premier in late 1804. They dined together and Liverpool was authorised to open negotiations with Addington. Pitt and Addington met at Liverpool's country estate at the end of the year. Addington accepted promotion to the peerage as Viscount Sidmouth and returned to office in early 1805. His relatives and friends were sprinkled with patronage.

- Opposition

William Pitt died in 1806. Hawkesbury demonstrated his kindness and consideration in the last letter he wrote to the premier. He pressed him to take up residence at his country estate for the good of his health. Hawkesbury remained loyal to the end. He

⁷ Tony Trowles, 'Ireland, John (1761-1842),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 336-7.

deferred to Pitt in this final correspondence on an important matter of military strategy, the possession of the island of Sicily.⁸ Such was his standing by now with the king and with politicians at large that Hawkesbury was offered the premiership by George III on Pitt's death. (He was also held in such high regard in 1809 that he was canvassed as a candidate for the Chancellorship of the University of Oxford.)

Hawkesbury turned the king down. This was undoubtedly a wise decision. It had been an incredibly difficult task for Pitt to hold the government together and Hawkesbury could hardly have expected to find the job any easier. The new government was a coalition, involving leading members of the opposition. Grenville became premier, and he was joined by Charles James Fox and Viscount Sidmouth, who had resigned from the previous government in 1805, about six months after he had joined it, infuriated by Pitt's attempt to save his old friend, Viscount Melville, from disgrace over a scandal in his department and inexplicably accusing Hawkesbury of coldness towards him. The new administration, the Ministry of All the Talents, attracted the support of all the groups within parliament with the exception of the former government party, including Hawkesbury.

The new government did not survive for long. It was undermined by Fox's death in 1806 and Sidmouth's resignation over the issue of military commissions for Roman Catholics and negotiations with his main political adversary, George Canning, in 1807. When the king asked Grenville to drop the issue of Roman Catholic emancipation, Grenville gave up the premiership and the coalition collapsed. The duke of Portland became Prime Minister and Hawkesbury returned to office as Home Secretary once more. Hawkesbury formed a cornerstone of the administration. Portland was just a figurehead premier, someone who was not a threat to the

⁸ Earl Stanhope, *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt* (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1879), iii, 382-3.

ambitions of his colleagues and under whom all the Pittites could serve. Portland was sick and elderly, and rarely spoke now in parliament. It was left to Hawkesbury to lead the debates for the government in the House of Lords. Hawkesbury was also the man called upon to step into the breach on other occasions. Viscount Castlereagh fell seriously ill in 1807 and Hawkesbury took over at the war office until he was restored to full health. When the rivalry between Castlereagh and Canning brought about both of their resignations in 1809, Hawkesbury supervised the running of the departments of all three of the secretaries of state.⁹

⁹ John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (London: Constable, 1996); Peter Jupp, *Lord Grenville 1759-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); David Wilkinson, *The Duke of Portland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); David Wilkinson, 'Bentinck, William Henry Cavendish Cavendish-, third duke of Portland (1738-1809),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, v, 261-9; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 56-76; E. Anthony Smith, 'The Duke of Portland', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 199-210; Peter Jupp, 'The Aims and Achievements of Lord Grenville', in *Essays Presented to Michael Roberts Sometime Professor of Modern History in the Queen's University of Belfast*, ed. John Bossy & Peter Jupp (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1976), pp. 93-103; Peter Jupp, 'Lord Grenville', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 251-70; P. J. Jupp, 'Grenville, William Wyndham, Baron Grenville (1759-1834),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 749-59; A. D. Harvey, 'The Ministry of All the Talents: The Whigs in Office, February 1806 to March 1807', *The Historical Journal*, 15, 4 (1972), 619-48.

Chapter Seven

Lord Liverpool as Secretary of State for War

1809-11

- Spencer Perceval

The duke of Portland's health deteriorated in 1809 to the point that he had to resign as premier. It was widely believed that it was preferable for the Prime Minister to come from the House of Commons and the cabinet supported the appointment of Spencer Perceval as Portland's replacement. He required the debating assistance of at least one Secretary of State in the lower chamber. Richard Ryder could only be expected to cope with the pressures of the home office on account of his health. Marquess Wellesley accepted the seals of the Foreign Office and Liverpool therefore became Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. George III opposed this arrangement at first. He did not want to lose Liverpool at the home office and from his side. Liverpool had not wanted to leave the home office, but he took it upon himself, out of a sense of loyalty to the premier, both to set aside his own feelings on the subject and to write to the king in support of the reshuffle.¹

Liverpool found himself in an unenviable position once again. The war was not going very well at all. Efforts had recently been seriously undermined by a series of scandals and setbacks. Viscount Melville was impeached, but acquitted, in 1806 for his conduct at the admiralty. He had been held responsible for certain financial irregularities in his department.² In 1809 the duke of York was investigated for the sale of commissions in the army by his mistress, Mary Anne Clarke. The joint

¹ *The Later Correspondence of George III*, v, 428.

² Michael Fry, 'Dundas, Henry, first Viscount Melville (1742-1811),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xvii, 274-81.

military-naval expedition to take the island of Walcheren that year had ended in disaster.

It also appeared that the recently begun campaign in Portugal was failing. Sir Arthur Wellesley had arrived in Portugal in 1808 and defeated the enemy at the battle of Vimeiro. He was not allowed, however, to follow up this victory and Sir Hew Whitefoord Dalrymple signed an armistice, the Convention of Cintra.³ The British agreed not only to release the French prisoners, but also to transport them and their booty back home. Such favourable terms came as a shock to the country and the generals were recalled. Sir John Moore was placed in command in Portugal, but he was killed at the battle of Corunna in 1809. Wellesley was acquitted after a court martial and returned to the front. The British swept the French out of Portugal. Wellesley entered Spain and defeated the enemy at the battle of Talavera, but the year came to a close with the army in retreat and back over the border. Furthermore, parliamentarians and the wider political nation remained far from united in their support for the strategy of intervention in Portugal and Spain. The Whigs particularly became increasingly convinced that military success in the Iberian Peninsula was all but impossible.⁴

Nevertheless, there was considerable wisdom in the nation's decision to become embroiled in the war in the Iberian Peninsula. By entering the Peninsular War, the British could finally establish a proper foothold on the continental mainland and launch a major land offensive against the French. The army would be operating from a secure base in a friendly country and could be relatively easily supplied with all the essentials of warfare by sea.

³ Stephen Wood, 'Dalrymple, Sir Hew Whitefoord, first baronet (1750-1830),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv, 985-7.

⁴ Godfrey Davies, 'The Whigs and the Peninsular War, 1808-1814', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Ser., 2 (1919), 113-31.

- The Peninsular War

Liverpool set to work at the war department. He appointed two reliable and capable under-secretaries of state. Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson, his half-brother, followed him from the home office and Henry Edward Bunbury, who was a professional soldier and had fought with distinction at the battle of Maida in 1806, brought to the department the benefit of his military expertise and experience.⁵ (Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson resigned in 1810 and Robert Peel joined the department as his replacement.) He also got in touch with Wellesley, now Lord Wellington, as soon as possible in late 1809. Liverpool sought to win his confidence:

I feel very strongly the additional weight of anxiety this change will bring upon me; but I could not, under the circumstances, refuse it, and I think I may be, perhaps, of more use to you in your command in Portugal than any other person who could be placed in the same situation.⁶

A commitment by the government to the campaign in the peninsula was given repeatedly by the Secretary of State for War to the general. He wrote in 1811: 'You know our means, both military and financial, are limited; but such as they are, we are determined not to be diverted from the Peninsula to other objects. If we can strike a blow, we will strike it there.'⁷ That said, Liverpool could not allow the army to be put at serious risk of being destroyed and he had preparations for an evacuation made in 1809-10. He believed that he did not stint in the provision of resources to his general, however. Liverpool told Wellington in late 1809: 'We have done all in our power to reinforce and support you, and the result will, I hope, accord with your wishes and our

⁵ John Sweetman, 'Bunbury, Sir Henry Edward, seventh baronet (1778-1860),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 675-6.

⁶ *Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, ed. The Duke of Wellington (15 vols., London: John Murray, 1858-72), vi, 421.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vii, 102.

own.’⁸ Liverpool sought to keep Wellington supplied with both men and money. He wrote in 1810:

We should feel mortified to the greatest degree if the contest in the Peninsula should fail for want of pecuniary means: no government could attach more importance to the continuance of it than the present, or be more disposed to direct the whole disposable efforts of the country to this one object. When I accepted the seals of the War Department, I laid it down as a principle that if the war were to be continued in Portugal and Spain, we ought not to suffer any part of our efforts to be directed to other objects. Upon this principle we have acted and are still acting. Every regiment which is serviceable, and every General officer of reputation and experience whose station in the army admitted of his being employed in Portugal or Spain, has been selected for this service.⁹

As the army dug in for the defence of Lisbon in the winter of 1810-11 behind the fortified Lines of Torres Vedras, Liverpool was ready and willing to go to quite some lengths to support Wellington. He thought in 1810 that in order to strengthen Wellington’s land defences there would be no objection if the army chose to strip the fleet of their guns, at least from a number of decks on each ship, and for the navy to be sent to man them.¹⁰ A fine cavalry regiment was embarked for the peninsula in 1811 and another was relieved of most of its horses to plug the gaps among those units already in service there that had suffered animal casualties.¹¹ The Secretary of State for War was also careful not to let resources go to waste. He was reluctant to despatch a regiment of cavalry to the peninsula in 1810 until it was definitely required for service by the general because he had heard that there was a shortage of forage for the horses at the front.¹²

Liverpool sought to keep Wellington supplied and he also maintained a regular and close correspondence with him. He used his letters to Wellington not so

⁸ *Ibid.*, vi, 438.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vi, 548.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi, 604.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vii, 119-20.

¹² *Ibid.*, vi, 618.

much to issue orders as to inform, to question, to suggest and to caution. The general was given the authority to take independent action, both to undertake an evacuation if it became necessary and to launch operations of an offensive nature, at his own discretion. In 1810 the Secretary of State for War wrote to him about a possible advance: 'We wish you to be governed on this point entirely by your own discretion, and that you should neither abstain from attack, nor engage in it, in consequence of any opinions which may be supposed to be entertained in this country.'¹³ Liverpool left it up to Wellington to take the decision to march his army across the Portuguese-Spanish border in 1811.¹⁴

He informed Wellington of any intelligence about the enemy that reached the war office. Intelligence on the movement and strength of the enemy was passed on to Wellington. The general was briefed about foreign affairs, government sentiment and even public opinion. Liverpool gave him regular accounts of the progress of the government and the chance of its survival. He did not deny the weakness of the administration in parliament, but he did seek to give the general confidence in it. He wrote in 1811: 'Perceval's character is completely established in the House of Commons: he has acquired an authority there beyond any minister within my recollection, except Mr. Pitt.'¹⁵ The predicament faced by the ministry in keeping Wellington supplied was explained and the exertions, which often meant going out on a limb, made by the administration on his behalf were described to the general by the Secretary of State for War.

Liverpool kept himself up-to-date with the latest developments and prospects in the military campaign in the peninsula. He liked to know what was going on. He

¹³ *Ibid.*, vi, 641.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vii, 144-5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vii, 102.

asked Wellington many questions, and made decisions about resources and took measures on the basis of the answers, the knowledge, he received. In the first letter he wrote to the general as Secretary of State for War, Liverpool requested a complete account of the military situation in the peninsula. ‘Thirdly, If a serious attack is made by the French upon Portugal, what is at present the prospect of successful resistance? ... What is the present effective strength of the British army in Portugal?’¹⁶ After the British drove the French out of Portugal again in 1811, he wrote to Wellington, ‘I shall be most anxious to learn your future views.’¹⁷

The steady flow of correspondence between Liverpool and Wellington was also used by the Secretary of State for War to make observations and even suggestions on the conduct of the war. In 1810 Liverpool weighed up the relative merits of a couple of embarkation points in the event of an evacuation of Portugal.¹⁸ Liverpool directed Wellington’s attention to retaining control of the coast in this situation.¹⁹ He stated that a young aristocrat about to join his regiment in the peninsula would benefit from some advice.²⁰ On more than one occasion in 1810-11 he recommended that something ought to be done to raise the siege of Cadiz. In 1811 he wondered if an advantage might be gained by occupying the mountain of Santõna in Spain.²¹

Observations and suggestions, however, were invariably made apologetically and deferentially; Liverpool never tried to dictate to the commander in the field. Liverpool wrote to Wellington in 1810: ‘Though I have no doubt you have thoroughly considered all these points, I think it important at this time to direct your attention

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vi, 412-13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vii, 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vi, 493-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vi, 511.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vi, 552.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vii, 116-17.

particularly to them.²² He wrote again, 'I may view this question very ignorantly, but I think it a duty to bring it before you for your consideration in the same point of view in which it has occurred to me.'²³ The general was told:

If it were even possible (which it is not) to form a just opinion here on such a subject, the change of circumstances and succession of events would be very likely to render that opinion which might have been good when it was formed, bad when it came to be acted upon.²⁴

Wellington was cautioned by Liverpool as well. He was warned not to put the army at risk of being lost by staying in the peninsula for too long in 1810.²⁵ It was brought home to him several times that there was a limit to how much the nation could afford to spend and that the extent of available resources must influence and dictate the scale of the military campaign in the peninsula.

Liverpool sought to form and to maintain a cordial relationship with Wellington, and to encourage him in his efforts. Wellington could be difficult, but Liverpool's letters were always polite, calm, sympathetic and deferential. He offered his constant support, materially and morally, and placed his entire confidence in the general. He wrote in 1810:

In short, you know our objects to be the defence of Portugal and the support of the cause of the Peninsula, as long as they are practicable; and I trust you feel that you possess the entire confidence of government with respect to the measures which it may be desirable to adopt for these purposes, whether they may be of a cautious or of a more enterprising character.²⁶

Wellington was included in consultations on policy by Liverpool, and the Secretary of State for War sought to be cooperative and to resolve any differences that he had with the general. Liverpool appointed officers to serve in the peninsula of whom

²² *Ibid.*, vi, 484.

²³ *Ibid.*, vi, 494.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vi, 641-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vi, 493-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vi, 642.

Wellington approved. Liverpool addressed his concern in 1810-11 over the amount of information on the campaign released or leaked to the press. He also won the approval of the crown for Wellington to accept certain foreign honours in 1811.²⁷ Wellington was congratulated and flattered by Liverpool at appropriate moments. Wellington, for example, received a letter of praise from Liverpool at the conclusion of the operations for the defence of Portugal in 1811.²⁸ Liverpool asked after Wellington's health, reported on the welfare of his wife and children, and passed on expressions of satisfaction from the royal family. In 1810 the Secretary of State for War stated that the general's young sons had recovered from a cough and enclosed a communication from the palace.²⁹

- The Government in Crisis

Liverpool could take some pride in the progress of the campaign in the peninsula between 1809 and 1811. Although the British and the French forces had reached near stalemate on the Portuguese-Spanish border by the end of 1811, Wellington had not been compelled to evacuate his army as had been feared. The British and Portuguese armies were still in the field, and Wellington could look forward to the new

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vii, 220.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vii, 103-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vi, 515.

campaigning season with some confidence.³⁰

The government could not look forward to the new parliamentary session with the same confidence. The ministry was still weak. It was starved of the services, if not the support, of Castlereagh and Sidmouth, the Canningites and the Grenvillites, members of the coalition under William Pitt 'the Younger'. The madness of the king and the establishment of a regent without full monarchical authority meant that the administration could not look to the crown for a show of strength and a demonstration of confidence. With the scent of political blood in the air, the government could not expect the opposition to sit out the crisis when parliament met again at the start of the year.³¹

³⁰ It was said, even by Wellington in private and also by Wellington's elder brother in public, that the government could have done more to help the general. The most recent and thorough examination of the contribution made by Liverpool to the Peninsular War was completed by George D. Knight in 1976. Knight concludes his doctoral dissertation with the claim that Liverpool was not a great Secretary of State for War. He argues that Liverpool could have done more, in terms of materiel, men and money, and he criticises the advice given to Wellington by Liverpool. Some of the points made by Knight are legitimate. For example, Liverpool did not solve the problem of the shipment of substandard supplies and did not propose any bold or original plans to support the war effort. Knight, however, does not emphasise to a fair extent the crucial fact that the Secretary of State for War was just one of a number of figures, such as the Commander-in-Chief and the Master-General of the Ordnance, with responsibility for the supply of the forces on the continent. Knight also refuses to give Liverpool much credit for the significant support he gave Wellington in parliament or for the tone and content of his letters.

³¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 77-99.

Chapter Eight

Lord Liverpool and the Government in Crisis

1 January–11 May 1812

- The Prince Regent and the Foreign Secretary

The future looked bleak for the government on 1 January 1812. The administration had always been weak, but it now faced a looming crisis that it was not generally expected to survive. Unless the king made a full recovery from his mental illness, the Prince Regent would receive complete monarchical authority on 18 February, and it was widely assumed that he would then seize the opportunity to dismiss his father's ministers and reward his old friends on the opposition benches with government office. Marquess Wellesley, furthermore, hoped to take advantage of this situation. He occupied the Foreign Office, but his vanity convinced him that he should be premier. He continued to ingratiate himself with the Prince Regent, and to destabilise the administration by throwing his weight around in cabinet and undermining Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister.¹

Lord Liverpool was closely involved in handling Wellesley, in trying not to give him a good excuse to storm out of the ministry and a chance to destroy it. Wellesley severely criticised both the style and substance of the speech drawn up by the government to be delivered on behalf of the Prince Regent at the formal opening of the new session of parliament that outlined the administration's policies. Liverpool assisted Perceval in producing a draft of the speech that was acceptable to their

¹ C. A. Bayly, 'Wellesley [formerly Wesley], Richard, Marquess Wellesley (1760-1842),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lviii, 37-46; Iris Butler, *The Eldest Brother* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 77-99; P. J. Jupp, 'Perceval, Spencer (1762-1812),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xliii, 664-9; Denis Gray, *Spencer Perceval* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963); Joyce Marlow, 'Spencer Perceval', in *The Prime Ministers*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (Vol. 1, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 271-81.

difficult colleague.² Liverpool was not prepared, however, to satisfy every demand made by Wellesley. He refused to allow the Foreign Secretary to interfere in the running of the department of war and the colonies. Liverpool appointed Sir Evan Nepean, 1st Bt., a politically sound and personally upright, long-standing and hard-working official, as governor of Bombay on 7 January and rejected Barry Close, the candidate for the position strongly favoured by his old crony in India, Wellesley.³

It was absolutely vital for ministers to appear entirely confident and competent when parliament reconvened on 7 January 1812. The opposition would be seeking to capitalise on the government's predicament. Lord Grenville led the attack on the ministry in the House of Lords. He did not pull any punches. He declared that the administration had brought the country to the brink of ruin. He painted a dramatic picture of nationwide distress: 'People might chuse to close their eyes, but the force of truth must dispel the wilful blindness; they might chuse to shut their ears, but the voice of a suffering nation must sooner or later be heard.'⁴ Grenville utterly condemned the government's policies. He specifically accused ministers of wasting public resources and denounced the Orders-in-Council that had been adopted in the economic war against France. Earl Grey forcefully echoed these damning remarks in his own speech. Liverpool, however, was not browbeaten by this ferocious and coordinated assault. He rose immediately and spoke passionately in defence of the ministry. He insisted that the administration's measures had actually saved the

² The Duke of Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England, during the Regency, 1811-1820* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1856), i, 170-3.

³ Elizabeth Sparrow, 'Nepean, Sir Evan, first baronet (1752-1822),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xl, 425-6; Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, i, 173-5; Nigel Chancellor, 'Close, Sir Barry, baronet (1756-1813),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, 184-5.

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 9.

nation.⁵ Liverpool also carefully supervised parliamentary proceedings at the start of the session and ensured that they ran smoothly. He politely asked the Prince Regent on 8 January not to hold up the steady progress of the parliamentary session.⁶ His efficient and fair-minded conduct of business in the upper chamber won for him the huge admiration of influential peers. Liverpool moved a vote of thanks to the earl of Minto on 10 January for the successful conclusion of the military operations that he had recently undertaken in his capacity as governor-general of India. Grenville, who just a few days earlier had berated ministers for almost destroying the country, readily admitted that he had never heard a more manly, generous and statesmanlike speech.⁷

- The Resignation of Wellesley

Wellesley finally tendered his resignation from the government on 16 January on the grounds that he did not have sufficient influence in cabinet. He particularly disliked having to submit his despatches for review by other ministers. Wellesley rudely did not bother to inform the Prime Minister of his intention to leave the administration until the next day, and then only through Earl Bathurst, the President of the Board of Trade.⁸ Perceval understandably wanted the resignation of this destabilising figure to be accepted, but the Prince Regent was reluctant to lose his friend's services. The crisis for the ministry had arrived. The Prince Regent could solve the problem by changing the government as had been widely anticipated. If he ultimately refused to part with Wellesley, the Prime Minister and the cabinet might possibly walk out. He could alternatively give his clear support to the present administration, accept

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxi, 1-15.

⁶ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812*, ed. A. Aspinall (8 vols., London: Cassell, 1963-71), viii, 327.

⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 126-31.

⁸ Francis Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst, Preserved at Cirencester Park* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), pp. 160-1.

Wellesley's resignation, and permit the Prime Minister to strengthen the ministry by inviting Castlereagh and Sidmouth to re-enter the cabinet.

Liverpool had no sympathy for the Foreign Secretary and remained loyal to the Prime Minister from the outset of this crisis. On 18 January Perceval invited Liverpool and the earl of Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, to a meeting.⁹ They met the next day and, then, almost certainly having agreed a position to take on the affair, they went on to see Wellesley and the Prince Regent.¹⁰ They all gathered once again, with the duke of York in attendance as well, on 20 January, but no decision on the future of the government was reached.

The fact that Wellesley had tendered his resignation from the government might well have had a detrimental effect on the delicate relationship between the administration and his brother, Lord Wellington. Liverpool stepped forward to prevent this from happening. Perceval informed Wellington on 22 January that Liverpool would communicate further with him on the subject of his brother.¹¹ In fact, Liverpool had written to Wellington already, on 20 January. Liverpool needed to put the ministry's side of the argument to Wellington before the latter heard an account friendly to his brother that might cause him to call into the question the honour and strength of the administration.

The letter Liverpool sent to Wellington was evidently written with considerable care and it is worth quoting at some length. The Secretary of State for War gently broke the news about his brother to Wellington only after making some very friendly remarks on the campaign in the peninsula:

⁹ Horace Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon, with Selections from his Correspondence* (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1844), ii, 186.

¹⁰ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 357.

¹¹ Spencer Walpole, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Spencer Perceval* (2 vols., London: Hurst & Blackett, 1874), ii, 261.

I am very much obliged to you for your two letters on the subject of your intended operations. They afford me all the information I could expect, or even desire. I am fully aware that any plan of campaign formed at this period of the year must be subject to those contingencies to which all important and extended operations are liable from the events of war; you may rely, therefore, on my discretion in communicating your present intentions to as few persons as possible.

I am sorry to be under the necessity of informing you that Lord Wellesley has intimated to the Prince Regent his intention of resigning his situation in the government.

Liverpool staunchly defended the administration and placed the blame, regrettably though firmly, on Wellesley for the unfortunate estrangement that had arisen between him and other senior ministers:

I am not aware of the existence of any distinct difference of opinion on any public question of importance which has led to this determination. He says generally that he has not the weight in the government which he expected when he accepted office. I have never seen any want of attention to his opinions, nor do I recollect a single question (except one of comparatively little moment lately, respecting the King's and Regent's establishments) to which he ever entered a dissent. The government through a Cabinet is necessarily a government *inter Pares*, in which every man must expect to have his opinions and his despatches canvassed, and this previous friendly canvass of opinions and measures appears to be absolutely necessary under a constitution where all public acts of government will be ultimately hostilely debated in Parliament. I have always regretted that Lord Wellesley's habits of late have prevented him seeing as much of his colleagues and mixing as much in general business as is usual with persons in public office. I do not believe he has attended more than half the Cabinet meetings which have taken place since he has been in government: this circumstance, combined with others, unavoidably prevents a man from having the same common feelings with his colleagues as exist amongst those who not only act but live together.

The correspondence ended with an extraordinarily upbeat assessment of the prospects for the government:

Lord Wellesley declares it is not his intention to go into Opposition, and that he does not even wish his son to resign his seat at the Treasury.

The event is as yet secret, but it must be known in a few days. If you wish to have my opinion as to the effect of it, I am persuaded it will not, under present circumstances, materially prejudice the government. The Prince takes it very quietly, and appears now determined to support the present government with all his influence.

Indeed, he says he has no alternative. This may appear to you to be strange, after all that has passed; but so it is. It is Perceval's intention immediately to sound Castlereagh about his return to office.¹²

It would seem that this letter had the required effect. Wellington's confidence in the government was substantially retained. (Wellington had a good idea of how difficult a colleague his brother could be.) Wellington wrote to his brother on 12 March. He reported that ministers had expressed to him nothing but regret at the possibility of losing Wellesley.¹³ Wellington replied simply to Liverpool, 'P.S. I have written to Mr. Perceval regarding Lord Wellesley's resignation; and I can only say that I am very sorry for it.'¹⁴

The Prince Regent could not make up his mind what to do. Meanwhile, the ministry was left in a state of limbo. It was uncertain how far it had or did not have the support of the Prince Regent. Liverpool brought what comfort he could to the Prime Minister during this crisis. The Secretary of State for War and the Lord Chancellor paid the king a visit on 31 January. They found George III in much better health. The king was not exactly calm, but he was apparently collected. He was able to promise the ministers that he would reappoint them to government just as soon as he was well enough to resume his regal role if his son abandoned the administration, but this improvement in his mental state proved to be only temporary.¹⁵

- The End of the Affair

The government's predicament, however, was never as bad as it was widely perceived to be. The problem was of course that the Prince Regent failed to indicate clearly what he intended to do when the temporary restrictions on his authority were lifted and

¹² *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 256-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vii, 303.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vii, 305.

¹⁵ *The Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose*, ii, 477-8.

politicians were forced to reach their own conclusions. It would seem, however, that by early 1812 any thought that had once been entertained by the Prince Regent of changing the administration had gone. Presumably, he had become accustomed to being served by his father's ministers. He appreciated their talents and he shared their views on the main issues of the day, including the war and Roman Catholic emancipation. The government had acted to please the Prince Regent while members of the opposition had started to annoy him. For example, the ministry had reappointed the duke of York as Commander-in-Chief in 1811. Many Whigs had voted for a motion condemning the move. Furthermore, the Prince Regent's intimate and influential friend, Lady Hertford, was a firm government supporter.¹⁶ Moreover, he lacked the courage, determination and energy to force through a complete transformation in the composition of the ministry. All that the Prince Regent seemed to want now was to avoid completely alienating his old friends on the opposition benches by persuading the more prominent of them to form a coalition with the government. It is not surprising that, when Grenville and Grey, 'the two Gs', peremptorily refused to join the administration, the Prince Regent eventually decided on 15 February to stick with the government that he had. Robert Plumer Ward was a witness to the scene when this news was conveyed to Liverpool: 'I left Mr. P. [Perceval] at his garden gate in the park, and found Ld. Liverpool and Pole galloping up to it, to speak to him, with seeming impatience, and as Perceval was only that moment come from Carlton House, they of course came to be told the event.'¹⁷

The crisis in the government was not yet over, however. The Prince Regent had not accepted Wellesley's resignation and the Foreign Secretary made his own bid

¹⁶ T. J. Hochstrasser, 'Conway, Francis Ingram-Seymour-, second marquess of Hertford (1743-1822),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiii, 47-9.

¹⁷ Edmund Phipps, *Memoirs of the Political and Literary Life of Robert Plumer Ward, Esq.* (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1850), i, 416-17.

for the premiership on 17 February. He presented himself as the one man who could form a stronger administration. He told the Prince Regent that he would serve with Perceval, but not under him, and that only he could bring both George Canning and Viscount Castlereagh back into government. The cabinet, appalled and disgusted by this behaviour, now threatened to resign unless Wellesley's resignation was accepted. The Prince Regent accepted Wellesley's resignation the next day.

- A Reshuffle of the Cabinet

Perceval offered the seals of the Foreign Office to Liverpool. He declined them. He believed that a move by him at that point from the war department might damage the prospects of the campaign in the peninsula.¹⁸ Liverpool's value to the war effort was also acknowledged by his cabinet colleagues. Ward recorded in his diary on 21 February: 'Ld. Mulgrave told me in the morning that nothing was fixed about the Foreign office, and that Ld. Liverpool was too good a War Secretary to be spared there.'¹⁹ Liverpool loyally agreed, however, to run the Foreign Office until Perceval could make a permanent appointment to it.²⁰

Accordingly on Wednesday (19th) at one p.m., Lord Wellesley proceeded to Carlton House in the highest style, state liveries, and full dress, and delivered up the said Seals to the Prince, which were delivered to my Lord Liverpool, who was summoned to receive them, and who came for that purpose *in his boots*.²¹

Liverpool wrote to Wellington on the same day and stated that the crisis in the government was over.²²

¹⁸ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p. 448.

¹⁹ Phipps, *Memoirs of the Political and Literary Life of Robert Plumer Ward*, i, 428.

²⁰ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 19.

²¹ Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, i, 261.

²² B. L., Add. Mss. 38326, fos. 19-20; Add. Mss. 59772, fos. 94-5.

Liverpool had been of great value to the government throughout the crisis. He had helped to defuse a potentially explosive situation with Wellington and he had stepped into the breach when the Foreign Office was vacated. Perceval evidently knew that Liverpool was someone he could rely upon, but Liverpool's services did not go unrecognised in higher places either. The Prince Regent had a conversation with Edward Venables Vernon, the Archbishop of York, on 19 February. There was no one for the Prince Regent to rely on but Liverpool. 'That he has now only Lord Liverpool', wrote the archbishop.²³ Liverpool's importance to the administration was reflected in the prominence he now received in caricatures. George Cruickshank had a caricature published on 1 April, PRINCELY PREDILECTIONS OR ANCIENT MUSIC AND MODERN DISCORD. It was a satire on the decision of the Prince Regent to stick with the present government. Liverpool is shown just behind Perceval.²⁴

Liverpool filled in temporarily at the Foreign Office. (Castlereagh became Foreign Secretary the following month and Sidmouth also returned to government.) Ward had business with him there on 22 February and came upon him receiving the representatives of countries which still had diplomatic ties with the United Kingdom - all four of them.²⁵ Wellesley had left the department's paperwork in a confused state. Liverpool applied himself to bringing some order to his temporary fiefdom. He wrote to his predecessor on 27 February to say that he could not find any correspondence on

²³ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, eds. Walter Fitzpatrick, & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 222.

²⁴ Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires* (Vol. 9, London: The British Museum, 1949), pp. 96-8.

²⁵ Phipps, *Memoirs of the Political and Literary Life of Robert Plumer Ward*, i, 428-9.

the policy to be adopted towards French prisoners-of-war held by the Spanish authorities.²⁶ Wellesley clarified the situation to Liverpool the next day.²⁷

- War

As well as supervising affairs at the Foreign Office, Liverpool continued to run his own department of war and the colonies. He did not like to get behind with his considerable workload. The Prince Regent was humbly reminded at the start of the year not to hold up the despatch of a letter that required his signature.²⁸ Liverpool's departmental responsibilities must have become considerably less depressing at this time, however, because it was at this point that the nation's exertions in the peninsula began to bear results. Wellington captured the stronghold of Ciudad Rodrigo on the Portuguese-Spanish border on 19 January. This operation, followed by the seizure of the fortress of Badajoz on 6 April, completed the defence of Portugal and cleared an obstacle out of the way for an attack on Spain. A relative was staying with Liverpool and his wife when the news of this victory reached the Secretary of State and she shared in the pleasure that it brought the household. She wrote on 5 February: 'Is not this *delicious*?'²⁹

Liverpool did not waste any time before using this victory to bolster support for the embattled government and the war effort, and to cement further the relationship between him and his commander-in-the-field. News of this successful operation was delivered to Liverpool on 4 February by Alexander Gordon.³⁰

Liverpool rushed round to the palace as soon as he received the despatch from the

²⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 37296, fos. 209-10; Add. Mss. 38247, fos. 111-12.

²⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 298-9.

²⁸ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, viii, 323.

²⁹ Grosvenor, *The First Lady Wharncliffe and her Family (1779-1856)*, i, 183.

³⁰ H. M. Chichester, rev. Roger T. Stearn, 'Gordon, Sir Alexander (1786-1815),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 856-7.

battlefield. The Prince Regent was not there at the time, but the War Secretary communicated the development to him in a letter at 6.30 in the evening. Liverpool ordered the guns to be fired in celebration in the capital that night.³¹ He offered his hearty congratulations to Wellington in a letter on 6 February.³² Liverpool moved a vote of thanks to Wellington in the House of Lords on 10 February. He explained the significance of the successful operation and showered Wellington with praise. He paid tribute in particular to Wellington's indefatigable exertions and consummate wisdom.³³

The flow of correspondence between Liverpool and Wellington was not interrupted during this period. The Secretary of State for War continued to take a keen interest in every detail of the campaign in the peninsula. On 11 February Wellington wrote to Liverpool decriing the quality of the equipment and specifically the tools used for digging trenches that had been received at the front.³⁴ Liverpool replied on 11 March. He asked Wellington to send defective articles straight to him for inspection and correction.³⁵ Similarly, on 13 February, the Secretary of State for War asked for a description of the effectiveness of the shells invented by Henry Shrapnel.³⁶ Wellington provided a complete evaluation of this latest development in weapons technology on 12 March. He explained that his favourable opinion of the shells had

³¹ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, viii, 358.

³² B. L., Add. Mss. 38326, fos. 14-15; Add. Mss. 59772, fos. 86-7 (Copy).

³³ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 703-7.

³⁴ Edward Herries, *Memoir of the Public Life of the Right Hon. John Charles Herries in the Reigns of George III., George IV. William IV. And Victoria* (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1880), i, 37.

³⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38326, fos. 23-4; Add. Mss. 59772, fos. 106-8.

³⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38326, fos. 18-19; Add. Mss. 59772, fos. 92-3.

been shaken lately.³⁷ The shells only inflicted the sort of trifling wounds one might expect to receive if hit by accident during a duck shoot.³⁸

- The House of Lords

Liverpool of course also continued to lead for the government in the House of Lords. It fell to him to answer questions put by peers about what the administration intended to do about Luddite machine-breaking. (The Luddites were mainly skilled men who broke machines which threatened their livelihoods and the disturbances were concentrated in parts of the Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire between 1811 and 1816.)³⁹ Liverpool had told the upper chamber on 4 February that the ministry was aware of the riotous situation in Nottingham and pledged to stop it. Two of the best magistrates in the capital had been sent to the troubled region to investigate.⁴⁰ The government eventually brought a bill before parliament to crack down on the violence. It became a capital offence to damage a knitting frame or break a machine. It was clear to Liverpool that this legislation would not have an easy passage through the House of Lords. Lord Byron led the opposition to the bill on 27 February when he delivered a vitriolic maiden speech. He asked, 'Is there not blood enough upon your penal code, that more must be poured forth to ascend to Heaven and testify against you?'⁴¹ Liverpool was required to make a convincing case in favour of the bill. He claimed that the government had done everything it could under the law as it then stood to stop the violence and had come to the conclusion, only after much

³⁷ John Sweetman, 'Shrapnel, Henry (1761-1842),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 1, 450-2.

³⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 303-5.

³⁹ Miles Taylor, 'Ludd, Ned (fl. 1811-1816),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiv, 708.

⁴⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 602-3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxi, 971; Jerome McGann, 'Byron, George Gordon Noel, sixth Baron Byron (1788-1824),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ix, 345-61.

consideration, that fresh legislation was now required. He said that terror of the law would act as a deterrent. He quoted the theologian and moralist, William Paley (1743-1805), and stated that the severity of the punishment was related not to the seriousness of the crime but to the difficulty of preventing it.⁴² Liverpool said that the measure was designed to be only temporary and confirmed that it would be brought back before parliament for review. Furthermore, he pointed out that the legislation was not without precedent. Liverpool also proposed amendments to the legislation to clarify the offence. The word 'damage' was replaced with the phrase 'with intent to destroy or render useless'. The bill was ultimately passed by the House of Lords on 5 March.⁴³

Liverpool dealt with the opposition's attempt to revisit in the House of Lords the recent government crisis. The correspondence between the Prince Regent, the duke of York, Grenville and Grey, at the height of the crisis in the administration, was brought to the attention of the upper chamber on 11 March. A motion of no confidence in the ministry was moved on 19 March. Liverpool managed to avoid being drawn into a potentially dangerous debate and raised a point of order. He said that no notice could be taken of private letters. The motion of no confidence was not carried.⁴⁴

⁴² James E. Crimmins, 'Paley, William (1743-1805),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlii, 445-51; He could also have quoted Lord Halifax, 'the Trimmer', in 1750: 'Men are not hanged for stealing horses, but that horses may not be stolen'. *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 166; Mark N. Brown, 'Savile, George, first marquess of Halifax (1633-1695),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24735>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

⁴³ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 964-79, 1077-84, 1166-8.

⁴⁴ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, eds. Walter Fitzpatrick, & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 229; *Parliamentary Debates*, xxi, 1250-2; xxii, 36-89.

It was also Liverpool's responsibility to handle sensitively the vexed issue of Roman Catholic emancipation. Grenville and Grey announced at the start of the session that they intended to press the matter in the weeks ahead. Grenville, in recognition of the major obstacle Liverpool posed to the passage of a measure of emancipation, sought to outmanoeuvre the leader of the upper chamber by finding out what position he would take in the debate and concealing from him the exact words of the motion for as long as possible.⁴⁵ Liverpool managed to avoid a confrontation on the matter at the beginning of the parliamentary term on technical grounds, but he also made it clear that the government was in no way afraid of defending its stance on the matter in due course, when it was formally brought before the house. He was finally compelled to give his views on the issue of Roman Catholic emancipation on 21 April. This was not an easy task for him. He was required to explain the opposition of the government to a measure of emancipation without provoking the fury of exponents of the scheme and revealing fault lines on the matter within the ministry itself. He declared his opposition to the motion at the very start of the speech, but he based his opposition on reasoned, dispassionate argument and did not descend into bigoted abuse against Catholics. Indeed, he freely admitted that the institutions of the Roman Catholic church were as pure as those of the Church of England and he insisted that Roman Catholics had no immoral tenets of belief. His central point against a measure of emancipation was simple and straightforward, and it was the same as the one he gave when he first spoke on the subject in the House of Lords. Roman Catholics could not expect to enjoy political rights so long as they maintained a divided loyalty between the king and the pope. Liverpool did not slam the door shut

⁴⁵ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, eds. Walter Fitzpatrick, & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), pp. 191-4, 203-4; Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, i, 182, 189-95, 215-20, 250-2.

in the face of Roman Catholic demands, however. He held out the possibility of a change in their political status. He said towards the end of his speech that the question could always be revisited if Catholics could resolve this central dilemma.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxii, 509-704.

Chapter Nine

The Appointment of Lord Liverpool to the Premiership

11 May–8 June 1812

- The Assassination of Spencer Perceval

It was announced in *The Times* on Saturday 9 May 1812 that Lord Liverpool would be in the chair at a dinner of the charity, the General Sea-Bathing Infirmary for the benefit of the diseased poor, at the London Coffee House, Ludgate Hill, on Monday at 5 o'clock.¹ Just after the meal was due to be served on 11 May, Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister, was assassinated by John Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons.²

Bellingham instantly became a hero to the mob, and the government, having lost its leader and terrified of revolution, was plunged deeply into crisis. Liverpool rose to the occasion over the crucial next twenty-four hours. He placed himself at the centre of events, asserted his control over the unprecedented situation, and provided the headless administration with leadership. Liverpool was back in his place and supervising the proceedings in the House of Lords when the peers agreed to present an address to the Prince Regent expressing their horror at the assassination.³ Liverpool and the Lord Chancellor had an audience with the Prince Regent before the presentation of the address. The Prince Regent stated that the very first thing he must do was to ensure that the late premier's family was properly provided for and he

¹ Liverpool was the President of this charity; Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963).

² Mollie Gillen, *Assassination of the Prime Minister* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972); rev. Michael J. Turner, 'Bellingham, John (1770-1812),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, v, 20-1; Bellingham had unsuccessfully demanded redress from the Prime Minister for a personal and baseless grievance against the state, and he was executed on 18 May.

³ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii, 161-4.

asked the ministers not to resign.⁴ Richard Ryder, the Home Secretary, the man ultimately responsible for law and order in the capital, was severely overcome with shock and grief, and Liverpool joined him to discuss at length with the sheriffs early in the morning on 12 May the security arrangements for Bellingham's trial.⁵

Liverpool delivered a moving tribute to Perceval in the upper chamber. 'If ever there lived a man in whose composition not a particle of gall existed,' he declared, 'he was the man.'⁶ Liverpool seized the opportunity, furthermore, to call for an adjournment of the house as a mark of respect, but which was also to his own political advantage. The opposition leader, Earl Grey, was disappointed because the committee investigating the effect of the Orders-in-Council and exerting an enormous pressure on the government would not be able to meet again now until 20 May.⁷

- The Premier for a Day

The cabinet gathered to discuss the future of the government on 13 May. The Lord Chancellor, the earl of Eldon, asked his colleagues to decide if it were possible for them to continue in office without the support of Marquess Wellesley and George Canning, and of Lord Grenville and Earl Grey, the leaders of the opposition. They were divided, but Liverpool replied, 'Doubtful, not desperate.'⁸ The twelve men unanimously refused to serve under Wellesley, doubtless because of his recent disgraceful behaviour, and they apparently concluded that the administration would have less chance of retaining parliamentary confidence and public support if no

⁴ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, pp. 172-3.

⁵ *The Times*, 13.5.1812; W. R. Williams, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Ryder, Richard (1766-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvi, 458; D. R. Fisher, 'RYDER, Hon. Richard', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, v, 78-83.

⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii, 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xxiii, 170-1.

⁸ Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon*, ii, 210.

attempt were made to strengthen it. Eldon informed the Prince Regent that the ministry would persevere under the leadership of any cabinet member chosen by him.⁹

Attention quickly turned to the choice before the Prince Regent. Some biased contemporaries judged Liverpool as unqualified for the premiership. ‘Alas!’ Robert Southey, the conservative poet, wailed on 12 May, ‘he [Perceval] has left no successor. Lord Liverpool wants his reputation; Lord Sidmouth and Vansittart (all good men) want his talents’.¹⁰ ‘The Prince’, William Augustus Miles, an opponent of the war, declared on 13 May, ‘will do well to dismiss Lord Liverpool from his councils for ever. His talents are below mediocrity.’¹¹ His ministerial colleagues, however, had a different opinion of him and they swiftly and smoothly turned to Liverpool. ‘My *belief* is,’ Viscount Sidmouth confessed on 15 May, ‘that Lord Liverpool will be at the head of the Treasury.’¹² Perceval was buried on 16 May. Liverpool travelled in the second coach of the funeral procession and acted as a pall-bearer. The Prince Regent commissioned him to approach Wellesley and Canning the next day. It is not difficult to see why the cabinet and the Prince Regent looked to Liverpool at this time. Liverpool had been a candidate for the premiership for over six years. He was a cornerstone of the administration and close to the Prince Regent, and he had been very loyal and of great value to Perceval, especially over the last six months. Since the murder, furthermore, Liverpool had honoured the late premier’s memory and appeared prime ministerial in the way he conducted himself. It was

⁹ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 74-5.

¹⁰ *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, &c. &c. &c.*, ed. John Wood Warter (4 vols., London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856), ii, 274.

¹¹ *The Correspondence of William Augustus Miles on the French Revolution 1789-1817*, ed. Charles Popham Miles (2 vols., London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1890), ii, 376.

¹² George Pellew, *The Life and Correspondence of the Right Honble Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth* (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1847), iii, 76.

therefore natural for Perceval's friends, colleagues and supporters to transfer their allegiance to Liverpool.

Liverpool made a sincere, cordial and fair offer to Canning and Wellesley for their support on 17 May. He visited them, adopted a conciliatory tone, promised an equitable distribution of offices and answered their questions. Liverpool assured Wellesley, who believed that the campaign in the peninsula should be extended, that the government would prosecute the war with full vigour. Canning was informed that his old rival, Viscount Castlereagh, would not seek to obstruct a deal that brought him into the cabinet. The offer, however, was rejected the next day. Canning politely refused his support on the grounds that the administration would not grant political rights to Roman Catholics. Wellesley declined to serve for the same reason, though he expressed himself less politely, and also because the government was still not prepared to conduct the war to his satisfaction. Wellesley doubtless still vainly believed that he should be premier and Canning resented Castlereagh serving as both Foreign Secretary and Leader of the House of Commons.¹³

Liverpool therefore assumed power without these major ministerial reinforcements on 20 May. Charles Abbot, the Speaker of the House of Commons, encountered him the next day:

In the street Lord Liverpool stopped me and got into my carriage, and desired me to set him down at Carlton House. In our way he spoke of his own new situation (as First Lord of the Treasury) and its difficulties; that he wished to call upon me some morning, &c. N. B. He never did.¹⁴

¹³ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii; *Authentic Correspondence and Documents, Explaining the Proceedings of the Marquess Wellesley, and of the Earl of Moira, in the Recent Negotiations for the Formation of an Administration* (London: Richard Phillips, 1812).

¹⁴ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 382.

He never did because he was not Prime Minister the next morning. The attempt to strengthen the administration was not enough to retain parliamentary confidence and public support. Contemporaries, including former Perceval supporters, seemed to believe that there must be a stronger alternative to the present ministry. This was clear from the moment Liverpool took charge. He struggled to retain the services of all his colleagues. William Wellesley Pole refused Liverpool's offer of the War Department and resigned from the government on 21 May in order to avoid offending his brother, Wellesley. Influential parliamentarians failed to rally to Liverpool's standard. 'P. S. Lord Liverpool sent to desire to see me to-day,' William Wilberforce, the slavery abolitionist and faction leader, admitted, 'but I had a fair excuse for not going, and so declined it.'¹⁵

Liverpool ultimately lost the confidence of parliament. James Archibald Stuart-Wortley, a former Perceval supporter, brought forward a motion of no confidence in the government before the House of Commons on 21 May and it passed.¹⁶ To some extent this was more of a technical defeat for the administration than an unambiguous indication that the ruling class had completely lost faith in the ministry. The motion had not been taken very seriously because its mover was an insignificant figure. Stuart-Wortley had not even bothered to recruit in advance someone to second his proposition. Castlereagh mismanaged the proceedings, the debate was not well attended, government friends, including George Rose, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, missed the division, and the motion was passed only

¹⁵ Robert Isaac Wilberforce & Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London: John Murray, 1838), iv, 31.

¹⁶ G. Le G. Norgate, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Wortley, James Archibald Stuart-, first Baron Wharncliffe (1776–1845),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26731>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

by four votes.¹⁷ It would also seem that Liverpool had not realised the seriousness of the government's predicament and had therefore not acted with determination to prevent this defeat. Thomas Grenville reported:

Our friends all expect Temple, and George, and Fremantle, and Bernard, for to-night's division; and Macdonald, the great list-maker, says we shall have a majority; so we shall, if what I hear is true, that H. Drummond, Lascelles, Wilberforce, Lord Lovain, Lord Dysart, and all the Lowthers, will support Stuart Wortley; though some say the Lowthers only declare they will not vote against Stuart. The inexplicable thing is, how Lord Liverpool undertakes this, after having had notice from the above list, that they should be hostile to this arrangement.¹⁸

Liverpool was affected both politically and personally by this manoeuvre because Stuart-Wortley was a relative. 'The Liverpools have been very much hurt with Wortley,' the duchess of Devonshire mentioned on 2 June, 'but he went to him first, and did it in a feeling and gentlemanlike manner.'¹⁹

Despite this unexpected reverse, the fundamental strength of Liverpool's candidacy for the premiership is clear from the letters of support he received from prominent fellow peers at this time, even after it appeared certain that he would not after all be Prime Minister.²⁰ The duke of Buccleuch declared on 21 May that Liverpool's cause was good even if it did not attract further support and he reported that his friends approved of Liverpool's conduct.²¹ The duke of Rutland informed Liverpool the same day that he still had confidence in him as the head of the

¹⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii, 249-86; *The House of Commons 1790-1820*.

¹⁸ Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, i, 311.

¹⁹ *The Two Duchesses*, ed. Vere Foster (Bath: Cedric Chivers Ltd., 1972), p. 369.

²⁰ Charles Whitworth praised Liverpool on 22 May for his role in the negotiations to reconstruct the ministry, wished that he had a hundred votes to give him, and promised his unwavering support; B. L., Add. Mss. 38247, fos. 312-13; Whitworth was related to Liverpool and he was appointed the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1813; Roland Thorne, 'Whitworth, Charles, Earl Whitworth (1752-1825),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29338>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

²¹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 9, fos. 3-4.

government.²² Lord Abercorn described Liverpool's conduct on 27 May as manly and he pledged his support to the end.²³ The vote of the House of Commons had to be accepted nevertheless and the ministers tendered their resignations on 22 May.

Frances Calvert remarked on 25 May, 'Lord Liverpool was Premier for *one* day'.²⁴

- There Is No Alternative

Wellesley now tried putting together a ministry and on 23 May Canning was sent to enquire if Liverpool and his colleagues would support them. Liverpool turned Canning down later the same day. Support was refused not over issues of principle but because of the character of Wellesley. Liverpool never explained precisely why he and his colleagues refused to serve with Wellesley, but it is possible to work out what their objections were. Wellesley had behaved unreasonably during the previous round of negotiations with Liverpool and he had adopted a haughty manner with Liverpool at the interview on 17 May. Grey reported on 18 May, 'and this is so far confirmed that I know Liverpool said after the interview that the Marquis was on his high horse.'²⁵ Wellesley had also demonstrated an entire unwillingness to compromise on issues in his reply to Liverpool. He had continued to insist that the government was withholding vital and affordable resources from the war in the peninsula, for example. Liverpool had attempted to clarify his stance on Catholic emancipation and on the war in his response to Wellesley on 19 May. Wellesley replied needlessly, extensively, and argumentatively, to this on 21 May.

²² B. L., Add. Mss. 38571, fos. 174-5.

²³ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 7, fos. 8-9.

²⁴ Alice E. Blake, *An Irish Beauty of the Regency* (London: The Bodley Head, 1911), p. 186.

²⁵ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, eds. Walter Fitzpatrick, & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 255.

Wellesley had recently seriously offended Liverpool and his colleagues in other ways as well. A statement about Wellesley appeared in *The Times* on 20 May. It not only amounted to a defence of his resignation from the government earlier in the year, but it also savagely criticised Perceval, the late premier, for whom the period of mourning still continued. The article was placed in the newspaper by Thomas Sydenham, but Wellesley did not immediately distance himself from it. Documents relating to the recent negotiations, furthermore, between Liverpool and Wellesley and Canning were leaked to the press by Wellesley on 21 May. This was both highly improper and extremely impolite. Grenville reported:

The papers of to-day contain the letters and *minutes* of conversation between Wellesley, Canning and Lord Liverpool, a more unreserved communication than former custom or even present times seem to justify to such an extent and at so early a moment.²⁶

The queen informed the Prince Regent:

With infinite concern do I see by today's papers that the correspondence as well as the conversation between Lrd Liverpool, Marquis of Wellesley and Mr. Canning (not Cunning) is published. This is the first time I ever remember such a transaction being given out in the public prints, and I can not help reflecting with pleasure how well the dear King judged the characters of those two individuals, by proving themselves such as he always described them to me.²⁷

It appeared to Liverpool and his colleagues that the documents had been published at such a time with the explicit intention of inflicting the maximum possible damage on the government. These documents revealing the failure of the negotiations to attach fresh support to the ministry were published on the same day that the lower chamber debated the motion of no confidence that brought the administration down.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, x, 264.

²⁷ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 81.

²⁸ It is of interest, but probably no more than that, that Wellesley and Canning were both Freemasons; Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons* (London: Robinson, 2000), pp. 160, 165, 172, 173, 219.

This refusal by Liverpool and his colleagues to work with Wellesley annoyed the Prince Regent who wanted to see an end to the crisis in the government. Liverpool refused to change his mind, however, and was obliged to cope with the Prince Regent's bad temper. Grey reported on 30 May:

I have just received intelligence from a quarter that can admit of no doubt as to the fact that the P is in such a state of irritation that he cannot be spoken to and that Liverpool in the greatest consternation has sent an express for the Duke of York, who is at Oatlands.²⁹

Following the failure of the efforts undertaken by Wellesley to reconstruct the ministry under his leadership, the earl of Moira, the royal favourite, was invited to see if it were possible for him to form an administration. Liverpool was prepared to offer his support, but with certain qualifications. He would give him backing only from outside government on account of their difference of opinion over Catholic emancipation. Moira also failed to construct a ministry.³⁰ Liverpool saw the Prince Regent on 8 June and became First Lord of the Treasury and Prime Minister. Liverpool had celebrated his forty-second birthday the day before.

Some contemporaries were surprised at this turn of events. Wilberforce recorded, '[I] went down with Bankes to the House, and to our astonishment found that Lord Liverpool was first Lord of the Treasury, and empowered to form an

²⁹ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, eds. Walter Fitzpatrick, & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 275.

³⁰ Several reasons have been put forward to explain this failure. Moira may simply have lost his nerve, but the evidence is inconclusive. It is possible, however, that Moira went through the motions of trying to form a government and therefore creating the impression that every effort had been made by the Prince Regent to fulfil the wishes of the House of Commons but intending all along not to succeed and so producing a situation in which the recently resigned ministers could justifiably be asked to stay on. Liverpool wrote to Nicholas Vansittart on 7 January 1815. The Prime Minister asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider a request for patronage from Moira and Liverpool reminded Vansittart that Moira had been of assistance to them in 1812; B. L., Add. Mss. 31231, fos. 214-15.

administration'.³¹ 'Well,' Thomas Creevey, an opposition MP, exclaimed, 'this is beyond anything. Castlereagh has just told us that Moira resigned the commission this morning, and that His Royal Highness had appointed Lord Liverpool Prime Minister. Was there ever anything equal to this?'³² It seemed surprising to many contemporaries that Liverpool ended up as premier, but in hindsight it should not have been. Liverpool was chosen to succeed to the premiership by his colleagues and the Prince Regent within a few days of the vacancy first appearing. The crisis continued not because the Prime Minister had actually and completely lost the confidence of parliament, but because he technically and constitutionally had. The resignation of the government and the difficult but abortive negotiations that followed, however, only served to demonstrate that there was no alternative candidate for the premiership.³³

³¹ Wilberforce & Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, iv, 33.

³² *The Creevey Papers*, p. 102.

³³ Michael Roberts, 'The Ministerial Crisis of May-June 1812', *The English Historical Review*, 51, 203 (1936), 466-87; Norman Gash, *Lord Liverpool* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), pp. 77-99; Roland Thorne, 'Hastings, Francis Rawdon, first marquess of Hastings and second earl of Moira (1754-1826),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxv, 743-9.

Part Three

Chapter Ten

The Stabilisation of the Administration

8 June-24 November 1812

- A Most Arduous and Difficult Situation

Lord Liverpool became Prime Minister on 8 June 1812, but his grip on power was far from secure at the start of his premiership. Lord Wellington stated to Liverpool in a letter he wrote the next day: ‘You have undertaken a most gigantic task, and I don’t know how you will get through it.’¹ ‘However, there is nothing like trying’, he added.² It appeared to some in parliament and across the wider political nation that Liverpool had become Prime Minister purely by accident following his predecessor’s untimely demise and the Prince Regent’s seemingly desperate search for a replacement while others believed that the circumstances in which Liverpool had become premier were suspicious, with particular attention being drawn to the sudden failure of the earl of Moira’s attempt at constructing an administration, and to the fact that the wish of the House of Commons for a proper search to be made for a stronger ministry had not been fulfilled. Furthermore, Liverpool led a government that was opposed, or at least not supported, by Earl Grey and the usual suspects in opposition, besides men with whom he had once served, including Lord Grenville, Marquess Wellesley and George Canning. The administration was also under enormous pressure over the Orders-in-Council and a number of other issues, including Roman Catholic emancipation. Liverpool confessed to Wellington on 10 June:

With respect to myself, I feel placed in a most arduous and difficult situation, from which I should have been most happy, on many accounts, to have been relieved; but I could not, under the

¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 400.

² *Ibid.*

circumstances, have shrunk from it with honour; and I owe it now to the Prince to use my best endeavours for carrying on his government.³

Liverpool was true to his word. He did not shrink from the struggle to stabilise and strengthen the administration. 'As to Lord Liverpool,' the duke of Richmond requested Earl Bathurst on 12 June, 'pray tell him I have avoided troubling him, as I know how much he must be occupied.'⁴

- A Reshuffle of the Cabinet

One way in which the premier could shore up the administration was by reshuffling the cabinet. The Prime Minister sensibly retained the services of those well connected, influential and experienced peers who had formed the backbone of the previous ministry, including the earl of Eldon as Lord High Chancellor,⁵ 2nd Viscount Melville as First Lord of the Admiralty,⁶ Lord Mulgrave as Master-General of the Ordnance,⁷ and the earl of Westmorland as Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal.⁸ The recent ministerial crisis, however, had left Liverpool with some room for manoeuvre. A replacement for Spencer Perceval as Chancellor of the Exchequer had to be found. The late premier had also occupied the position of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Moreover, Richard Ryder, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, wanted to retire on

³ *Ibid.*, i, 399.

⁴ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 180.

⁵ E. A. Smith, 'Scott, John, first earl of Eldon (1751-1838),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlix, 417-24; R. A. Melikan, *John Scott Lord Eldon, 1751-1838* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶ Michael Fry, 'Dundas, Robert Saunders, second Viscount Melville (1771-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xvii, 292-4; Michael Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

⁷ Stephen M. Lee, 'Phipps, Henry, first earl of Mulgrave (1755-1831),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 184-7.

⁸ Roland Thorne, 'Fane, John, tenth earl of Westmorland (1759-1841),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xix, 5-6.

account of his health and Liverpool's own promotion to the premiership left the war office without a head.⁹

Liverpool acted promptly and wisely to tie Viscount Sidmouth and his friends more securely to the administration. Sidmouth was promoted to the home office and the department was offered to him in the most flattering way. Liverpool's very first words to his colleague on returning from his audience with the Prince Regent and having become Prime Minister on 8 June 1812 were, 'You must take the Home Department, Lord Sidmouth – It will be everything to me!'¹⁰ Sidmouth was oversensitive, and he had wanted a more senior and active role in the government than the one he held at present, but given his courageous and conscientious rather than colourful character, it was a suitable position. By placing Sidmouth at the home office, Liverpool also sought to placate those men wary of concessions to Roman Catholics. Sidmouth was a staunch Protestant and now in ultimate charge of the affairs of Ireland.¹¹ Sidmouth's friends were also promoted. Nicholas Vansittart became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Charles Bragge Bathurst was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.¹² The earl of Buckinghamshire continued as President of the Board of Control and Sidmouth's brother, John Hiley Addington, also entered the administration as Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department.¹³ The earl of Harrowby replaced Sidmouth as Lord President of the Council and his

⁹ W. R. Williams, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Ryder, Richard (1766-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvi, 458.

¹⁰ Ziegler, *Addington*, p. 307.

¹¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 94.

¹² John Plowright, 'Vansittart, Nicholas, first Baron Bexley (1766-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lvi, 131-4; Roland Thorne, 'Bathurst, Charles Bragge (bap. 1754, d. 1831),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, iv, 350-1.

¹³ Roland Thorne, 'Hobart, Robert, fourth earl of Buckinghamshire (1760-1816),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxvii, 381-4; D. R. Fisher, 'ADDINGTON, John Hiley', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 47-50.

elevation doubtless made the retirement of his brother, Richard Ryder, easier to bear.¹⁴

As his own successor at the war office, Liverpool chose Bathurst. Bathurst was a close colleague and sound. He shared certain attributes with the premier. He was politically moderate and had a conciliatory manner. Moreover, he had been firm friends with Grenville and Wellesley at university, and this connection could prove to be useful as Liverpool struggled to reunite the Pittites.¹⁵ Liverpool ensured that this appointment would be acceptable to Wellington. He wrote on 10 June 1812: 'I believe you are sufficiently acquainted with him to know that there are few men so assiduous at business, and that you could not have a more agreeable correspondent.'¹⁶ The earl of Clancarty, replaced Bathurst as President of the Board of Trade.¹⁷

Although Bathurst formally took over at the war office, Liverpool continued to take a keen interest in the war effort and he therefore maintained a cordial relationship with Wellington.¹⁸ He hoped that, in turn, the government would enjoy Wellington's confidence and support.¹⁹ As soon as he was confirmed in the highest office,

¹⁴ D. R. Fisher, 'Ryder, Dudley, first earl of Harrowby (1762-1847),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xviii, 449-51.

¹⁵ Neville Thompson, 'Bathurst, Henry, third Earl Bathurst (1762-1834)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, iv, 354-5; Neville Thompson, *Earl Bathurst and the British Empire 1762-1834* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1999); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 94.

¹⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 399.

¹⁷ G. Le G. Norgate, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Trench, Richard Le Poer, second earl of Clancarty (1767-1837),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lv, 297-9.

¹⁸ Liverpool was also lucky. In the same month that Liverpool was appointed to the premiership, Napoleon invaded Russia; Adam Zamoyski, *1812* (London: Harper Collins, 2004); Adam Zamoyski, 'Napoleon Triumphs in Russia', in *What Might Have Been*, ed. Andrew Roberts (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), pp. 79-91.

¹⁹ Norman Gash, 'Wellesley [formerly Wesley], Arthur, first duke of Wellington (1769-1852),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lviii, 1-29; Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: The Years of the Sword* (London: Panther, 1972); Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: Pillar of State* (London: Panther, 1975); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 97.

Liverpool reassured Wellington that the ministry's policy towards the peninsular campaign would remain unchanged. He declared on 10 June 1812:

You may rely with the utmost confidence on a continuance of every possible degree of support from the Government. They feel the importance of a successful issue to the contest in the Peninsula, and they are determined to make every effort in that quarter compatible with our resources, and which is consistent with the security of the British empire.²⁰

Whenever news of victory on the battlefield arrived in the capital, the Prime Minister showered the general with praise. He wrote on 19 August after the battle of Salamanca:

I congratulate you with the greatest sincerity, as I am sure you will believe, on the most decided as well as brilliant victory which has for centuries crowned the British arms, and which, whilst it reflects the highest lustre upon every individual who was engaged in it, redounds so peculiarly to the credit of the Commander, by whose foresight, decision, and science those operations were conducted which have led to a result of such incalculable importance.²¹

Liverpool also continued to engage in frank and friendly correspondence with Wellington on overall strategy. The Prime Minister raised with the general the likely consequences of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. He ended one letter on 27 October:

Excuse me, my dear Lord, for having gone so much at length into these subjects; I have, in fact, been thinking aloud upon them; and I thought there would be no harm in bringing under your consideration those ideas which the extraordinary circumstances of the present crisis have presented to my own mind.²²

All these efforts on Liverpool's part did not go unrecognised or unappreciated by Wellington. Thomas Sydenham reported from Torquemada on 13 September:

Whatever may be his opinion of the capacity of the present ministry, he [Wellington] has always been on good terms with Lords Liverpool, Bathurst, and Castlereagh, and he feels himself under certain obligations to that party for the general support which he has

²⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 399.

²¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 401.

²² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 442.

received from them, and the confidence with which he has been treated by them.²³

Liverpool continued to use his new position to bind Wellington ever more tightly to the administration. The Prime Minister announced his intention in the summer of 1812 of proposing a parliamentary grant for Wellington of £100,000. He also took it upon himself to organise the purchase of an estate, Wellington Park, for the general. Sydenham commented on Liverpool's conduct in this matter on 21 September: 'Since I last wrote to you Lord Wellington has received a letter from Lord Liverpool, which has pleased him very much; and it really does appear that on this occasion both Lord Liverpool and Perceval have done a handsome thing in a handsome manner.'²⁴

- The Management of Parliament

Liverpool also sought to bolster his ministry by courting the favour of parliamentarians in both houses. Of course he continued to lead the House of Lords personally and his abilities as a speaker were much admired. Joseph Farington's dinner companions on 3 July 1812 discussed the Prime Minister's oratorical skills: 'Lord Liverpool was spoken of as possessing an excellent judgement in debate, having always sufficient to say, & never committing Himself.'²⁵ Liverpool also showed a willingness to come to the aid of his colleagues in debate. Sidmouth presented a bill to deal with public disorder in certain districts on 27 July. The Prime Minister spoke in favour of the legislation when it came under attack and he also

²³ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 423.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vii, 426.

²⁵ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xii, 4154.

defended Viscount Castlereagh's reputation when the Foreign Secretary was accused of cruelty during his time as a minister in Ireland.²⁶

The new premier also made efforts to improve the management of the House of Commons. When another motion of no confidence was tabled on 11 June 1812, the administration did not leave the result of the debate to chance. Ministers ensured that their supporters turned out in force. The motion was defeated by a majority of 125 votes. A total of 289 Members of Parliament voted with the government on this occasion. Liverpool also favoured candidates in by-elections who were likely to support his ministry. He wrote on 24 June to Hart Davis to wish him luck at the polls in Colchester,²⁷ and to his father, Richard Hart Davis, another candidate: 'I know no person who has as strong claims to represent the city of Bristol as yourself, and on every consideration, public and private, you may rely upon my best wishes for your success.'²⁸

The Speaker of the House of Commons in the early nineteenth century could take a much more partisan role in the lower chamber than they can do today and Liverpool made a point of being on friendly terms with Charles Abbot.²⁹ The Speaker was close to Sidmouth and no doubt took comfort from the promotion of the Home Secretary's faction in the cabinet reshuffle. Abbot took an interest in the British Museum expeditions to Greece and the safeguarding of ancient ruins. One such trip to the island of Aegina was proposed in the summer of 1812 and Liverpool

²⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii, 356-1294.

²⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fo. 15; R. G. Thorne, 'DAVIS, Hart', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 573-4.

²⁸ Lawrence Taylor & R. G. Thorne, 'DAVIS, Richard Hart', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 574-6.

²⁹ Clare Wilkinson, 'Abbot, Charles, first Baron Colchester (1757-1829)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, i, 11-15.

communicated personally with the Speaker on 25 July setting out the government's attitude in terms of granting a permit and offering financial assistance.³⁰

- Solutions to Problems

As well as taking care to improve the general management of parliament, the Prime Minister acted to defuse a number of explosive issues on the political agenda. The issue of Roman Catholic emancipation had the potential to tear the government apart. Some ministers vehemently opposed any concessions, whereas others were sympathetic to the demands of Roman Catholics. It was extremely difficult for Liverpool to agree a policy on this issue with his colleagues, but finding a solution to this problem was a matter of urgency because both Canning and Wellesley planned to raise the matter in parliament in the very near future. The very day after he was commissioned to form an administration, Liverpool held a meeting at his house of various government ministers, friends and supporters. The Prime Minister declared that the ministry as a body would not oppose Roman Catholic emancipation and explained that in future his colleagues would be free to take whatever position they wanted on the issue. Although this principle would be severely tested over the next fifteen years, it enabled prominent politicians on both sides of this argument to work alongside each other on other issues for as long as Liverpool remained at the head of the government.

In the first weeks of his premiership the Prime Minister sensitively handled another religious issue that had forced its way onto the parliamentary agenda. Methodists had been alarmed by a bill championed by Sidmouth shortly before he entered Perceval's government which they believed would class them with Dissenters

³⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 30-1.

and therefore impose restrictions on their denominational practices. Although the legislation was defeated, Methodists continued to campaign vigorously for protection under the law. The parliamentary opposition hoped to take advantage of this situation, to curry favour with non-conformist communities and to embarrass the administration, by bringing forward measures of their own that offered relief to Dissenters. Liverpool introduced a toleration bill which satisfied Methodist demands and removed several long-standing penalties on Dissenters. The Prime Minister collaborated with Thomas Allan, a solicitor acting for the Methodists, in drawing up the legislation. Liverpool also smoothed the passage of the bill by speaking prominently in favour of it and persuading senior Anglicans that they had nothing to fear from it. The Prime Minister carefully defended the proposals in letters he sent to Charles Manners Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 30 June and 3 July 1812.³¹ The toleration bill became law on 29 July and Allan expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister in a letter on 15 August.³² Liverpool had conciliated the naturally conservative Methodists without infuriating the Anglicans, had given Dissenters a reason not to make common cause with the Roman Catholics and had stolen the clothes of the opposition by posing as the friend of Dissent.³³

The Orders-in-Council were repealed on 16 June 1812. The effect of this was to rob the opposition of the main stick they had been using to beat the government. Repeal was also intended to pacify the United States of America, but, unfortunately,

³¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 20-1, 23-5.

³² B. L., Add. Mss. 38249, fos. 51-3.

³³ W. R. Ward, 'Allan, Thomas (fl. 1800-1840),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, i, 758-9; David N. Hempton, 'Thomas Allan and Methodist Politics, 1800-1840', *History*, 67, 219 (1982), 13-31; David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); W. M. Jacob, 'Sutton, Charles Manners- (1755-1828),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, liii, 377-8; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 93-5.

the USA declared war on the United Kingdom just two days later, before news of this concession had reached Washington DC.

- The Canningites

Towards the end of the parliamentary session Liverpool tried very hard again to recruit Canning to his administration. Negotiations were opened, meetings were arranged and letters were exchanged. Charles Arbuthnot reported to William Huskisson on 24 July 1812 that, 'the anxiety had completely exhausted Liverpool.'³⁴ Liverpool generously offered Canning the Foreign Office, but the latter finally and foolishly refused to join the government on 27 July because he just would not serve under his old rival, Castlereagh, as Leader of the House of Commons. Liverpool could not convince Canning that Castlereagh would simply be manager of the business of the lower chamber and that this did not imply that he would have authority over his colleagues.

Having failed to win over Canning, Liverpool resorted to bolstering the administration by promoting promising young men who could bring administrative talent and debating strength to the government. Frederick John Robinson, a future premier, was promoted to the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade.³⁵ Liverpool also appointed Robert Peel, another future premier, to succeed William Wellesley-Pole as Chief Secretary for Ireland.³⁶ (Wellesley-Pole had resigned from the government out of loyalty to his brother, Marquess Wellesley.) Liverpool

³⁴ Hinde, *George Canning*, p. 254.

³⁵ P. J. Jupp, 'Robinson, Frederick John, first Viscount Goderich and first earl of Ripon (1782-1859),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvii, 324-9; Wilbur Devereux Jones, *'Prosperity' Robinson* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

³⁶ G. Le G. Norgate, rev. John K. Severn, 'Pole, William Wellesley- [formerly Wesley-], third earl of Mornington (1763-1845),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 738-40.

perceptively recognised his significant potential and sought to harness it for the good of the country.³⁷ He wrote to Richmond, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on 1 August 1812:

I can speak with more confidence of Mr. Peel than I could of most persons to whom such an office might be offered. He has been under me in the Secretary of State's office for two years, and has acquired all the necessary habits of official business. He has a particularly good temper, and great frankness and openness of manners, which I know are particularly desirable on your side of the water. He acquired great reputation, as you must have heard, as a scholar at Oxford, and he has distinguished himself in the House of Commons on every occasion on which he has had an opportunity of speaking. I have the greatest hopes, therefore, that this appointment will prove acceptable to you and advantageous to the Government.³⁸

Richmond was pleased with the appointment.³⁹ He wrote to Peel on 4 August, 'Though I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with you, I assure you Lord Liverpool could not have found a person in the House of Commons whom I would rather appoint to the office of Chief Secretary in Ireland.'⁴⁰ It would seem none the less, that when occasion demanded it, Liverpool was quite prepared to risk causing offence in order to recruit the men he wanted as quickly as he could. Although the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was pleased with the appointment of Peel, Richmond complained to Bathurst on 5 August that he had not been consulted before the position was offered to Peel.⁴¹

³⁷ John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788-1850),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xliii, 406-18; Norman Gash, *Mr. Secretary Peel* (2nd edn., London: Longman, 1985); Eric J. Evans, *Sir Robert Peel* (London: Routledge, 1991); Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel* (2nd edn., London: Longman, 1986).

³⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 425-6.

³⁹ T. F. Henderson, rev. Roger T. Stearn, 'Lennox, Charles, fourth duke of Richmond and fourth duke of Lennox (1764-1819),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiii, 365-6.

⁴⁰ *Sir Robert Peel*, ed. Charles Stuart Parker (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1891-99), i, 34.

⁴¹ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 193.

- The Exertion of Authority

Liverpool moved quickly to exert his authority over the government. Although Prime Ministers in the early nineteenth century did not interfere across the departments of state to the extent that a premier does today, Liverpool's presence was felt throughout his administration from the first months of his premiership. As First Lord of the Treasury, he was expected to supervise the finances of the nation and this was a task that Liverpool took seriously and did not delegate to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Prime Minister looked for ways to reduce government expenditure. On 26 August 1812 he sent a memo to Eldon outlining the possibility of finding savings in the king's medical expenses which amounted to £34,000 every year.⁴² Liverpool was also a leading force in the financing of the campaign in the peninsula. He informed Wellington on 7 October that he had arranged with the Bank of England to supply him with £100,000 in gold coin every month for the next four months.⁴³ There is evidence furthermore to show that other ministers consulted the Prime Minister on a range of matters. The Home Secretary told the Lord Chancellor on 13 November that certain prisoners held in York should face immediate trial. He mentioned that Liverpool had been shown the report on the situation and had approved the measures drawn up by the home office.⁴⁴ Even extremely capable and dependable colleagues turned to the Prime Minister for advice. Peel wrote to him on 14 September 1812 on the subject of opening the distillation from grain: 'I should be most anxious to have your opinion and advice before anything is decided upon finally.'⁴⁵

⁴² Lambeth Palace Library, Manuscripts 2109, fo. 63.

⁴³ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 445.

⁴⁴ Pellew, *Life and Correspondence*, iii, 90-1.

⁴⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 446.

- The Distribution of Patronage

The image projected by the new Prime Minister was an important factor in the strengthening of the government. Liverpool was an unassuming man. He did not crow over his accession to the premiership. He had accepted the nomination out of a sense of public duty and had not been driven by overwhelming personal ambition.

Liverpool referred to the talented young men whom he had promoted in a letter to Wellington, on 19 August 1812: 'I should be most happy if I could see a second Pitt arise amongst them, and would most willingly resign the government into his hands, for I am fully aware of the importance of the minister being, if possible, in the House of Commons.'⁴⁶ The Prime Minister came across to most independent, impartial politicians as kind and considerate. Farington recorded this observation of Liverpool on 3 July 1812, 'Mr. Long said "He is one of the best tempered men living".'⁴⁷

Liverpool was not simply courteous to those he met. He generally adopted a friendly tone in his letters even when his correspondents were impatient and antagonistic.

Thomas Attwood, who was to become a leading radical in the 1820s, asked the premier on 18 September 1812 to take notice of the interests of the manufacturing and commercial sectors when reviewing the monopoly of the East India Company.

Although Attwood had to write again to demand a reply, on 30 September, Liverpool did find the time to respond on 2 October. The Prime Minister explained that the government was not yet ready to make its views public on this issue, but he welcomed Attwood's opinion.⁴⁸ Liverpool also demonstrated integrity when it came to the dealing out of patronage. He honoured the pledges made by Perceval before he died and he avoided the temptation to deluge his friends with titles. Charles Gregan

⁴⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 402.

⁴⁷ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xii, 4154.

⁴⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38410, fos. 87-91, 115-17.

Craufurd's request for a peerage was turned down by Liverpool on 28 June 1812 and the Prime Minister added in his reply to the MP that he had rejected the applications of many friends.⁴⁹ On 12 June 1812 the Prime Minister wrote to Lord Ellenborough, stating that the see of Chester had become vacant and that therefore the time had come for him to appoint his first bishop. The Prime Minister declared that he had chosen an individual unconnected to him, Gerrard Andrewes, the Dean of Canterbury.⁵⁰ (When, however, Andrewes turned the appointment down on the grounds of age, the diocese was passed to George Henry Law, the brother of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Ellenborough.)⁵¹

Liverpool did oil the political system, however, with a few judicious drops of patronage during the first few months of his premiership. Lord Camden's departure from the cabinet at the end of the year was sweetened with a promotion in the peerage.⁵² Other peers who provided the administration with political and electoral strength were rewarded. The duke of Newcastle Under Lyme became a knight of the Garter, the duke of Northumberland was granted preferment in the church for a client and Lord Harewood was elevated to an earldom.⁵³ The duke of Buccleuch had his requests for favours granted on several occasions and Liverpool wrote to Richmond

⁴⁹ H. M. Stephens, rev. Roger T. Stearn, 'Craufurd, Sir Charles Gregan (1761-1821),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv, 49; B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 19-20.

⁵⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 5-6.

⁵¹ Robert Hole, 'Andrewes, Gerrard (1750-1825),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ii, 102; Richard Sharp, 'Law, George Henry (1761-1845),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxii, 754-5; Michael Lobban, 'Law, Edward, first Baron Ellenborough (1750-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxii, 741-7.

⁵² S. M. Farrell, 'Pratt, John Jeffreys, first Marquess Camden (1759-1840),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 219-23.

⁵³ H. C. G. Matthew, 'Clinton, Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham-, fourth duke of Newcastle under Lyme (1785-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, 147-8; Stephen Conway, 'Percy, Hugh, second duke of Northumberland (1742-1817),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xliii, 724-6; B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 3, 25-6.

on 31 July 1812 to suggest rewarding Lord Redesdale, who apparently had been very helpful to the ministry in the upper chamber.⁵⁴ The new Prime Minister also combined patronage with a good dose of flattery as he tried to attract the Grenvillites back into the government fold. On 4 July 1812 he promised the marquess of Buckingham that one of his clients would receive a measure of ecclesiastical preferment and he lauded the proposed recipient.⁵⁵

- General Election

There was one more important step that Liverpool took to bolster his position at the start of his premiership. He called a general election. Throughout the summer of 1812 the Prime Minister had carefully monitored the growth of what opinion pollsters today refer to as the ‘feel good factor’. He discovered first hand that there would be an abundant harvest. He reported to Bathurst from Walmer Castle on 16 August 1812:

You know that this is the greatest wheat county in England. I was very particular in my inquiries yesterday, and I heard with the exception only of the very heavy lands near the Medway the most favourable accounts of all the crops of grain. Even in these lands it is now expected that the crops will be reasonably good.⁵⁶

The Prime Minister also recognised the positive effect news of military victory in the peninsular campaign had on the nation. He reported to Wellington from London on 19 August after hearing of the successful outcome of the battle of Salamanca:

I have never in my life seen anything equal to the enthusiasm which the knowledge of this event has excited throughout this town, and throughout every part of the country from which accounts of its

⁵⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 14, 21, 30, 32, 33; D. S. Greer, ‘Mitford, John Freeman-, first Baron Redesdale (1748-1830),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxviii, 451-3.

⁵⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fo. 26; R. W. Davis, ‘Grenville, George Nugent-Temple-, first marquess of Buckingham (1753-1813),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 727-30; John Beckett, *The Rise and Fall of the Grenvilles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

⁵⁶ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 196

reception have yet been obtained. In addition to all the other advantages derived from your services, it must be gratifying to you to reflect that you have made the army as popular as the navy has hitherto been.⁵⁷

Liverpool also informed Wellington that the parliamentary session had ended satisfactorily with the government having managed to carry through both houses taxes amounting to two million pounds. Ireland, moreover, was more peaceful than she had been for over a year, the premier added. Liverpool believed at the end of September that the time was right to go to the country, but there were other voices in the cabinet who believed that the Prime Minister might be wiser to wait a little bit longer for a more propitious moment. Harrowby remarked to Bathurst on 17 September: 'Surely Liverpool does not recollect that all Great Britain is not the Isle of Thanet, and that if we dissolve by the end of September, there are many parts of the kingdom in which the harvest will not be over.'⁵⁸

The Prime Minister, having made the decision to go to the country, now set about gearing up his colleagues and supporters for the prospective contest. Liverpool was determined to take full advantage of the short period before the dissolution of parliament when the opposition might well be unaware of his intention to call a general election. He sought permission from the Prince Regent on 15 September 1812 to send out the confidential letters to government supporters as soon as possible in order to give them advance warning of the poll and enable them to make preparations.⁵⁹ The Prime Minister informed his friends on 18 September of his intention to request the dissolution of parliament either at the end of that month or at the start of the next one. Liverpool also took steps to make sure that those members of the government with particular responsibility for election arrangements were ready for

⁵⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 403.

⁵⁸ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 214.

⁵⁹ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 144.

action. Peel would lead the campaign in Ireland and Liverpool wrote to him on 22 September, providing him with the precise date for the dissolution of parliament and requiring him to do everything he could to support the friends of the administration.⁶⁰

Parliament was dissolved on 29 September 1812, but Liverpool's involvement in the general election did not end at that point. The Prime Minister worked with the patronage secretary, Charles Arbuthnot, throughout the campaign to bolster the position of the government.⁶¹ Liverpool passed on to his colleagues good news and hopeful predictions from the war front in order to boost government support. He informed Peel on 7 October: 'The news from America is most satisfactory. This was our weak side, and I have no doubt that by good management we shall be able to turn the tables on the Yankees.'⁶² The premier was also active finding seats for his friends. Peel had stood previously for Cashel, but the purchase of seats for prominent administration members with government money was now frowned upon and Liverpool suggested a move to Chippenham on 1 October. The Chief Secretary wrote to the Prime Minister on this subject four days later: 'I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have had in this affair.'⁶³ As the half-brother of the Prime Minister, Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson hoped to give up his seat in Sandwich and find a berth somewhere else that would require less effort on his part. Liverpool was involved in trying to satisfy this aspiration and he wrote to Isaac Hawkins Browne, MP for Bridgnorth, on 28 September, thanking him for vacating his seat in favour of

⁶⁰ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 38.

⁶¹ Neville Thompson, 'Arbuthnot, Charles (1767-1850),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ii, 320-2.

⁶² *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 41.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, i, 40.

the premier's half-brother.⁶⁴ MPs who had voted regularly against the government were targeted by the Prime Minister. He wrote to the earl of Harewood, who of course had just been promoted in the peerage, on 21 September 1812 and asked him to help the government defeat one of the MPs for Westbury. Harewood acted as a patron to John De Ponthieu and he was able to persuade him to retire from the House of Commons.⁶⁵ Suitable candidates were cajoled into standing in seats swayed by the ministry. Peel wrote to Liverpool about Sir Charles Saxton, 2nd Bt., on 6 October. Saxton had recently resigned as an Under-Secretary in the Irish administration and now wanted to stand for parliament. The Chief Secretary wondered if he would like to stand in Cashel, since he believed that Saxton's support would be an asset to the government. Saxton, however, feared for his political freedom if he stood in Cashel.⁶⁶ Liverpool replied to Peel, 'You may assure him from me that I only expect from my friends a generally favourable disposition, and that I shall never attempt to interfere with his right to vote as he may think consistent with his duty upon any particular question.'⁶⁷ Saxton was prevailed upon to stand in the government interest at Cashel.⁶⁸ Liverpool was prepared to offer favours in order to persuade other candidates to bear the burden of an electoral contest. John Owen, who stood for Pembrokeshire at great personal financial expense, was rewarded with a baronetcy in

⁶⁴ W. A. J. Archbold, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Jenkinson, Charles Cecil Cope, third earl of Liverpool (1784-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 978-9; B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fos. 45-6; J. M. Scott, rev. Stephen M. Lee, 'Browne, Isaac Hawkins (1745-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 171.

⁶⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fo. 41; R. G. Thorne, 'DE PONTHEIU, John', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 590-1.

⁶⁶ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, i, 41-2.

⁶⁸ P. J. Jupp, 'SAXTON, Sir Charles, 2nd Bt.', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, v, 101-3.

1813.⁶⁹ Other prospective parliamentary candidates enjoyed Liverpool's favour. The premier promised Sir William A'Court in Dorchester 'every attention' on 21 October.⁷⁰ Liverpool's intervention was not always enough to achieve the result he wanted, however. The Prime Minister asked Newcastle Under Lyme on 9 October to support Richard Arkwright, who supported the war and opposed reform, in Nottingham.⁷¹ Despite this assistance from the government, Arkwright failed to win the seat.⁷²

There was however a clear limit to how much Liverpool was prepared to do to influence the outcome of the election. He was unwilling to bend the law for his own ends. Since the last general election Curwen's Act had been passed which sought to eradicate the practice of purchasing seats with cash by the government. The Prime Minister was determined to observe this legislation, although it made his task of winning some seats that much harder. He informed Peel on 22 September 1812 that the administration could not be party to any arrangements that could be considered a violation of an Act of Parliament, particularly one so recently passed.⁷³ He repeated this assertion to Peel in a letter on 1 October,⁷⁴ and he wrote in a similar vein to Sir Walter Scott on 25 September 1812: 'Mr. Curwen's bill has put an end to all money transactions between Government and the supposed proprietors of boroughs.'⁷⁵ The premier also refused to distribute patronage too rashly or lavishly. He turned down requests for peerages from electoral patrons when he thought that they were

⁶⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38458, fo. 182; R. G. Thorne, 'OWEN, John', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 702-3.

⁷⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38249, fos. 356-8; R. G. Thorne, 'A'COURT, William', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 20-1.

⁷¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38578, fos. 64-5.

⁷² Winifred Stokes, 'ARKWRIGHT, Richard', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 87.

⁷³ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 38.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, i, 40.

⁷⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 444.

undeserving and he was clearly concerned that giving honours to such people might undermine his reputation for integrity. Lord Charleville approached Peel for an English peerage in return for his support in the Irish borough of Carlow. Liverpool explained to the Chief Secretary on 10 October that he considered Charleville a very poor lord and not much respected in Ireland. Granting his request would offend friendly, respectable opinion and Liverpool did not wish to continue as Prime Minister if he could not do so with credit.⁷⁶

By early November, Liverpool was able to assess whether or not his decision to go to the country had paid off and whether the election had strengthened the position of the government in parliament. The premier summed up the results to Peel on 1 November. He voiced satisfaction at the outcome in Ireland and expressed the view that the ministry would gain between thirty and forty seats in England. Moreover, he believed that the opposition had lost for the time being some prominent members, including Henry Peter Brougham and Sir Samuel Romilly.⁷⁷ Liverpool wrote again to Peel on 7 November to confirm that the fifteen Canningite MPs had been reduced to eight and that Wellesley had not gained as many as Canning had lost.⁷⁸

- Preparations for Parliament

After the general election the Prime Minister made careful preparations for the first session of the new parliament and he identified the likely challengers to the government's authority. He wrote to Peel on 1 November 1812 and declared that the main threat would emanate not from the official opposition, but from Wellesley and

⁷⁶ *English Historical Documents*, pp. 211-12.

⁷⁷ R. G. Thorne, 'Introductory Survey', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, i, 1-355; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 96-7.

⁷⁸ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 45.

Canning who would attempt to portray themselves as the rightful heirs of William Pitt ‘the Younger’. ‘The practical question in the House of Commons for the next session will be, Who are the true Demetriuses? and on the issue of that question the fate of the Administration will in a great measure depend.’⁷⁹ He expressed the view that it was important for the government to force an early division in the House of Commons on a substantive issue of national policy in an effort to help ministers to work out who was and who was not to be trusted. Liverpool did not wish to alienate Canning unnecessarily, however, and he reached an understanding with him over the way in which Canning would raise with the Prime Minister concerns expressed by his constituents, but at the same time he sought to deny Canning the opportunity to raise his profile further among the public.⁸⁰ The premier expressed displeasure at the suggestion that Canning might be allowed to second the motion re-electing the Speaker.⁸¹

Government friends were encouraged to turn up for the start of the session when the public finances would be debated. Peel’s attendance was requested by the Prime Minister on 27 October and the Chief Secretary was asked to bring the administration’s Irish supporters over with him.⁸² Liverpool offered to arrange accommodation for Peel in another letter on 17 November.⁸³ Liverpool’s friendly gestures then, and ever since Peel had accepted promotion from the Prime Minister, doubtless played a major part in winning for the government the Chief Secretary’s devotion by the time he took his seat in the new parliament. Peel wrote to John Wilson Croker on 30 October 1812: ‘There never was a time when I felt more

⁷⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 44.

⁸⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38568, fos. 32-6.

⁸¹ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 402-7.

⁸² B. L., Add. Mss. 40181, fos. 23-4.

⁸³ B. L., Add. Mss. 40181, fos. 29-30.

determined to do all I could to support the Government on its present footing, and on the principles on which it will meet Parliament.’⁸⁴ The Prime Minister persuaded other supporters to turn out for him with similar marks of kindness and consideration. Thomas Sherlock Gooch, MP for Suffolk, received a letter from the Prime Minister stating that it would be perfectly convenient for him to take his seat on 30 November just as he desired.⁸⁵

Other steps were taken by the Prime Minister to ensure that the session began smoothly. He met with the Speaker on 21 October to discuss the legislative timetable. On 27 October Liverpool wrote to Wellington to ask about prospective operations in the peninsular campaign. Supplied with this information the premier would be able to set the appropriate tone in the parliamentary debates.⁸⁶ The Prince Regent’s role at the opening of parliament was clarified by the Prime Minister, when Liverpool wrote to the palace on 19 November that, having sought precedents, there could be no objection to the prince occupying the Chair of State or Throne in the House of Lords.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 63.

⁸⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 19242, fo. 267; Winifred Stokes & R. G. Thorne, ‘GOOCH, Thomas Sherlock’, in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 34-6.

⁸⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 440-2

⁸⁷ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 183.

Chapter Eleven

The Battle for the Mantle of William Pitt 'the Younger'

24 November 1812–21 June 1813

A great deal had undoubtedly been achieved by Lord Liverpool during the first six months of his premiership in terms of stabilising and strengthening the administration, but his position still remained under threat after the general election; above all because he had failed to win the support of George Canning and his friends. Liverpool was, however, well aware of the situation in which he now found himself and he accurately described the political scene to Robert Peel in a letter on 1 November 1812. The Prime Minister stated that the future of the government would be endangered in the next parliamentary session not by the traditional Whig opposition, but by the third parties led by Canning and Marquess Wellesley. These other groups would pose as the true bearers of the Pittite ideological flame and seek to garner the support of government friends.¹ The new parliament assembled on 24 November and in less than a week the administration would come under attack exactly as Liverpool had predicted.

- Wellesley and the Peninsular War

The Prince Regent delivered the speech from the throne outlining the ministry's priorities in person to parliament on 30 November. The Speaker of the House of Commons recorded in his diary that he entered the House of Lords at two o'clock precisely and seated himself in the Chair of State or Throne: 'The Prince wore the robes of Prince of Wales, and his hat on his head. He read his long speech well; rather fluttered at first, but recovering himself, gradually delivered himself with great

¹ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 44-5.

dignity and expressiveness.' Liverpool joined the grand procession that heralded the arrival of the Prince Regent and carried the Great Sword of State, a symbol of royal power. He then took his place at the Prince Regent's right hand.² With all the pomp and circumstance over by the evening, the politicians returned to the partisan fray and Wellesley launched a bitter assault on the government.

Wellesley had prepared for this confrontation with the Prime Minister. 'He is extremely eager,' Lord Grenville wrote to the marquess of Buckingham on 28 November 1812, 'and will, I doubt not, make a very good and very violent attack on Liverpool and Co.'³ Wellington's eldest brother had decided to focus in his speech mainly on the recent military setbacks in the peninsular campaign. The allied forces had failed to capture the stronghold of Burgos in the autumn, had abandoned Madrid and had retreated all the way back to the Spanish-Portuguese border. Wellesley sought to pin the blame for this defeat squarely on the government. The former Foreign Secretary insisted that the government had not done enough to prosecute the war effectively. He believed that the administration should have seized the opportunity, made every effort and strained all resources, as soon as it heard of the disaster that had befallen Napoleon in Russia in order to strike one grand and decisive blow in the peninsula. Wellesley furthermore accused the ministry of denying his brother the means to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion. He declared that Lord Wellington had lacked money, reinforcements and even the transport to convey his artillery and a siege train. Wellesley concluded with the warning that, unless greater efforts were made on the part of ministers in the peninsula, the French would not be ejected from Spain and the whole war effort would be undermined.

² *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 411-12.

³ Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, i, 416.

The Prime Minister rose to defend the administration. He replied that ministers had done everything they could to support the campaign in the peninsula. He wondered whether it was truly wise to throw everything into one massive push while Napoleon was occupied elsewhere:

He admitted, that at the period when the French army were so engaged with Russia, the opportunity might be more favourable for a distinguished effort in the peninsula; but considering the uncertainty of war, and the responsibility of government for the perpetual protection and safety of the empire, he would ask, whether it would be consistent with its duty, for one extraordinary effort, to throw away the means of future exertion; that knowing the most brilliant campaign has often no decisive influence upon the fate of war, whether a wise government should cast all on one die – should hazard the main power, the heart's blood of a country, merely to make a flourish – to risk perpetual strength for the peculiar triumph of one year?

Turning to refute the allegation that ministers had starved Wellington of resources, the Prime Minister stated that nothing requested by the general had ever been refused by the administration. Liverpool provided figures to demonstrate the extent of ministerial exertions. He told his fellow peers that on 27 June 1812 there were no fewer than 127,000 men in the pay of the United Kingdom serving in the peninsula and the Mediterranean region, and he doubted that there was a single man in England who three years earlier would have thought that an army on such a scale could have been established. Since 25 December 1811, he continued, 20,000 soldiers and 7,000 horses had been sent to the peninsula. Liverpool denied any knowledge of the transport deficiencies cited by Wellesley and remarked that before the former Foreign Secretary began flinging accusations of ineffectiveness at the government it was Wellesley's responsibility to show how greater exertions could be made on the part of ministers in the peninsula; this he had so far comprehensively failed to do in the debate.⁴

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiv, 11-50.

Wellesley had blundered again. Liverpool had been prepared for the attack and had managed to counter the former Foreign Secretary's arguments, and, crucially, the Prime Minister continued to enjoy the confidence of Wellesley's own brother.

Liverpool was as assiduous as ever in late 1812 in maintaining a cordial relationship with Wellington. The premier championed the proposal to grant Wellington £100,000 in the House of Lords on 7 December 1812 and paid another generous tribute to the general on that occasion:

For four campaigns, my lords, has the marquis of Wellington devoted the powers of his body and mind, to the conduct of the war in the peninsula. In the course of that period, he has been opposed to the most celebrated and experienced of the French generals, to Soult, to Victor, to Jourdan, to Massena, and to Marmont, and not only, my lords, has he been opposed to all these, but he has overcome them. Indeed, when we reflect that the whole of this period has been devoted to the cause of his country, without the exception of a day, when we reflect what privations he must have endured, that no considerations of personal ease could divert him from his object, that no fatigue, that no considerations of private policy could shake him in the discharge of these important public duties, we are led to wonder at that strength both of body and of mind which could support him under all these circumstances, and for so long a period.⁵

The Prime Minister attended the meeting of trustees for the grant on 23 December, made arrangements for the first payment of interest on the sum to be backdated to the day of victory at Salamanca, and finalised the purchase of the estate in Somerset.⁶ The day before this meeting Liverpool wrote to Wellington on the subject of the parliamentary grant. The Prime Minister enclosed a copy of the Bill authorising the reward and assured the general that it would receive the royal assent that day: 'I have endeavoured to arrange the provisions in such a manner as that they should, as much as possible, meet your wishes.' After the acquisition of the estate in Somerset, a sum of between 70 and 80 thousand pounds would still remain to be invested in land.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiv, 180-2.

⁶ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 414-15.

Liverpool asked Wellington to let him know what sort of property he would like the trustees to look for now. He wondered if the general would like to have some ground purchased in a particular county or counties, or if he would simply prefer the committee to buy another estate that would give him the greatest return on his money.⁷

Despite the recent setbacks in the peninsula, furthermore, the course of the war in general had turned decisively in the allies' favour.⁸ Wellesley had picked the wrong moment to attack Liverpool, however justifiable his criticism. Napoleon's Russian campaign had almost destroyed the French grand army, the great commander at last looked vulnerable, and his allies were beginning to desert him. Prussia would declare war on France on 16 March 1813. At the conclusion of the most recent campaigning season in the peninsula, the allies controlled the gateway into Spain and had driven the French north of the river Tagus. Liverpool was fully aware that the moment to strike Napoleon had possibly arrived. He outlined the situation to Wellington on 22 December: 'There has been no example within the last twenty years, amidst all the extraordinary events of the French Revolution, of such a change of fortune as Bonaparte has experienced within the last five months.' The most formidable army ever collected by Napoleon, he continued, had been decimated. The premier considered the likely consequences of this for the campaign in the peninsula. Liverpool speculated that Napoleon would withdraw the greater part of the French force from Spain to prevent a further deterioration of his position in Germany and he expected Wellington to prepare for such an eventuality. The Prime Minister concluded with the hope that, if Austria and Prussia could be persuaded to take

⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 503.

⁸ Todd Fisher, *The Napoleonic Wars (2): The Empires Fight Back 1808-1812* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001).

advantage of the Russian successes, the continent might yet be delivered from Napoleon's tyranny.⁹

Liverpool acted to take advantage of the unfolding military drama. The premier sought to encourage Russian resistance and to cement a union with the tsar in the autumn of 1812. In a speech in the House of Lords on 13 December the Prime Minister lauded the incredible defensive efforts made by the Russians in response to the invasion of their country by Napoleon. He declared, 'There was no example in modern warfare of so great and magnanimous a sacrifice as that of the burning of Moscow.' The British government, however, had more than just warm words to offer in support of the Russians. Liverpool asked parliament to grant the Russians £200,000 for the reconstruction of their shattered nation.¹⁰ The Prime Minister closely involved himself in the efforts to raise a similar sum by private charity. Liverpool attended a preliminary fundraising meeting at the Crown & Anchor tavern on 23 December. He also agreed to meet with William Wilberforce three days later to discuss improvements to the management of the subscription fund.¹¹

Wellesley's fierce assault on the government had been successfully beaten off and Liverpool was able to prorogue the first gathering of the new parliament just before Christmas in a contented mood. He wrote to Wellington on 22 December 1812:

The disposition to abuse the Government for the retreat from Burgos and Madrid might naturally have been expected in the actual state of political parties.

It has, however, produced no effect of any consequence to the prejudice of those in whose hands the administration of the Government has been placed. We have gone through our short session in the most satisfactory manner.

⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 448-50.

¹⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiv, 319-23.

¹¹ Wilberforce & Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, iv, 89-90.

Parliament reconvened after the Christmas recess in early February 1813 and Wellesley renewed his assault on the government a month later. He introduced a motion in the House of Lords on 12 March calling for the establishment of a committee to investigate the conduct of the war in the peninsula. The former Foreign Secretary continued to assert that the allied forces had ended the last campaign on the defensive because of some failing on the part of ministers. He charged the government frontbench with inadequate management of the nation's resources. He claimed that the administration had failed to take advantage of an excellent opportunity to advance against the French forces while Napoleon was embroiled in Russia throughout the previous year. On this occasion, Wellesley tried to explain how more troops and money could have been found for the war in the peninsula. He argued that if another fifteen thousand men had been despatched to this theatre of war the recent operations would not have concluded with the allied forces in retreat. He suggested, for example, that the garrison of Gibraltar, amounting to about 5,000 soldiers, could have been redeployed at the front. The sum of £500,000 was all that would have been required to maintain this extra unit and Wellesley described how savings could have been made at home. Some £125,667 had been assigned for the construction of new barracks in Ireland, and Wellesley declared that this project could have been delayed and the money used instead to support the campaign in Spain.

Wellesley's doubts about the effectiveness of ministers were shared by some prominent figures in the political nation. The duke of Gloucester, a nephew of the king, insisted in a letter on 20 April 1813, 'Were Lord Grenville and Lord Grey now in the situations which are occupied by Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh, Great

Britain would certainly dictate peace to France by the 1st of next January.’¹² Of course, Prince William Frederick was renowned for his lack of intelligence and widely known as ‘Silly Billy’.¹³ For those charged with supervising the despatch of supplies to the campaign in the peninsula, however, Wellesley’s accusations were entirely unjustified. John Charles Herries, the Commissary-in-Chief, submitted a paper to the Prime Minister just five days after the debate in the upper chamber which easily refuted the central allegations laid at the government’s door.¹⁴ Herries was clear that the level of expenditure on the military infrastructure at home had no effect whatsoever on the financing of the recent operations in Spain.¹⁵ Wellesley should have taken greater care to identify the most vulnerable points in the government’s strategy.

Liverpool was consequently content to leave the defence of the administration on that occasion mainly in the hands of the Secretary of State for War and the Prime Minister only stirred himself to intervene near the conclusion of the debate. When the premier did speak, he was withering in his expressions of contempt for the motion. He declared that of all the motions he had ever heard in the House of Lords the present one rested on the slightest grounds and he stated that he had never seen a case for inquiry so weakly made out. Liverpool insisted that every disposable battalion had been sent to the peninsula and every exertion had been made to supply the allied forces with money. He also reminded peers that over the last year Portugal had been

¹² *Life of General Sir Robert Wilson*, ed. Herbert Randolph (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1862), ii, 409.

¹³ A. W. Purdue, ‘William Frederick, Prince, second duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh (1776-1834),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lix, 119.

¹⁴ P. J. Jupp, ‘Herries, John Charles (1778-1855),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxvi, 808-11.

¹⁵ Edward Herries, *Memoir of the Public Life of the Right Hon. John Charles Herries* (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1880), i, 67-72.

secured and the French had been swept from one-third of Spain. The backers of Wellesley's motion forced a vote, but they were defeated by a majority of 75.¹⁶

The premier also continued to ensure that he retained the support of Wellesley's younger brother, Wellington. The most desirable honours that could be bestowed on a British subject were presented to the general. Liverpool informed him on 17 February that it was the intention of the Prince Regent to admit Wellington to the Order of the Garter, the most distinguished British order of chivalry, in place of the late marquess of Buckingham.¹⁷ It was usual for subjects who were not royal princes to be member of only one order at a time and Wellington was therefore expected to resign from the Order of the Bath. The Prime Minister, however, even made inquiries through the duke of York to see if the Prince Regent would object to Wellington retaining the honour and receiving the Blue Ribbon as well. Liverpool told the general on 21 June 1812 that he had decided not to press the matter, but he flattered Wellington with the admission that if an exception to the rule was ever to be made then it would be for him.¹⁸

- Canning and Catholic Emancipation

Before his first parliamentary session as Prime Minister came to an end, Liverpool had to face one more major challenge. A determined attempt was made in the House of Commons in early 1813 to pass a measure of political relief for Roman Catholics. This was something that the premier could not really allow to succeed. He continued to oppose Roman Catholic emancipation as a matter of principle, but there were other reasons at this time why it was important for Liverpool to defeat this motion. Canning

¹⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxv, 24-88.

¹⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 555-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vii, 651-2.

supported the measure and therefore if it passed safely through the lower chamber his reputation would be enhanced and he could subsequently emerge as a revitalised rival for the premiership. It was also important for Liverpool to defeat this measure because some people, especially across the Protestant community in Ireland, had come to suspect, presumably above all after the premier had declared at the establishment of his administration that the government would not oppose Roman Catholic emancipation, that his resolve to defend the constitution was softening. John Bernard Trotter, an author, informed Liverpool on 2 February 1813 that he had heard rumours in Dublin and asked the Prime Minister to clarify his position on the issue of Roman Catholic emancipation.¹⁹ No doubt in an attempt to stiffen what he feared was the premier's buckling backbone, Trotter proceeded to bombard Liverpool with anti-emancipation arguments over the next couple of months.²⁰ Sir Edward Worth Newenham also felt compelled to instruct the Prime Minister from Dublin on 9 February to stand up to the Roman Catholics.²¹ 'I cannot think how the report could have reached Dublin', Robert Peel even wrote to the duke of Richmond on 29 May, 'that Lord Liverpool had turned Catholic.'²² If the motion in favour of Roman Catholic emancipation passed through the House of Commons, the Prime Minister might lose the confidence of those government friends and supporters for whom opposition to relief was an issue of vital importance.

Engineering the defeat of this measure of political relief for Roman Catholics, however, was not an easy task for Liverpool to perform. He of course did not sit in the House of Commons and therefore could not take part in the debate on the floor of the

¹⁹ W. F. Rae, rev. Marie-Louise Legg, 'Trotter, John Bernard (1775-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lv, 429; B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fo. 8.

²⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 5-7, 16-18, 23, 24.

²¹ James Kelly, 'Newenham, Sir Edward (1734-1814),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xl, 618-19; B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 246-7.

²² *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 86.

chamber. The government, moreover, was divided over the issue. Peel opposed the motion, but Frederick John Robinson and Viscount Castlereagh, the Leader of the House of Commons, supported it. There were some things, nevertheless, that Liverpool could do to defeat this measure.²³ He reassured the anti-emancipationists that he was on their side by favouring them with patronage. Newenham, the son of a prominent friend of the Protestant ascendancy, was granted a military commission for his third son.²⁴ By proving to the anti-emancipationists that the premier had not abandoned them, they in turn would doubtless be encouraged not to lose faith in their cause and MPs unhappy with the measure would be inspired to turn up to the debate and to take part in the vote. The Prime Minister was also careful not to inflame passions further and push wavering MPs over the edge and into the lobby with the emancipationists by appearing unreasonable. Liverpool demonstrated that he was not motivated by bigotry in opposing emancipation by accepting other measures of relief for Roman Catholics. On 7 March 1813 he told the Speaker of the House of Commons that he was not against the promotion of Roman Catholics to some of the highest ranks in the army.²⁵ Sir John Coxe Hippisley, Bt., had opposed the government and supported emancipation, but he decided to abstain in the fatal vote on the emancipation bill on 24 May 1813 because he proposed the establishment of a committee of investigation as the first essential step on the road towards political relief for Roman Catholics. The Prime Minister courted Hippisley. Liverpool thanked him for some papers on the emancipation issue on 13 May and stated that they must

²³ It is possible that Liverpool attempted to orchestrate the production of anti-emancipation petitions. He presented a plan of action to Richard Hart Davis, a MP for Bristol and a close government friend, on 29 December 1812. It is unclear what this plan was, but in his reply Davis promised to act on it and then referred to local anti-emancipation petitions; B. L., Loan 72, vol. 34, fos. 101-2.

²⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 73-4, 169-70, 243; Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 296-7.

²⁵ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 440.

meet.²⁶ The Prime Minister also raised the subject of emancipation with the Speaker of the House of Commons. Liverpool arranged to see him on 7 March 1813 and he informed Abbot of his continued and staunch opposition to Roman Catholic emancipation.²⁷ This conversation with the Prime Minister must have been a factor in the decision taken by the Speaker to intervene in the debates on the relief bill and to speak against it on 9 March and 24 May. It was the Speaker, moreover, who proposed the amendment on 24 May which wrecked the bill and led to the abandonment of the measure. The Speaker's amendment was passed by a majority of 4 votes.²⁸

Trotter expressed his happiness to Liverpool on 3 June 1813 at the defeat of the motion in favour of emancipation and the total failure of Canning.²⁹ The Prime Minister must have shared in this happiness. In the course of the parliamentary session both Wellesley and Canning had posed as Pitt's true heir, just as Liverpool had expected. Wellesley had claimed the mantle of war leader and Canning had championed the cause of Roman Catholic emancipation. Both Wellesley and Canning failed, and Liverpool continued as premier.³⁰

²⁶ Roland Thorne, 'Hippisley, Sir John Coxe, first baronet (1745/6-1825),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxvii, 306-8; B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fo. 379.

²⁷ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 440.

²⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvi, 312-65.

²⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 122-3.

³⁰ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

Chapter Twelve

The March on Paris

21 June 1813–6 April 1814

- Vitoria

The campaign season of 1813 in the Peninsular War opened with a surprising and skilful British offensive which forced the French to evacuate the Spanish capital and pull back towards the Pyrenees. Joseph, Napoleon's brother and imposed king of Spain, finally called a halt to the retreat and decided to make a stand against Lord Wellington at Vitoria on 21 June. The French army was subsequently routed, but it managed to avoid complete annihilation. Well over sixty thousand men took to the field against Wellington, but only about 8,000 French soldiers were killed or captured. The British troops were seriously distracted from the task of pursuing the French by the spectacular opportunity for plunder and licentiousness presented by the abandoned French baggage train. The British and their Hispanic allies, however, had seized all but one of Joseph's 152 guns, immense quantities of enemy supplies, every piece of French transport, the personal possessions of the king of Spain and many senior officers, numerous camp-followers including hundreds of prostitutes, the collected papers of the Bonapartist regime in Spain, and Joseph's entire treasury. This victory, moreover, broke the back of French power in the Iberian Peninsula. Joseph fled his realm, having avoided capture by the closest of shaves when he leapt out of one side of his coach just as a British soldier reached the other side. The liberation of Spain seemed no longer to be an unlikely or even distant prospect. The victory at Vitoria, furthermore, reinforced Great Britain's standing on the continent and encouraged the

other nations engaged in the hard struggle with Napoleon's France in northern Europe to continue the fight.¹

News of the victory produced extensive celebrations in London. On 3 July the guns were fired at the Tower and elsewhere in the metropolis, the Lord Mayor delivered the valuable intelligence to the financial community at Lloyd's and the Stock Exchange, and the mail coaches were delayed in order to carry the news to every corner of the land.² The widespread rejoicing continued two days later. Many fabulous illuminations, patriotic slogans and other displays reflecting nationalist sentiment were erected across the capital in shop windows, on government buildings and outside grand private residences, and the streets of the city remained crowded until late at night. Apsley House was the site of some of the most impressive illuminations. At the house of a sword manufacturer, a display showed a lion about to trample on a cockerel. It was thought that the emblem should be changed. It would be more fitting apparently to show a man crushing a tiger, symbolising manly courage and human feeling vanquishing savage cunning and barbaric ferocity. The people who had gathered outside Wellington's house forced the servants of every carriage that passed the front door to take off their hats. The name of Wellington was illuminated at the offices of the War Department in Downing Street. It was also noted that the home of one prominent radical politician, Sir Francis Burdett, 5th Bt., was lit by just a few dim candles that evening.³ Both houses of parliament offered their thanks to Wellington and his forces as well. The House of Lords gathered for this purpose on 7 July. Earl Bathurst delivered a statement and Liverpool joined with another peer at the

¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

² *The Times*, 5 July 1813.

³ *The Times*, 6 July 1813; Marc Baer, 'Burdett, Sir Francis, fifth baronet (1770-1844),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 737-41; J. R. Dinwiddy 'Sir Francis Burdett and Burdettite Radicalism', *History*, 65, 213 (1980), 17-31.

end of the proceedings in expressing sadness at the loss of Colonel Henry Cadogan in the battle.⁴

The Prime Minister, however, had more to contribute in the aftermath of the victory at Vitoria than merely an additional expression of heartfelt condolences. A letter was despatched to the triumphant general on the same day that news of the battle reached London and this was followed with a further communication from the Prime Minister on 7 July. Liverpool immediately reassured the British commander that his efforts were entirely appreciated. The premier expressed his pleasure, congratulated Wellington and described the impression that the news of the victory had made on the public. He also informed Wellington that the Prince Regent had promoted him to the rank of Field Marshal and that this elevation would be announced in the same issue of the *Gazette* that carried his despatch from the battlefield.

The premier also passed on to the commander all the latest information that he had received about diplomatic and military developments elsewhere on the continent. He stated that the Russians and Prussians were disposed to resist the temptation to make peace with Napoleon, estimated that Britain's allies would soon have a force of about 250,000 men in the field and admitted that he could not say for certain how many troops were still under Napoleon's command. The Prime Minister also expressed the hope that Austria might now be persuaded to declare war against France and looked forward to putting an end to what he described as the tyranny that had been oppressing the world for so many years.

Liverpool believed that victory in Spain had been achieved at an opportune moment in the struggle with France and that it would have a significant effect on

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvi, 1123-33; John Sweetman, 'Cadogan, Henry (1780-1813),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ix, 416-17.

continental events. It was hoped that news of the outcome at Vitoria would have a positive impact on the shifting attitudes of the other powers towards continuing the war. The Prime Minister reported to Wellington that the government had acted decisively to take full diplomatic advantage of the victory, stiffen the resolve of Britain's allies, demoralise the French people, and confound Napoleon's political machinations to divide the nations arrayed against him. On the same day that Liverpool heard of the result from Vitoria, orders were issued for the news to be transmitted to the north of Europe. The *Gazette* carrying the news of the victory was translated into French, Dutch and German, and despatched to the European mainland with as little delay as possible and messengers were also sent to the headquarters of the Russian and Prussian armies. Liverpool added in his communications with Wellington that the ministry was urging the Spanish authorities to return to Madrid to demonstrate, above all to the other powers, that they had confidence in the security of their nation. Intelligence of the outcome at Vitoria was doubtless a factor in Austria's decision to enter the war on the side of the Allies on 12 August 1813 and in persuading the other great powers to resume their offensive against Napoleon that summer.

As well as ensuring that news of the victory was proclaimed far and wide, Liverpool suggested to Wellington how he might militarily be able to capitalise on the result at Vitoria. As early as 3 July Liverpool voiced the opinion that Wellington's forces should not now be divided for separate operations. By 7 July the premier had given further thought to how the battle could be followed up. His foremost concern was the continued security of the Iberian Peninsula: 'We may now entertain a reasonable hope that we shall succeed in driving the French out of Spain: the next step

will be to *keep them out* of that country.’⁵ The premier made a number of detailed suggestions about how Spain and Portugal could be secured without those countries relying on the current level of military assistance from Britain. The Prime Minister wondered if the defensive lines built in front of Lisbon could be replicated at the passes through the Pyrenees, if a force officered by Britain might be raised in the north of Spain where the inhabitants were reputedly more warlike in character and charged with the defence of the mountain range that separated Spain from France, and if these two measures, combined with a limited British-Portuguese force of twenty to thirty thousand soldiers, could secure the Iberian Peninsula effectively against further aggression from the French. Just as he did when he was Secretary of State for War, the Prime Minister worded these thoughts carefully: ‘Although the suggestions I am about to make have certainly occurred to yourself, I think it right, however, at this particular moment to mention them.’⁶

Although the Prime Minister had quickly and clearly grasped the political and strategic importance of the victory at Vitoria and had identified the need to secure Spain and Portugal from a French counter-offensive, it would seem that Liverpool’s suggestions for the defence of the Iberian Peninsula were unhelpful. One historian has recently described the idea that the Pyrenees could be fortified like the Lines of Torres Vedras as ‘utterly impracticable’.⁷ Liverpool, however, was not seeking to force Wellington to adopt his suggestions. Nor was he saying that these ideas were faultless or even necessarily thoughtful. His suggestions were put to Wellington not as commands but in the form of questions. For example: ‘In the first place, would it be practicable to apply the principle upon which the lines before Lisbon have been

⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 471.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, p. 457.

formed to the passes of the Pyrenees, and in what degree would such a system afford security to the country?’⁸ Liverpool was evidently floating these ideas for the additional purpose of subtly discovering what exactly Wellington had in mind to carry the struggle with France forwards. By raising these issues with Wellington, the Prime Minister was also demonstrating to the Field Marshal that his political masters back in London appreciated the difficult obstacles that lay ahead of him and the British army.⁹

Britain and her allies made further remarkable progress against Napoleon in the six months following the triumph at Vitoria. At the Pyrenees, Wellington repelled the French counter-offensive and, having captured the last remaining enemy citadels in Spain, on 7 October 1813 the British troops crossed the Bidassoa river and entered France.¹⁰ A little over a week later Britain’s allies defeated Napoleon at the battle of Leipzig and forced him to abandon control of Germany.

Liverpool continued to be much more than a mere spectator to this drama unfolding on the continent. He maintained a keen interest in the details of the peninsular campaign. Wellington’s letters to the Secretary of State for War were submitted to the Prime Minister for perusal. Liverpool also involved himself to some extent in the co-ordination of diplomatic and military initiatives. Viscount Castlereagh’s concern that the British government should not be seen to side decisively with the Bourbons, the exiled French royal house, and the Foreign Secretary’s suggestion that Wellington should publish a declaration rejecting any notion of dismembering France on entering that country were passed to Earl Bathurst by the Prime Minister.¹¹ Wellington’s expense claims were customarily forwarded by

⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 471-2.

⁹ *Supplementary Despatches*, viii, 49-50; Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 471-2.

¹⁰ Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Napoleonic Wars (4): The Fall of the French Empire 1813-1815* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002).

¹¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, viii, 302.

Bathurst to the Prime Minister for consideration by the latter in his capacity as First Lord of the Treasury.¹²

The premier also continued to communicate with Wellington directly though irregularly. Liverpool sought above all else to use his letters to encourage the Field Marshal in his endeavours by accommodating requests, expressing appreciation and providing intelligence on the military initiatives and diplomatic manoeuvrings of Britain's allies. The Prime Minister wrote to Wellington on 20 October 1813 after learning that Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Richard Fletcher had been killed at the siege of San Sebastian and his death had been brought to the attention of the government by Wellington.¹³ Liverpool promised in the opening paragraph of his letter to give this matter his immediate attention and to recommend a pension for Fletcher's family. The premier heartily congratulated Wellington on the success of his recent operations and declared that the establishment of the British army on French territory, after the liberation of Spain, would be remembered as a proud event in Britain's military history and mark the beginning of a new stage in the long conflict with France. Wellington was also provided with the latest news from northern Europe. Letters from the headquarters of the allied armies had arrived in London the previous night and Liverpool was consequently able to inform the Field Marshal that the Austrians had struck a deal bringing the Bavarians into the war against France. The premier also accurately predicted, on the basis of the information that he had before him, that the French would be expelled from Germany. The letter ended with Liverpool stating that steps would be taken to maintain the current level of forces under Wellington's

¹² *Supplementary Despatches*, viii, 315-16.

¹³ R. H. Vetch, rev. John Sweetman, 'Fletcher, Sir Richard, first baronet (1768-1813),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xx, 131-2.

command and that he was happy to hear a good account of the Field Marshal's health.¹⁴

- Châtillon

Wellington marched out of Spain in late 1813, while at the end of the year the allies started to cross the Rhine into France. Over the course of the last twelve months the tide in the war with France had turned decisively in the allies' favour. While vigorously continuing with the military campaign on enemy territory in early 1814, the British government could now start giving some serious thought to peace negotiations. Liverpool had reiterated to the House of Lords at the start of the new parliamentary session in November 1813 his moderate terms for bringing an end to the conflict. Great Britain and her allies must be compensated he said, 'We should not ask from our enemies such terms, as in their situation we should not think reasonable to concede.' These words were greeted with cries of 'Hear, hear!' from his fellow peers.¹⁵ Castlereagh arrived on the continent at this crucial point in the long conflict with Napoleon, charged with both defending British interests in the negotiations for peace taking place at Châtillon and maintaining the unity of the allies until Napoleon finally surrendered.

Liverpool was closely involved in both Wellington's military operations and Castlereagh's diplomatic initiatives in early 1814. Liverpool ensured that the Field Marshal was kept completely informed about the progress of the war and the peace talks. The Prime Minister provided Wellington in February and March with duplicates of correspondence with the Foreign Secretary and a full explanation of his own views

¹⁴ *Supplementary Despatches*, viii, 318.

¹⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvii, 22.

of the latest prospects in the conflict.¹⁶ Liverpool sympathised with the problems facing Wellington: 'We are thoroughly satisfied that the weather and state of the roads have been impediments to your advancing.'¹⁷ The premier also encouraged the commander. Liverpool explained to Wellington in February that the British hand at the negotiating table would be strengthened if he could extend his control over more of the south of France.¹⁸

The Prime Minister took a keen interest in ensuring that the British forces were kept fully manned and supplied. He stated to Castlereagh in January 1814: 'In the mean time every exertion shall be made here to enable Wellington to advance and to occupy as large a part of the south of France as he may find practicable.'¹⁹ Later that month the premier informed the Foreign Secretary that Henry Edward Bunbury, an Under-Secretary of State at the War Department originally appointed by Liverpool, would be sent immediately to Britain's military head quarters on the continent with all the intelligence Wellington required about reinforcements and supplies. Liverpool added that special arrangements were also being made to equip Wellington with the large sum of gold and silver coins he needed to cover his immediate expenditure in France that could not be raised through the Bank of England or any other usual channel.

This doubtless referred to a scheme to authorise the Rothschild banking firm to procure specie secretly from across Europe. John Charles Herries, the official who conceived the idea, was informed in January 1814 that Liverpool himself, in conjunction with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had given his approval to the

¹⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 495-7, 500-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, i, 497.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1931), p. 513.

engagement of the Rothschild family in this essential business. Nathan Mayer Rothschild was employed to amass in the space of two months through his agents a quantity of gold and silver coins from Germany, France and Holland for spending in France not exceeding in value £600,000. British ships of war would be stationed at Helvoetshuys for the purpose of receiving the treasure and Rothschild was required to accept full responsibility for all risks and losses of the enterprise before the transfer of the specie into British hands. A sum of money to enable Rothschild to commence his operations was released to him by the Treasury on receipt of certain securities and Rothschild was promised payment of a commission of 2% on the amount finally delivered. Wellington was furnished with sufficient cash to bolster his campaign. He wrote to the Secretary of State for War on 22 February 1814: 'I am obliged to Your Lordship for the supplies of money which are very ample.'²⁰ Rothschild continued to supply the forces in France with specie throughout 1814. Liverpool asked Castlereagh on 12 December to take an interest in the state of the Jews in Germany as a result of certain representations made to him by Rothschild and added: 'Mr. Rothschild has been a very useful friend. I do not know what we should have done without him last year.'²¹

Liverpool also played a central role on the diplomatic stage in bringing the war with France to a swift and successful conclusion. The government had agreed to enter negotiations for peace with Napoleon because some allies would not countenance his dethronement. Negotiations with Napoleon, however, were extremely unpopular in Britain and demands to abandon them only increased as the military

²⁰ Victor Gray & Melanie Aspey, 'Rothschild, Nathan Mayer (1777-1836),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvii, 920-25; Niall Ferguson, *The World's Banker* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998); Lord Rothschild, *The Shadow of a Great Man* (London: Lord Rothschild, 1982).

²¹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, p. 543; Albert S. Lindemann, *Anti-Semitism before the Holocaust* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

noose around the emperor's neck tightened. It fell to Liverpool as Prime Minister to resist any temptation to change the policy of the government in Castlereagh's absence and to preserve the alliance from division and possible collapse. On 12 January 1814 he wrote to Castlereagh:

The disposition in this country for *any* peace with Bounaparte becomes more unfavourable every day. I hear it from all quarters and from all classes of people. I well know, however, how fleeting these sentiments are, and that we can only act right be acting steadily upon our own system.²²

These popular sentiments, however, only grew stronger and more widespread.

Liverpool informed the Foreign Secretary a month later:

You can scarcely have an idea how *insane* people in this country are on the subject of any peace with Buonaparte, and I should really not be surprised at any public manifestation of indignation upon the first intelligence of any peace with him being received.

By the middle of March a majority of the cabinet, supported by the Prince Regent and the press, had come round to favour no peace with Napoleon.²³ Liverpool wrote again to Castlereagh on 19 March 1814 to explain that it required all his efforts to hold the line on the subject of negotiations with Napoleon. The Prime Minister insisted that it was not simply the public that was opposed to peace, but also prominent figures in the political world and that it was difficult to make them listen to reason.²⁴

While the Foreign Secretary was away, Liverpool held the reins at the Foreign Office and he was required in Castlereagh's absence to handle some thorny diplomatic issues affecting the course of the hostilities on the continent which arose in London.²⁵ Some prominent members of the exiled French royal family resident in Britain wished to return to their homeland and raise the standard of royalist rebellion

²² *Ibid.*, p. 514.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

²⁵ *The Letters of King George IV*, i, 370-1.

against Napoleon. The British government, however, could not consent to blessing such an enterprise without the agreement of the allies to the dethronement of the emperor and the return of Louis XVIII, and without the provision of clear evidence that the people of France were willing to fight for the restoration of the Bourbons to the French throne. This placed Liverpool in an awkward situation. The Prime Minister had a number of difficult meetings with the count of Artois, the French king's brother, in December 1813 and January 1814. Artois made various requests of the British government on these occasions. Liverpool composed a memorandum of a meeting that took place on 4 January. The French king's brother asked the British government on that occasion to provide a warship to convey his two sons to Passages and to permit them on arrival to communicate with Wellington. If this was not possible Artois hoped that the premier would at least agree to grant their applications for passports to Passages. The Prime Minister explained to Artois that it was the duty of the British government to refuse both of these requests, certainly until the administration had received some further indication of the sentiments of the nation's allies on the subject.²⁶ The government ultimately refused all immediate help to members of the exiled French royal family in achieving their ambition of a Bourbon restoration. That, however, was not the end of the matter. Artois remained determined to make at least an attempt to get to France and to erect the royalist standard there, and the Prime Minister was quick to realise that if this were the case then there was very little that the British government could actually do to stop them. Members of the exiled French royal family could smuggle themselves out of the country under assumed names and there were numerous other ways in which they could effect their return to France. The administration could hardly impose personal restraint upon them

²⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 483-8.

without provoking a highly embarrassing incident. In short, all the government could do was to refuse the French prince's official permission to leave the country on their mission to restore the house of Bourbon, deny them all aid, warn them of the dangers that they faced and refuse to grant them access to Wellington's military headquarters.²⁷ On 20 January Liverpool informed the Foreign Secretary that he had seen Artois and that the French prince had stated his intention of travelling to Switzerland under a fictitious name. The premier told Artois that he would not be refused a passport to sail to Holland.²⁸ Artois did not leave the country entirely peacefully, however. Liverpool complained to Wellington on 9 February that before Artois left for Switzerland he had had an interview with the Prince Regent. Artois had subsequently leaked the substance of his conversation with the prince to the newspapers and the premier was disgusted at what he considered to be Artois' extreme imprudence.²⁹

There were other diplomatic problems affecting the course of the war on the continent with which Liverpool had to deal in Castlereagh's absence. The Dutch people had rebelled against their French masters in November 1813 and Sir Thomas Graham had been placed in command of the British expeditionary force despatched to support the uprising in the Netherlands. The Swedish authorities had promised to send a unit to reinforce Graham, who struggled to make a real impact on the French position, but they became embroiled in a quarrel with Denmark and the troops earmarked for the Dutch campaign ended up in Schleswig-Holstein.³⁰ The Swedish minister arrived in London in early January 1814 in order to justify his nation's

²⁷ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 512-13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 516-17.

²⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 495-7.

³⁰ David Gates, 'Graham, Thomas, Baron Lynedoch (1748-1843),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 239-42.

conduct and it was Liverpool's task to convey to him the feelings of the British government on the subject of Sweden's non-appearance on the field of battle in the Netherlands. The Prime Minister expressed his disappointment at Sweden's actions and explained to the Swedish ambassador that an opportunity to take the campaign forward in the Netherlands had been lost and that much blood and treasure would now have to be sacrificed to achieve their ambitions there.³¹ On 12 January the premier informed Castlereagh that the Prince Regent was expected back in the city that evening and that it could be assumed that he would encounter the Swedish minister in the course of the next few days. Liverpool ensured that his royal master would be properly briefed for the meeting: 'I shall not fail to intimate to His Royal Highness the sort of language which it would be desirable that he should hold to him.'³²

It was also Liverpool's task to smooth the feathers of those representatives of allied powers in London who became concerned about the defence of their national interests as the war came to a close and a settlement for Europe began to be hammered out. The Spanish government was frustrated at not being acknowledged as a great power in the peace negotiations.³³ The premier sought to heal the damaged pride of the Spanish ambassador in London. He wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 12 February 1814: 'I have been endeavouring to manage Fernan Nuñez, and I think with some success.'³⁴

In addition to striving to prevent the government from abandoning its decision to enter into negotiations with Napoleon, thereby wrecking Castlereagh's strategy and possibly placing in jeopardy the unity of the allies, and running the Foreign Office while Castlereagh was away, the Prime Minister also remained in close contact with

³¹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 514-15.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 514.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 520-22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 522.

the Foreign Secretary and sought to assist him in his mission to the European mainland in a more direct way. Before he left for the continent, Castlereagh was furnished with a memorandum, approved by the cabinet, setting out the general views of the British government on the subject of peace, but apart from these general remarks, he was invested with the trust of his colleagues to strike a good deal for the nation at the talks.³⁵ For the duration of his period out of London, Castlereagh despatched regular and lengthy communications to the Prime Minister, reporting on his work, the state of the negotiations and the attitudes of the allies, and he received, furthermore, many letters from Liverpool. The premier's compositions were undoubtedly meant for serious consideration by the Foreign Secretary. Liverpool instructed Castlereagh on 12 February 1814: 'I shall be obliged to you if you will acknowledge the receipt of my letters with their dates, as it enables me to know whether they have come to hand.'³⁶ Liverpool's letters were intended to serve a purpose, to assist the Foreign Secretary.

Liverpool sought to sustain the Foreign Secretary in his struggle to cope with the personal and physical burden of his mission. The premier expressed his concern for the welfare of the Foreign Secretary. On 8 February 1814 he wrote: 'I trust the expedition with which you made your journey will have done no injury to your health and that you will find the means of returning home, when all your business is concluded, by a shorter and easier route.'³⁷ The Prime Minister demonstrated his appreciation of the considerable size and difficult nature of the task undertaken by Castlereagh and offered to provide him with more time to deal with it. Liverpool explained on 26 January that he could adjourn parliament again or delay the

³⁵ C. K. Webster, *British Diplomacy 1813-1815* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1921), pp. 123-8.

³⁶ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, p. 522.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

introduction of controversial business until Castlereagh was ready to return home and to resume his place as Leader of the House of Commons or at least for a short period:

If you cannot bring all matters to the point in which you would wish to leave them by such time as would enable you to return before the 1st of March, do not let this embarrass you. We can adjourn Parliament by authority for a fortnight, if it should be necessary, or we might go on with common business with understanding that no motion of political importance should be made till after your return. I do not believe there would be any difficulty in such an understanding for a reasonable time.³⁸

When it was appropriate for him to do so, Liverpool also did not hesitate to convey his satisfaction for the work done by the Foreign Secretary. On 12 February the premier remarked: ‘The proceeding you have adopted, as to the course and form of the negotiation is most highly approved.’³⁹

It fell to Liverpool to quash any rumours and correct any misunderstandings that naturally arose as a consequence of the intermittent and slow communications between Castlereagh on the continent and the British government in London that could quite conceivably derail the mission. He wrote to Castlereagh on 17 February: ‘It was reported and believed yesterday that there were divisions in the Cabinet and that I had resigned. There was as little foundation for the first of these reports as for the last. Be assured everyone is disposed to support you in what you do.’⁴⁰ On 18 February the Foreign Secretary enclosed in his despatch to the Prime Minister a letter from Count Lieven, the Russian ambassador to Britain, which claimed that both the Prince Regent and Liverpool hoped that the Bourbons would be restored to the French

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.521.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

throne.⁴¹ This had been referred to by the Russian tsar and remarked upon by the diplomatic representatives of other countries, and was causing a problem for Castlereagh because it appeared to contradict his assertion to the allies that Great Britain was willing to enter into meaningful peace negotiations with Napoleon.⁴² Liverpool replied on 27 February.⁴³ He admitted that he would prefer to negotiate with anyone else at the head of the French government rather than the emperor, but he insisted that the policy of the administration on the matter of talks with Napoleon had not been subject to change in the absence of the Foreign Secretary and he struggled to alleviate his concern at the progress of his mission:

I can assure you that your conduct in every part of this business has met with the unqualified approbation of the Prince Regent and of his confidential servants; and that we sincerely regret that anything should have occurred to have given you so much uneasiness.⁴⁴

Castlereagh was able to report back to the Prime Minister on 5 March that the premier's letter had been passed to Tsar Alexander I, that the Foreign Secretary's word had been accepted, and that his own mind had been put at rest:

Your private letter is entirely satisfactory to all my feelings, public and private, and it will altogether remove any possible prejudice which might have resulted to the public service from misconception, as to my language not being sanctioned.⁴⁵

The Prime Minister kept the Foreign Secretary supplied with all the latest diplomatic and military information that could have an effect on his ability to do his job, to defend British interests and maintain the unity of the allies, effectively and efficiently. It was absolutely essential for Castlereagh to be aware that the

⁴¹ Madeleine Bingham, *Princess Lieven* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982); Dominic Lieven, 'Lieven, Dorothea Khristoforovna, Princess Lieven in the Russian nobility (1785–1857),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40960>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

⁴² Webster, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 157-8.

⁴³ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 523-4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 524.

⁴⁵ Webster, *British Diplomacy*, p. 164.

administration back in London had done all that it realistically could to prevent Artois and his sons from heading for the continent. The allies could not be allowed to reach the erroneous conclusion that the British government had publicly declared its willingness to negotiate with Napoleon, while actively supporting the restoration of the Bourbons. Liverpool therefore provided the Foreign Secretary with a detailed and immediate account of his discussions with Artois in December 1813 and January 1814, and on 6 January 1814 he sent Castlereagh duplicates of all the correspondence between himself and the French king's brother.⁴⁶ The Prime Minister also provided the Foreign Secretary with updates on the acceptable extent of colonial concessions that Britain was prepared to make to achieve a durable peace settlement. On 20 January the premier informed Castlereagh that since he had left the country a legitimate and popular argument had been raised against the restitution to France of the island of Tobago.⁴⁷ France had only possessed Tobago since the time of the American colonies' struggle for independence from Britain and every single one of the owners of property on the island were British. Liverpool asked the Foreign Secretary to secure this colony for the nation if it were at all possible.⁴⁸ He wrote on 17 February: 'Pray secure Tobago if you can. The restitution of it would make a great clamour here, and cannot be pressed ultimately by France.'⁴⁹

Castlereagh was also the recipient of frank advice from the Prime Minister. Since the premier had been Foreign Secretary when the last peace settlement had been agreed with France and was someone in possession of a great deal of diplomatic experience, Liverpool's opinion was not something to be valued cheaply and at the very least must have given Castlereagh food for thought as he searched for solutions

⁴⁶ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 510-13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 517-18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 520-22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

to the problems of territorially reordering the European mainland. For example, on 11 March the Prime Minister tentatively suggested an alternative alignment for the Low Countries, the former Austrian Netherlands, if they refused to join with Holland.

Liverpool wondered if one district of modern Belgium could be given to the Dutch for their security and the rest of the Low Countries connected with Mayence and Trêves and placed under an Austrian Archduke:

These countries combined might in time constitute a formidable state. The people of them agree in religion, and do not materially differ in character and habits, and there is reason to believe that they would prefer Austrian connexion to any other which could be proposed for them.⁵⁰

As with Wellington, Liverpool was usually careful not to force his advice upon Castlereagh, the man on the spot, the man in the best position and the most qualified to make the final decisions in these matters. He stated to the Foreign Secretary on the subject of the representations made to the government concerning the island of Tobago on 20 January 1814:

I have thought it right to trouble you with this detail in order that you may be fully apprized of the circumstances of this case which differ very materially from those of every other colony which can become the subject of negotiation – and I have no doubt you will give them all the weight to which you may consider them as entitled.⁵¹

There was one more important service provided by Liverpool in his letters to Castlereagh. The Prime Minister supplied the Foreign Secretary with a constantly updated review of the sustainability of the policy reluctantly agreed by the government when Castlereagh left the country, in order to enter into negotiations with Napoleon, as the allied military situation improved, the common British disposition not to favour making a deal with the emperor became increasingly clear and the French people began to express some desire for the restoration of the Bourbons.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

Throughout most of the first three months of 1814 the Prime Minister reiterated his belief in the rightness of the course being followed by Castlereagh, but as conditions began to change at home and on the continent, the premier started to add some words of caution in his letters to the Foreign Secretary. Liverpool identified the growing opinion in France in favour of the exiled royal family on 6 January and suggested dragging out the negotiations with Napoleon indefinitely, if terms acceptable to Great Britain could not be agreed.⁵² On 12 February the Prime Minister described the popular domestic clamour against making a deal with Napoleon and argued that on this basis the country could not possibly settle for anything less than complete agreement on the part of the emperor to the demands made by Britain: 'This ought not to make any substantial difference in the course of our policy – but it renders it necessary that we should not *lower* our terms.'⁵³ On 12 March 1814 the city of Bordeaux had declared its support for Louis XVIII and opened its gates to the British army. The Prime Minister consequently felt compelled to tell Castlereagh on 22 March that the government would never be forgiven if Britain made peace with Napoleon under these circumstances, unless forced to do so by her allies. He therefore advised the Foreign Secretary to play for time.⁵⁴ In fact, three days earlier, Castlereagh and the other representatives of the coalition powers had already withdrawn from the fruitless talks at Châtillon and by the time Liverpool's despatch reached the Foreign Secretary the allies had embraced the cause of a Bourbon restoration.⁵⁵

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 512-13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 529-30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter Thirteen

Victory in Europe

6 April 1814–26 February 1815

- The Abdication of Napoleon

In late 1813 the government had reluctantly agreed to enter into peace negotiations with Napoleon in order to preserve the fragile unity of the allies. The popular clamour in Great Britain in favour of the restoration of Louis XVIII, however, made it increasingly difficult for the Prime Minister to prevent the abandonment of this policy in cabinet in early 1814. Fortunately, before his position became completely untenable, a series of diplomatic and military developments on the continent propelled the allies towards a realisation of the desirability and feasibility of overthrowing the emperor and restoring the king of France. Britain renewed her alliance with the other powers and provided them with valuable financial assistance in the Treaty of Chaumont on 1 March 1814. The people of Bordeaux rallied to the cause of restoration and opened up the gates of the city to the British army on 12 March. The unproductive talks at Châtillon ended on 19 March. On 31 March the allies captured Paris. Alexander I sought out Talleyrand in the capital that same day and Napoleon's former foreign minister recommended to the Russian tsar the restoration of the royal house of Bourbon to the throne of France. A provisional government was appointed with Talleyrand at its head, Napoleon was formally deposed and Louis XVIII was invited back. Lord Wellington defeated the French at the battle of Toulouse on 10 April, but even before then there was already no question of striking a deal with Napoleon and opposing the restoration of Louis XVIII. The emperor had already abdicated on 6 April 1814. He signed the Treaty of Fontainebleau on 11 April and left for exile on the island of Elba.

In London some people donned royalist white cockades and turned out in their thousands to greet the king of France on his journey from his place of political asylum in the country through the capital to Dover.¹ Lord Liverpool described the extraordinary scene to Castlereagh on 26 April: 'Indeed I never saw so much enthusiasm in my life on any occasion as was manifested from the period of their quitting Hartwell to that of their embarking at Dover.'² Escorted by the duke of Clarence, Louis XVIII embarked on the *Royal Sovereign*, the Prince Regent's yacht, and sailed for France on 24 April 1814. Liverpool and his wife welcomed the royal party on board ship, provided them with hospitality and joined the Prince Regent at the end of the pier in huzzaing and waving them off. Lady Liverpool concluded a letter on 25 April: 'Oh! it was Gub, Gub.'³

Viscount Castlereagh meanwhile stayed on the continent to hammer out a settlement between France and the allies. The First Treaty of Paris was signed on 30 May. Louis XVIII was forced to surrender Napoleon's territorial conquests and the frontier of his kingdom was pushed back to where it had been in 1792, but, in an effort to be lenient and bolster the reinstated Bourbon regime, France regained most of her colonial possessions, and she was not asked to pay reparations to her enemies, disarm, endure an army of occupation or even restore Napoleon's looted art treasures to their rightful owners. (As Liverpool had requested, however, Tobago was retained by Britain in the negotiations.) Liverpool kept himself informed about the talks in Paris just as he had done about those in Châtillon. The Prime Minister clearly expected to be consulted by the Foreign Secretary. He requested a copy of the peace

¹ E. J. Knapton, 'Some Aspects of the Bourbon Restoration of 1814', *The Journal of Modern History*, 6, 4 (1934), 405-24.

² Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, p. 538.

³ Grosvenor, *The First Lady Wharncliffe and her Family*, i, 198.

preliminaries for perusal on 26 April 1814.⁴ Liverpool nevertheless evidently entirely trusted Castlereagh and was content to leave him to get on with the business of making peace with France without very much interference from London. The Prime Minister mentioned to the Foreign Secretary on 16 May:

We have heard nothing from you since the 5th. but I conclude you are too hard at work to have much time to write. As your treaty is to be definitive, there would be some advantage if it were possible that we could see it (to guard against *minor errors*) before it was actually agreed.⁵

The premier's letters to Castlereagh continued to serve a variety of purposes. Liverpool helped the Foreign Secretary to cope with the pressure of his mission by recognising his achievements, bringing into clear focus the tasks that lay ahead of him and offering to extend the period of his absence on the continent.⁶ Matters of particular concern to Britain in the negotiations were brought to Castlereagh's attention by the Prime Minister. He reiterated the nation's wish to retain Tobago and, in order to have the use of a harbour in that region of the West Indies, St. Lucia.⁷ (St. Lucia was also not returned to France at the Paris talks.) Liverpool also suggested how the case for the retention of these islands could be put to the French. The premier recommended explaining the financial sacrifices made by the British in the war that led to the restoration of the Bourbons, offering to relinquish pecuniary claims on the French government and emphasising the moderate nature of Britain's demands in comparison to those of other nations.⁸ The Prime Minister spurred on the Foreign Secretary. Liverpool recommended to Castlereagh on 14 April 1814 that matters of

⁴ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, p. 538.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 543.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 530-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 536-7.

⁸ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 538-9; Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 510-11.

etiquette should not delay the agreement of preliminaries for peace.⁹ Castlereagh was informed by the Prime Minister of financial arrangements being made to ease the progress of the negotiations.¹⁰ On 29 April 1814 the premier authorised the Foreign Secretary to offer Louis XVIII a further immediate grant, essentially a sweetener, of £100,000:

Perhaps even the offer of it in a delicate manner may be productive of some advantage, as it may keep alive the feeling with which the Royal Family of France quitted this country, which I am satisfied it is our interest to cultivate for the welfare of both countries as well as for that of Europe in general.¹¹

Liverpool also expressed to Castlereagh his dissatisfaction with the plan, hatched by Alexander I, to exile Napoleon to Elba, an island close to France, but admitted that he could not think of a good alternative.¹²

Tsar Alexander I of Russia, King Frederick William III of Prussia, Blücher, Metternich and a number of other very important persons arrived in London on 7 June 1814 to join in the peace celebrations. They were treated to banquets and balls, illuminations and investitures, and they attended levees and plays, operas and concerts, fetes and races, processions and recitations. They received addresses, visited attractions and wondered at the marvels of the industrial revolution. The highlight of these festivities for the Prime Minister however took place just a couple of days after the arrival of the two sovereigns in the country. Liverpool became a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the oldest and highest order of chivalry, in a magnificent ceremony conducted by the Prince Regent at Carlton House on 9 June. He also received a bill for the cost of the investment and insignia of £169 4s. 0d..

⁹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, p. 534.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 532-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 534-6.

In late 1814 the Prime Minister was extremely troubled by startling reports that arrived on his desk from Paris. On 31 October he was informed by a senior British officer who had just returned from the continent that the French government was weak, divided and unpopular, that the bulk of the French army was disaffected, and that radical groups and the unemployed masses were determined to undermine the regime. In short, France stood on the brink of another bloody revolution and only the slightest nudge would be required to push her over the edge. The premier was further warned that in the event of an uprising in France the duke of Wellington, who had been appointed ambassador to Paris, would almost certainly be arrested and possibly killed. Liverpool acted swiftly and decisively on the basis of this intelligence. The seriousness of the threat against Wellington might have been exaggerated, but the report could definitely not be ignored by the Prime Minister. The consequences for him, the government, the nation and the world if Wellington were murdered were simply too appalling to contemplate. The premier carried out further investigations into the state of unrest in France, discussed the situation with his cabinet colleagues, and on 4 November he urged Wellington to leave the country as soon as possible. There was one additional problem, however. It was necessary for the government to come up with a convincing pretext for suddenly withdrawing Wellington from Paris in order to avoid causing unnecessary offence to the French government and encouraging the forces of rebellion by admitting that the ambassador was being recalled because France was unstable and his life was imperilled. It was suggested that Wellington could accept a military command or diplomatic posting that would require him to quit the French capital. Wellington was left to judge for himself the most suitable excuse to give to the French authorities. He was asked not to divulge his

intention to leave France in case steps were taken to prevent him from doing so.¹³

Wellington was concerned about fleeing precipitately when there was still work to be done in Paris and when there was in his opinion no imminent danger, and he disliked exposing himself to disgrace by appearing to lack personal courage and misleading the French government. Liverpool therefore wrote to the ambassador once more on 21 November to allow him the discretion to choose the most appropriate time for his departure.¹⁴ On 29 November the Prime Minister provided Wellington with another piece of intelligence which suggested that the ambassador was being targeted for assassination by those Frenchmen who resented his presence in France.¹⁵ A fine solution to this awkward problem was finally found the following month. Wellington was instructed to take over from Castlereagh in the closing stages of the negotiations at the Congress of Vienna. He left Paris on 24 January 1815.¹⁶

- The Abolition of the Slave Trade

In the run up to the Congress of Vienna in late 1814, a number of important preliminary discussions on the future shape of the continent were held. Liverpool had a contribution to make to these. Concerns were raised by the Prime Minister over the prospective union between Holland and the Austrian Netherlands. Liverpool argued, showing considerable foresight, that it would require the utmost care and attention to reconcile the people of Brabant to this arrangement. He shared his major apprehensions with Lord Clancarty on 30 May 1814: ‘Recollect how Ireland is

¹³ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 405-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ix, 449.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ix, 458.

¹⁶ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 261-323.

governed now, and what lost America to the crown of Great Britain.’¹⁷ Belgium of course broke away from the Netherlands in 1830.¹⁸

Norway objected to being transferred to Sweden and a popular clamour in support of the resistance movement across the North Sea was heard in Britain. The government, however, had brokered an alliance with Sweden in 1813. The Prime Minister outlined in a letter to the Foreign Secretary on 3 May 1814 his strategy for dealing with this problematic situation. Liverpool proposed calming the public by blaming Denmark for orchestrating the rebellion and determined to take every step to persuade the Norwegian people to accept a connection with their Scandinavian neighbour, including the despatch of emissaries to the region.¹⁹ The Swedish government was brought into communication with the Norwegian diet by the British, and Bernadotte fortunately accepted the main tenets of the constitutional arrangements in Norway and a union was agreed.²⁰ On 2 September 1814 the Prime Minister expressed his relief to the Foreign Secretary over the situation in Scandinavia: ‘Though our policy respecting the union of Norway to Sweden has always appeared to me to be right, I confess I felt for some time that the question was the most awkward and embarrassing of any in our European politics.’²¹

The most awkward and embarrassing question at this time actually proved to be the abolition of the slave trade. A major campaign was launched in Britain after the conclusion of a peace agreement with France calling on the government to press the colonial powers to sign up to the cause of abolition. William Wilberforce got on his soapbox, petitions rained down on parliament, and both MPs and peers voted for

¹⁷ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 514.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 514-15.

¹⁹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 541-3.

²⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 21-2, 24-7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 22.

addresses echoing the demands of the people. It would appear that it was this political pressure, rather than any moral consideration or even economic concern, that forced the Prime Minister to act in this matter. On 2 September 1814 he wrote to Wellington:

We shall anxiously await the progress of your negotiation on the abolition of the Slave-trade. I had a letter from Wilberforce yesterday, which proves to me that the Abolitionists in this country will press the question in every possible shape. We must do therefore all we can, and at least be able to show that no efforts have been omitted on our part to give effect to the addresses of the two Houses of Parliament.²²

France was the main obstacle to universal abolition of the slave trade. Before the conclusion of the first treaty of Paris, Liverpool attempted to use the power of reason to persuade the French government to embrace the cause of immediate and complete abolition.²³ On 19 May 1814 he outlined the arguments to Castlereagh that he wished the Foreign Secretary to put to the French authorities.²⁴ Liverpool highlighted the point that the slave trade had already been abolished in those colonies that were about to be returned to France. The French would only agree, however, to abolish the slave trade in a number of years. Talleyrand promised in a secret note to secure abolition on the coast of Africa north of the equator, but Liverpool complained to the Foreign Secretary on 4 October that no step whatsoever had been taken by the French to fulfil this pledge.²⁵ He repeated this censure to Wellington in a letter the next day.²⁶

On 7 September 1814 the Prime Minister wrote to both Castlereagh and Wellington stating his willingness to surrender the island of Trinidad or pay the French government as much as three million pounds sterling in return for the

²² *Ibid.*, ii, 27.

²³ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 533-4.

²⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 512-13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, 35-9.

²⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 321-2.

immediate and complete abolition of the slave trade. Liverpool thought that this was a price well worth paying. He believed that the French would refuse the offer, but he concluded that the fact that such an offer was made would win for the ministry the favour of Wilberforce and his friends.²⁷ A reply did not arrive for over a month and when it did it was to turn the proposal down. Liverpool's aim now was to procure documentary proof of the offer having been made to placate the abolitionists in parliament.²⁸ On 21 October the Prime Minister explained to Castlereagh that with the production of such evidence it would be impossible for the abolitionists across the country to deny that every effort had been made by the government to secure the abolition of the slave trade by France.²⁹

The other two colonial powers who proved reluctant to abolish the slave trade were Portugal and Spain. Liverpool set out to extract from them both an agreement to match the undertaking made by France, namely to abolish the slave trade throughout their colonies in five years time and immediately north of the equator. To accomplish this objective, the Prime Minister suggested a number of ploys, including the withholding of loans and imposition of sanctions.³⁰ Portugal eventually agreed to abolish the slave trade north of the equator in return for £300,000 in compensation for a suspect claim on Britain. At the Congress of Vienna the Foreign Secretary managed to obtain a declaration condemning the practice of the slave trade. When Napoleon returned to France the following year he abolished the slave trade and this act was not

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ix, 225, 225-30.

²⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 46-9, 123-5; *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 363-4.

²⁹ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 365-6.

³⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 125-6, 127-9, 130; *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 549-50.

reversed by Louis XVIII after the battle of Waterloo. The slave trade was not suppressed, however, until 1848.³¹

- The Issue of Income Tax

There was one particular concern of parliamentarians at this time. Now that the war was over, they demanded lower public spending and the abolition of the property or income tax. The government had drawn up plans to cut back on the nation's defences and the premier took a detailed and considered interest in this matter. As early as 4 May 1814 he returned some papers on the subject of the military establishment to the Secretary at War that had been forwarded to Liverpool by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and he gave Viscount Palmerston the authority to act on certain agreed reductions at once.³² In December the Prime Minister corresponded with the Quarter-Master General at Horse Guards on the subject of proposed troop deployments in peacetime. He queried the size of the garrison in the West Indies, emphasised the point that the nation could not maintain substantial forces everywhere, and recommended concentrating human resources in those parts of the empire where British interests were most vulnerable to attack.³³ Liverpool also believed, however, that it was necessary for the income tax to continue for at least another year to pay the bills run up during the war and he appealed for government friends in the House of Commons to speak to their constituents in order to explain the government's

³¹ Paul Michael Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* (London: Papermac, 1998).

³² B. L., Add. Mss. 48425, fos. 178-9; Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston* (London: Allen Lane, 1982); Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Panther, 1972); David Steele, 'Temple, Henry John, third Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27112>, accessed 24 Feb 2006>

³³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 269-81, 297-8; Add. Mss. 49476, fos. 95-6.

position.³⁴ The Prime Minister also defended the income tax in a letter to George Canning at the end of 1814, arguing that it was a more equal and just financial imposition on the nation than any alternative.³⁵ In a conversation with Charles Abbot, the Speaker of the House of Commons, on 29 November, the Prime Minister projected raising £5,000,000 in income tax in the next financial year.³⁶

The clamour against the tax, however, became too great. Petitions were presented to parliament calling for the tax to be ended, and discontent was noticed in Norwich, Bristol and Liverpool, and in other parts of the country. Henry Peter Brougham reported to Thomas Creevey on 17 January 1815: ‘Liverpool (the town) is all in an uproar (indeed I might say the same of the man of that name) about the property tax.’³⁷ It was reported in *The Times* that a property tax inspector was forced through a glass window by a crowd in St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, on 15 December 1814.³⁸ A meeting was held in Hampshire on 24 January 1815 attended by people from across the county calling for the repeal of the property tax.³⁹ The government decided not to continue with the income tax. William Huskisson suggested to Canning on 14 February that Liverpool had been ‘frightened out of the property tax’ by a series of public demonstrations.⁴⁰ The Prime Minister, however, did not see it entirely this way. He explained his reasoning in a letter to Canning on 6 January 1815. He believed that there would be problems for the administration both in terms of renewing the legislation, even if it were modified, and collecting the tax. (He was quite right on this point. A government proposal to continue with the tax in 1816 was

³⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 331-2, 351-2, 356-7, 362, 363-4.

³⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 74-7.

³⁶ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 524.

³⁷ *The Creevey Papers*, p. 128.

³⁸ *The Times*, 23 December 1814.

³⁹ *The Times*, 25 January 1815.

⁴⁰ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 11.

thrown out by the House of Commons.) He also argued, however, that it would be better to meet the demands of the country now rather than the following year in the hope of finding the people more willing to accept those taxes which it would be necessary to impose in place of the income tax.⁴¹ On 9 February the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced to the House of Commons the discontinuation of the income tax in peacetime.⁴² Nicholas Vansittart outlined the intended substitutes for the income tax at a meeting of the Committee of Ways and Means on 20 February.⁴³ Included in Vansittart's statement was a proposal for imposing a tax on green-houses, hot-houses and conservatories. In the event, however, the income tax was not permitted to lapse on 5 April 1815 because of the resumption of hostilities with Napoleon.⁴⁴

- The War of 1812

The campaign waged against the Americans was a matter that occupied much less of Liverpool's time than the struggle with Napoleon. The Prime Minister, nevertheless, believed that the contest taking place on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean mattered. He made his views on the conduct of the American administration clear in a debate on 18 February 1813. Liverpool accepted that the United States of America had been inconvenienced by the policies towards neutral states adopted by Britain, but insisted that the Royal Navy was all that stood between the American people and their molestation, even enslavement, by Napoleon:

Although, therefore, she might have had wrongs, although she might have had grounds of complaint, although she might have had pressing

⁴¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 134-6.

⁴² *Parliamentary Debates*, xxix, 693-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xxix, 853-905.

⁴⁴ Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

provocations, yet she ought to have looked to this country as the guardian power to which she was indebted, not only for her comforts, not only for her rank in the scale of civilisation, but for her very existence.⁴⁵

As far as Liverpool was concerned, the USA owed her advancement in prosperity to the security afforded her by Britain and she should be grateful. Rather like a naughty little child, the USA now had to be taught a lesson. The lesson, however, proved to be difficult to teach.

The campaign on land had started well for Britain, but the Royal Navy struggled to demonstrate immediate and complete superiority, as had been expected, over the Americans at sea. The American ship *Constitution* defeated the British *Guerrière* and *Java* in August and December 1812 respectively, and inflicted so much damage that both frigates had to be sunk. Incidents such as these called into question the effective management of naval administration and provoked a debate in the House of Lords on 14 May 1813. Viscount Melville, the First Lord of the Admiralty, led the defence of the government, but Liverpool felt obliged to intervene just before their lordships divided. The Prime Minister defended his own conduct and that of his colleagues, and contended that even before the commencement of hostilities every ship that could be spared from the conflict raging in Europe had been despatched to the west. He expressed deep regret over the loss of ships, but he declared that no blame could be attached to the ministry. The government, he argued, could not be expected to prevent accidental disasters such as when American frigates came into contact with inferior British vessels and captured them.⁴⁶

By the summer of 1814 the war with the USA, usually known as the War of 1812, had reached a stalemate. Most of the fighting took place along the American-

⁴⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiv, 586.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xxvi, 173-202.

Canadian border, on the upper part of the St. Lawrence river and through the Great Lakes region. The Americans struggled to establish a lasting presence on British territory which was their primary war aim. They made eight invasion attempts between 1812 and 1814, but only one of them proved successful. (In the early autumn of 1813 their forces managed to occupy a parcel of land in south-western Upper Canada, around Detroit.) The British counter-attacked by land and launched a number of offensives by sea. The Royal Navy installed an effective blockade along the eastern coast of America and carried out raids from the Atlantic on several states including Virginia and Massachusetts. Britain, however, failed to land a hard enough blow on America that would bring the conflict to an end. The British experienced some embarrassing military setbacks at the hands of the Americans. In the late summer of 1814 Sir George Prevost, Bt., the governor of British North America, crossed into New York with 10,000 men and moved towards the town of Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain, but the operation was cancelled and Prevost withdrew to Canada when the British squadron on the lake was defeated by the American navy.⁴⁷ In 1814 Britain and America agreed to enter into direct negotiations to resolve the conflict and the peace talks began at Ghent on 8 August.

Liverpool wanted peace. He had not wanted to go to war with America and had actively sought to avoid it in 1812. The War of 1812 was a nuisance and the premier wanted rid of it in 1814. It cost a lot of money to wage the war and the premier was under considerable pressure at home to cut back on public expenditure and not to renew the income tax. Liverpool referred to the protests against the income tax in a letter to Castlereagh on 23 December and added: 'This, as well as other

⁴⁷ C. A. Harris, rev. F. Murray Greenwood, 'Prevost, Sir George, first baronet (1767-1816),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 278-9.

considerations, makes us most anxious to get rid of the American war.’⁴⁸ As the Prime Minister indicated here, there were other reasons why he wished to bring the war with America to a close now. The public was likely to grow weary of the conflict, the war distracted the British authorities from the far more significant issue of finding a durable European peace settlement, continuing with the dispute could antagonise the other European powers who were forced to tolerate the British blockade of the American east coast, and, with the resumption of hostilities between the nations of Europe a possibility in late 1814, it would not have been sensible for Britain to commit further military resources to operations on the other side of the Atlantic at this time. Furthermore, it was Wellington’s considered view that little more could be obtained by Britain on the battlefield.⁴⁹ Although the war with America was always a secondary concern for the Prime Minister, particularly in comparison to the future of Europe and there are relatively few references to the subject to be found among his papers before the start of talks at Ghent in the summer of 1814, Liverpool did not advocate peace at any price. He wrote to Canning on 28 December 1814: ‘You know how anxious I was that we should get out of this war as soon as we could do so with honour.’⁵⁰ This meant that there was no question of surrendering the nation’s maritime rights and Liverpool was also determined to protect Britain’s Indian allies.⁵¹

A treaty was finally signed on 24 December 1814 and it became known as ‘the Peace of Christmas Eve’. It would seem that Britain did secure peace with honour. The Treaty of Ghent essentially restored the *status quo ante bellum*. Britain and America agreed to evacuate all enemy territory that they had occupied during the conflict. The issue of British maritime rights was not mentioned and both sides

⁴⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 495.

⁴⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 72-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 74.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 74-7.

promised to make peace with the Indians and restore to them all the possessions, rights and privileges that they had enjoyed in 1811. Some people across Britain were not happy with the agreement. *The Times* was disappointed that the Americans had not been given a sound thrashing.⁵² The treaty was nevertheless approved by a comfortable majority in the House of Commons on 11 April 1815 and Marquess Wellesley's motion in the upper chamber criticising the government's handling of the negotiations was decisively rejected two days later.

Great Britain was represented at the negotiations in Ghent between August and December 1814 by three commissioners and they acted on instructions from the government in London.⁵³ Earl Bathurst was the commissioners' main point of contact in the cabinet, but Liverpool corresponded with the Secretary of State for War and other figures and spoke in parliament on the subject of the Ghent talks, and it is therefore possible to identify certain strengths brought by the premier to the process of negotiations. The Prime Minister sought to comment on the dispute with the USA on the basis of the most up-to-date information from across the Atlantic. He even welcomed snatches of news from or pieces of advice about that part of the world passed on by well-informed members of the public.⁵⁴ In November 1814 the premier agreed to meet a man simply because he had just returned from the USA.⁵⁵ During the early stages of the negotiations when both sides put forward a greater list of demands than those for which they were actually prepared to settle, Liverpool emphasised the need to avoid presenting certain aspects of the British agenda in the form of an

⁵² *The Times*, 30 December 1814.

⁵³ G. F. R. Barker, rev. David Eastwood, 'Goulburn, Henry (1784-1856),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 62-6; Brian Jenkins, *Henry Goulburn, 1784-1856* (Liverpool University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 5-6, 7-10.

⁵⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 190-1.

ultimatum and risk receiving the blame for a rupture in the talks.⁵⁶ The Prime Minister was happy to continue with the military campaign, while the peace talks went on in order to gain further concessions from the Americans. The premier, however, was careful not to let success on the battlefield in late 1814 cloud his judgement, become momentarily overconfident and conclude that an end to the conflict should be sought by the sword. In August 1814 the British forces sacked Washington DC, the American capital. The premier certainly believed that this event might serve to make the Americans more conciliatory. He advised Earl Bathurst in September not to rush to respond to the Americans' latest settlement proposals and ended with the remark: 'Let them feast in the mean time upon Washington.'⁵⁷ The Prime Minister assured the Foreign Secretary at the same time, however, that this particular military advantage would not make any difference to the government's desire to bring an end to the war if an honourable peace could be agreed.⁵⁸ Liverpool was also careful not to abandon the moral high ground in the conflict. This was particularly important because the administration would not have wanted to provoke the criticism of the other European powers. Liverpool delivered a speech to parliament at the opening of the new session in November 1814 and in it he referred to the war with the USA. He insisted that no war had ever been prosecuted with such humanity as that exhibited by the British troops in America.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Prime Minister acted quickly to win support for the treaty of those parties in Britain especially interested in the outcome of the talks, such as the merchants and businessmen in Bristol and Liverpool. He defended the peace terms in letters to a MP for Bristol and to John Gladstone, a prominent

⁵⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 24-7; *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 214.

⁵⁷ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 295.

⁵⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 290.

⁵⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxix, 1-28.

Liverpool merchant and father of a future premier, in late December 1813 and early January 1814 respectively.

Liverpool's judgement on how to proceed in the War of 1812, however, did not always appear sound. In late 1814 the Prime Minister sponsored an idea to break the deadlock in the peace talks. He strongly urged Wellington in early November to take command in America with full powers to make peace or, if an honourable deal could not be agreed, continue the war with renewed vigour.⁶⁰ Liverpool seemed to believe that the fear of facing Britain's greatest general would compel the Americans to agree satisfactory peace terms and, if it did not, then Wellington would succeed on the battlefield where his predecessors had failed.⁶¹ Wellington, however, was reluctant to take up the posting and pointed out several palpable flaws in Liverpool's scheme. The Field Marshal suggested that his appointment to this command would be a triumph for the Americans. They might think that it was their military prowess that had brought them up against Britain's greatest military commander and this might encourage them to continue the fight.⁶² Wellington furthermore explained that what was wanting in the British campaign on the Canadian-American frontier was not a new general, but naval superiority on the Great Lakes. His despatch to America, Wellington argued, would raise expectations in Britain of victory in America which would be difficult to realise given the naval situation. Wellington also feared that it would not be easy for the Prime Minister to recall him from America if a crisis requiring his attention occurred elsewhere in the world.⁶³ Wellington told Liverpool

⁶⁰ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 405-7.

⁶¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 58-9.

⁶² Wellington was correct to think this. Henry Clay was of the opinion: 'Had we beaten the Duke, we should have gained immortal honour, whilst we should have lost none, had we been defeated by the Conqueror of Napoleon.' *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 97.

⁶³ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 424-6, 435-7.

bluntly on 18 November 1814: 'I declare it appears to me that we are proceeding on this occasion with a precipitation which circumstances do not at all justify, and that we shall get into disgrace and difficulties which a little patience would enable us to avoid.'⁶⁴ The Prime Minister characteristically did not force Wellington to do something he was reluctant to do and a deal with the USA was agreed at Ghent the following month anyway, but Wellington's arguments do seem to call into question the soundness of Liverpool's judgement on how to end the War of 1812.⁶⁵

- The Congress of Vienna

In late 1814 and early 1815, Liverpool also had some involvement in the diplomatic proceedings at the Congress of Vienna. With the conclusion of peace with France, representatives of the nations of Europe gathered in Vienna in September 1814 to forge lasting agreements on several issues of mutual concern, and to reorder the affairs of the continent after twenty years of war, including the navigation of international rivers and the establishment of a new constitution for Switzerland. Of particular importance to those major powers of Russia, Prussia, Austria and France who dominated the congress, however, was the extremely divisive matter of settling territorial boundaries. Russia wanted to extend her influence into Poland and Prussia laid claim to the kingdom of Saxony, but such designs naturally aroused the fears and jealousies of other countries. At times during the negotiations between September 1814 and February 1815 these territorial disputes even threatened to lead to a renewal of conflict in Europe. Another thorny problem to be discussed at the Congress was the future of the ruler of Naples. The Neapolitan king, Joachim Murat, had officially

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ix, 436.

⁶⁵ Fred L. Engelman, *The Peace of Christmas Eve* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962); Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1964).

deserted the French in early 1814, but he was strongly suspected of treachery, was Napoleon's brother-in-law, and was not on friendly terms with any of the great powers.

Castlereagh left home in August 1814 in order to lead the British delegation at the Congress of Vienna. The most controversial issues raised at the meeting were not really of primary concern to Great Britain, but the Foreign Secretary believed that it was in his nation's interest to mediate between the other great powers to whom these matters were of enormous consequence, to prevent the formation of a badly worked out and unjust settlement that might sow the seeds of future European armed conflict, and to restore the balance of power on the continent. To a large extent, the Foreign Secretary was expected to act on his own initiative in the talks. Discussions had taken place on the congress agenda in government circles before Castlereagh left for the continent, but he almost certainly did not carry with him to Vienna any specific documented instructions and in the course of the negotiations he received only one note from the administration containing an explicit order.⁶⁶ It would not have been very practical for the government to retain much control over the British delegation anyway, considering the distance between London and Vienna, the slowness of communications, and the occasional requirement for swift decision-making in order to secure an acceptable outcome at the talks. That is not to say, however, that Castlereagh did not stay in touch with his colleagues back in London or that the Prime Minister did not seek to exercise a degree of influence over the proceedings in Vienna. For the duration of his mission in Vienna, Castlereagh provided Liverpool with a constant stream of detailed reports on the progress of the talks. The premier also received a number of rather more informal and gossipy letters from Edward

⁶⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 342-3.

Cooke, Castlereagh's assistant, commenting on events in the Austrian capital.⁶⁷

Liverpool clearly found these missives from Cooke extremely helpful. The Prime Minister wrote to the Under-Secretary of State on 9 December 1814:

I cannot sufficiently thank you for the trouble you have taken in giving me so much information of all that has been passing at Vienna. It has afforded a clue to many of the public proceedings, which I should have found it difficult otherwise to unravel.⁶⁸

Castlereagh also received a series of letters from the Prime Minister.

An examination of Liverpool's letters in connection with the Congress of Vienna, moreover, suggests that the premier saw a role for himself in the negotiations. While granting the Foreign Secretary very considerable discretion in the way he went about trying to find equitable resolutions to the major issues that preoccupied the minds of the monarchs and ministers of the great powers in Vienna and invariably shying away from issuing Castlereagh with direct orders, Liverpool tentatively outlined to Castlereagh what developments would be unwelcome to Britain. The Prime Minister advised the Foreign Secretary to endeavour to prevent the great powers from resorting to force to resolve their territorial disputes or remove Murat from his throne. Liverpool feared that Britain would lose everything that she had gained if there were renewed conflict in Europe. He observed that France was still unsettled and argued that a resumption of hostilities at this moment would very probably cause the revolutionary spirit in that country to break forth once again in full force and plunge the continent back into all the difficulties experienced during the last twenty years and more. As far as the premier was concerned virtually any other resolution to the problems of Poland, Saxony and Murat was preferable to a return to

⁶⁷ P. J. Jupp, 'Cooke, Edward (bap. 1755, d. 1820),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiii, 139-42.

⁶⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 467.

war at this point.⁶⁹ Liverpool also argued that it would be difficult for Britain to remain aloof from a resumption of hostilities on the continent, but intervention by her would not win the support of the British people. The Prime Minister wrote to Castlereagh on 23 December 1814:

Such an event [war] could not at this time take place in Europe without the danger of our being involved in it at no distant period, unless we were prepared to purchase neutrality by sacrifices which would be neither consistent with our character nor our safety.

With these sentiments deeply impressed upon our minds, we must not disguise from you that it would be quite impossible to embark this country in a war at present, except upon a clear point of honour, or for some distinct British interest of sufficient magnitude to reconcile the country to it.

The defence of Holland and the Low Countries is the only object on the Continent of Europe which would be regarded in this light, and for which we could reasonably expect the support of Parliament in imposing or supporting those burthens on the country which our being involved in a war would render indispensable.⁷⁰

Liverpool explained to the Foreign Secretary on 20 February 1815 how difficult it would be for Britain to use military force to secure regime change in Naples:

You will not have been three days in London before you are convinced of the absolute impracticability of our engaging in any military operations for the purpose of driving Murat from the throne of Naples. The truth is, the country at this moment is peace mad. Many of our best friends think of nothing but the reduction of taxes and low establishments, and it is very doubtful whether we could involve the country in a war at this moment for objects which, on every principle of sound policy, ought to lead to it.

This, like all other popular sentiments in a country such as ours, will wear out; but, after such a contest for twenty years, we must let people taste something of the blessings of peace before we can expect fairly to screw them up to a war spirit, even in a just cause.⁷¹

Liverpool carefully pointed to other developments apart from a return to the battlefield that would be unwelcome to Britain. As it became impracticable to persuade the Russian tsar to drop his scheme to make Poland a Russian dependency,

⁶⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 49-51.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 85.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 105.

and given the widespread support of the British people for the restoration of the kingdom of Poland as she was in 1792, the Prime Minister urged Castlereagh not to become party to the arrangements respecting that country. Liverpool recommended making an official protest, recording his nation's desire to see the establishment of a free Polish state, in order to render the decisions about Poland palatable to the country.⁷² It was also brought to the notice of the Foreign Secretary by Liverpool that the annexation of all of Saxony would not be popular at home.⁷³ The premier wrote on 6 January 1815: 'It is just that the King of Prussia should gain, but the total and unnecessary annihilation of one of the oldest Powers of Europe would revolt the feelings of all mankind.'⁷⁴ In addition to this, the Prime Minister suggested to Castlereagh that, if Murat did not act treacherously towards the allies after he had made peace with Austria at the start of 1814, then Britain would not be justified in helping to eject him from Naples. Liverpool argued that to take such a step it would be necessary to produce evidence of his treachery clear enough to enable the government to justify a change of attitude towards Murat that would be accepted by parliament and the world.⁷⁵

As well as gently indicating certain limits on his freedom of manoeuvre at the Congress of Vienna, Liverpool also provided the Foreign Secretary with a degree of support. Taking a full part in delicate negotiations far from home was bound to place the Foreign Secretary under enormous strain and Liverpool sought to ease, or at least not add to, the burden upon Castlereagh. The Prime Minister expressed his complete understanding of the pressures faced by the Foreign Secretary. On 25 September 1814 he opened a letter to Castlereagh: 'I can assure you that we are fully sensible of all the

⁷² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 35-9; *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 539.

⁷³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 72-4.

⁷⁴ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 531.

⁷⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 100-2.

difficulties in which you have been involved, and entirely concur with you on the substantial points for which you have been contending.’⁷⁶ Reflecting on the lack of progress at the start of the talks, Liverpool sympathised with the Foreign Secretary on 2 November 1814: ‘The first point on these occasions, if not the greatest difficulty, always takes more time in settling than any other.’⁷⁷ The premier concluded a note to Castlereagh on 18 November 1814:

We have no despatches from you later than the 21st of October, but we perfectly understand that the uncertainty in which affairs might stand on the 1st day of November, may have led you to defer writing till you could afford more light as to our future prospects.⁷⁸

On 9 December the Prime Minister wrote to Cooke: ‘I am sorry to hear you have been so nervous, but I cannot be surprised at it, considering what you have all had to go through.’⁷⁹ Liverpool did not seek to impose his views on the Foreign Secretary. On 4 October 1814 the Prime Minister enclosed a memorandum containing his thinking on the subject of Poland, but added:

It is impossible to know how far you may have advanced in this and other subjects before you receive this letter, but at all events the memorandum can do no harm, and you will make such use of the contents of it as you may judge upon the whole most advisable.⁸⁰

Liverpool expressed his concerns about a renewal of war to the Foreign Secretary on 2 November 1814, but he did not issue Castlereagh with an explicit command to avoid a resumption of hostilities. The premier simply stated: ‘I recommend these considerations to your most anxious attention.’⁸¹ Liverpool encouraged the Foreign Secretary to enjoy those moments when there were breakthroughs in the talks.

Castlereagh informed the premier on 5 January 1815 that war would not now break

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 31.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, 50.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, 74.

⁷⁹ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 468.

⁸⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 36.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 51.

out over Saxony and Liverpool replied on 16 January: 'I have this moment received your letter of the 5th instant, and sincerely wish you joy of the favourable turn which the negotiation appears to have taken.'⁸² Liverpool flattered Castlereagh by acknowledging his value to and respecting his place within the administration. The Prime Minister mentioned on 2 November 1814 that the cabinet would discuss the war with the USA the next day and ended the letter: 'I regret particularly that we cannot have the advantage, on this subject, of your assistance.'⁸³ On 4 November the premier informed the Foreign Secretary that he had urged Wellington to leave Paris for his own safety and take command in America, and commented: 'I wish very much we could have had a communication with you before we came to this decision, but from the nature of the case delay was impossible.'⁸⁴

The Prime Minister also provided important support for the Foreign Secretary's diplomatic initiatives. In Vienna on 31 December 1814 the Prussians suggested that a refusal to acknowledge their claim to Saxony would be seen as tantamount to a declaration of war. Castlereagh reacted to this threat on 3 January 1815 by entering into a defensive alliance with the French and Austrians in an attempt not to trigger a resumption of hostilities, but to force the Prussians to back down in the face of such military opposition. If the Prussians did not back down, however, this secret treaty meant war for Britain. By making this deal, therefore, Castlereagh disobeyed, at least in a sense, the one direct instruction he had received from London. Bathurst had ordered the Foreign Secretary in the name of the Prince Regent on 27

⁸² *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), ii, 240.

⁸³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 51.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 59.

November 1814 not to involve the country in war.⁸⁵ Liverpool, nevertheless, gave the Foreign Secretary his immediate and complete support without interrupting his holiday in Bath and returning to town or, with some members at a distance from London, even summoning the cabinet.⁸⁶ About a week later, he wrote to Bathurst arguing against any delay in the process of ratification and undermining the position of the Foreign Secretary, and dismissing the objections of one or two members of the cabinet when ten out of thirteen of his colleagues gave their approval to the treaty. The premier admitted to Bathurst that he was not sure that if had been stationed in Vienna he would have proposed the treaty, but he could see the benefits of it. Britain would leave the congress with some credit if this ploy could save Saxony from total annihilation.⁸⁷ Castlereagh was able to inform the premier on 5 January 1815 that his treaty had worked and Prussia had yielded.

Before the Foreign Secretary finally handed over to Wellington in the middle of February 1815, the territorial disputes had been largely resolved. Most of Poland was made into a kingdom under the sovereignty of the Tsar with the rest split between Prussia and Austria, and Castlereagh issued a note stating his preference for a free Polish nation. Saxony survived, though reduced, since Prussia received about 40% of its territory as well as a bloc of territory in the Rhineland. (Murat brought about his own fall. Seizing the opportunity to strike a blow against his enemies while the nations of Europe were distracted by the consequences of Napoleon's escape from Elba in February 1815, he attempted to rally Italy against Austria, marched his army north, was defeated and fled his kingdom. Murat tried to regain his throne in October, but he was captured and subsequently executed.) Liverpool urged Castlereagh before

⁸⁵ Webster, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 247-8.

⁸⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 536-7.

⁸⁷ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, pp. 326-7.

he left Vienna to brief Wellington on the state of the negotiations,⁸⁸ but the Field Marshal's services were soon required urgently elsewhere.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), ii, 240-2.

⁸⁹ Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh* (London: Collins, 1981); Thorne, 'Stewart, Robert, Viscount Castlereagh and second marquess of Londonderry (1769-1822),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lii, 749-57; C. K. Webster, *The Congress of Vienna 1814-1815* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1934); Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

Chapter Fourteen

The Road to Waterloo

26 February–18 June 1815

- The Hundred Days

Lord Liverpool had several genuine reasons to be cheerful at the end of February 1815. A resumption of hostilities on the continent over Poland and Saxony had been avoided; the most contentious points, apart from the future of Murat, up for discussion at the congress had been more or less settled; the duke of Wellington had left Paris and arrived in Vienna to take over from the Foreign Secretary in the final stage of the negotiations; and Viscount Castlereagh had started his journey to London and would be back in his place in the House of Commons in a few days. The Prime Minister was now able to turn his mind to much more congenial matters. On 28 February 1815 he wrote to the Field Marshal. He opened his letter:

I have written to Lord Clancarty to-day to inform him that the Prince Regent had been graciously pleased to declare his intention of investing him with the Order of the Bath, in consideration of the important services which he had rendered to the country by the assistance he has given to Lord Castlereagh on various important occasions, and more especially in the late negotiations at Vienna.¹

The premier also hoped to hear soon that the American war had come to an end with a great British military victory. He closed the letter to Wellington:

There are reports of the capture of New Orleans, but no official intelligence has been received of a later date than the 1st January. The prospect was then favourable. It is very desirable that the American war should terminate with a brilliant success on our part; and I should feel most happy that our friend Sir Edward Pakenham should have an opportunity of establishing his military character and reputation in the eyes of the world in the first separate command on which he has been employed.²

¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 582; B. L., Add. Mss. 38573, fos. 8-10, 13.

² *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 582.

The Prime Minister, however, would soon have reason to be both disappointed and worried. The War of 1812 did not terminate with a brilliant British success, far from it in fact. The British suffered their worst defeat of the conflict at New Orleans on 8 January 1815 and, furthermore, Pakenham was killed in the course of the battle.³ Moreover, two days before the premier wrote to Wellington, Napoleon had set sail from his tiny island in the Mediterranean and initiated a series of alarming events that would plunge Liverpool into the greatest crisis of his premiership so far.

Napoleon had been forced to abdicate on 6 April 1814 and was banished by the allies to the island of Elba under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau on 11 April. In February 1815, however, refusing to accept his defeat and conscious of his still enormous ability, separated from his family and bored by life on Elba, failing to receive his pension from the new French regime, and concerned by the possibility of his transportation to another part of the world far from Europe, he was attracted by the idea of returning to power and taking his revenge on the royal house of Bourbon. He hoped to benefit from the unrest in France, the division among the allies at the Congress of Vienna, and the present deployment of troops on the continent. Escaping from his place of exile, he returned to France to restore his empire. On 26 February 1815 he boarded the *Inconstant* at Portoferraio and sailed with his party for the mainland. Napoleon arrived in the south of France near to Cannes on 1 March and advanced towards Paris. The army started to desert the recently restored Bourbon regime, the people showed no desire to fight for Louis XVIII, and the government struggled to carry on. Ney, Marshal of France and *le brave des braves*, promised the king to bring Napoleon back to Paris 'in an iron cage', but on 18 March he also abandoned Louis XVIII and defected to the emperor. Louis XVIII was obliged to

³ H. M. Chichester, rev. Roger T. Stearn, 'Pakenham, Sir Edward Michael (1778-1815),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlii, 422-3.

leave the capital the next day. On 20 March Napoleon entered the city, occupied the Tuileries and started to prepare for war.⁴

The news of Napoleon's escape from Elba reached the monarchs and ministers still gathered in Vienna on 7 March 1815. (The congress would not actually finish its business until 9 June.) On 13 March the assembled representatives of the European nations declared that Napoleon had contravened the stipulations contained in the Treaty of Fontainebleau and labelled him an outlaw, and on 25 March the four major powers, Russia, Prussia, Austria and Great Britain, renewed their alliance, 'the Seventh Coalition', against Napoleon. Wellington was placed in command of the British, Hanoverian and Dutch-Belgian forces in the Netherlands and he arrived in Brussels on 4 April. (Blücher eventually took charge of the Prussian army established further to the east.) Wellington spent the next two months augmenting his force with reinforcements of men and materiel from home and from allied states, and preparing for the coming encounter with the French. By the beginning of June both sides were ready to take to the battlefield. On 12 June Napoleon, having decided to seize the initiative and launch an offensive against the allies, left Paris. Napoleon hoped to drive a wedge between Wellington's army and Blücher's forces, and then to defeat them individually before the arrival in the west of the Austrians and Russians. On 15 June the French resumed hostilities by invading Belgium.

Because it is extremely well known how Napoleon's hundred days' campaign ended, it is easy not to appreciate fully the mounting pressure that Liverpool must have come under between February and June 1815. Some of his contemporaries were no doubt aware of it. William Wilberforce wrote to Liverpool on 17 March on the subject of the slave trade:

⁴ Norman MacKenzie, *The Escape from Elba* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Were the subject of my letter of less urgent importance, I would not intrude on you with it at a moment like the present, when the mind of every man who feels for his country is pressed upon, and when you, who have to bear the weight of all, must have an overpowering burthen to sustain.⁵

There was no certainty during those months that the renewed conflict would be of a short duration. Nor was there any guarantee that Britain would emerge victorious from the contest. The allies had been caught very much off guard by Napoleon, the battle-hardened force that Wellington had led across Portugal and Spain, over the Pyrenees and into France was no longer in one piece and this time Wellington would be facing Napoleon himself. If the war dragged on or Wellington was defeated, confidence in the British government could have been fatally eroded. For the duration of this campaign, Wellington's main points of contact in the cabinet, for fairly obvious reasons, were Castlereagh, the nation's chief diplomat, and Earl Bathurst, who was responsible for supplying Wellington with much of what he needed to fortify his army. On 17 June 1815 a caricature was published. Black clouds surround the heads of Liverpool, the most prominent of the five, Wellington, Blücher, the emperor of Austria and the tsar of Russia, and thunderbolts of lightning, from cannon in the sky and the mouth of Liverpool, strike down Napoleon and his army.⁶ It goes without saying that this print exaggerates Liverpool's role in the vast preparations for the looming conflict with France. Nevertheless, in a crisis on such a scale it was essential that the Prime Minister did not lose his head.

The news of Napoleon's escape was delivered to the government in London by 10 March 1815. It was now important for the administration to discover quickly, confidentially and accurately what was going on in France and to evaluate the likelihood of Louis XVIII's regime being able to deal with the situation itself. Only

⁵ Wilberforce & Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, iv, 249-50.

⁶ George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, p. 551.

then would the ministry in London be in a position to consider the most appropriate response. Liverpool took swift and productive action. He sent his own cousin, an experienced senior officer in the Royal Artillery, to Paris on 11 March to undertake this task.⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel George Jenkinson supplied the Prime Minister from Paris with a number of reports on the situation in France.⁸ Liverpool was calm and firm, informed and determined in the face of danger. He replied to his cousin's pessimistic missives on 21 March:

I have subsequently received your second letter of the 17th at night. I am sorry you view matters in such a gloomy light, though I am quite aware the situation of the royal cause is most critical. In God's name, however, keep up your spirits, or otherwise you can be of no use. I do not mean that you should not see things as they really are, but you should not suffer yourself to despair. I never knew those feelings entertained by any one, that they did not, however unknown to himself, tinge the language of the person who imbibed them, and thereby produce incalculable mischief. Poor Sir John Moore was a melancholy example of what I am saying.⁹

Liverpool recommended that his cousin remain in Paris for the time being to assist Britain's hard-pressed ambassadorial staff there.¹⁰

⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 11-12. 'As an intermediate step Liverpool sent his half-brother Cecil, now Colonel Jenkinson, to Paris to report on the morale of the French government and army.' Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 119. 'And since, among the things to be done instantly, it was manifestly an object of the first importance to ascertain the state of feeling of the French themselves, and especially of their army, Lord Liverpool with great judgement despatched his own brother, Colonel Jenkinson, to Paris, with instructions, after consulting with Lord Fitzroy Somerset, who, while the Duke of Wellington was at Vienna, had been left in charge of our diplomatic relations at the court of the Tuileries, to proceed to join the French army in the south-east or the south-west, and from the head-quarters to keep the Cabinet informed of all that was passing: but, before the colonel could reach Paris, it had become so doubtful whether the fidelity of any portion of the troops could be depended on that the Ministry of Louis declined to sanction his further progress.' Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 167. It appears that both Gash and Yonge are incorrect on this point. It is quite clear from the manuscripts that it was George Jenkinson (1783-1823), his cousin, and not Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson (1784-1851), his half-brother, who was employed by the premier.

⁸ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 58, fos. 28-31, 32-4.

⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 168; B. L., Loan 72, vol. 58, fos. 35-6.

¹⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38573, fos. 14-15.

Liverpool ensured that the government prepared for the resumption of hostilities armed with a clear understanding of the road ahead and at an early stage in the unfolding drama. On 1 April he sent two members of the cabinet, the earl of Harrowby and William Wellesley Pole, to Brussels to confer with Wellington.¹¹ They took with them two memoranda drafted by the Prime Minister. In the first Wellington was asked to give his views on a range of eventualities, including the defeat of the allies, a retreat by Napoleon and, in the event of total victory by the allies, the possibility of the emperor escaping to the United States of America and therefore being at liberty to threaten the peace of Europe once again at some point in the future. The second memorandum expanded on the first and posed a list of eighteen questions for Wellington to answer. The Field Marshal was asked about the sentiments of the allies, the plan of campaign, the maintenance of allied troops on entering France, the treatment of those Frenchmen who rallied or returned to the cause of the king, and the execution of the settlement at Vienna.¹² Harrowby provided Castlereagh with

¹¹ 'Since Wellington was fortunately still in the Netherlands, two Cabinet ministers – Harrowby and Pole – were sent across to confer with him.' Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 119. Gash is also incorrect here. Wellington had been posted to Vienna and did not arrive in Brussels until 4 April 1815. Wellington wrote to Liverpool from Vienna on 12 March 1815: 'The hot rooms here have almost killed me.' *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 588.

¹² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 169-72.

Wellington's response to the two memoranda on 7 April.¹³

The Prime Minister also sought to encourage Wellington by demonstrating the commitment of the government to the campaign. Liverpool wrote to the Field Marshal on 14 April. The letter was delivered by John Charles Herries, the Commissary-in-Chief, and Liverpool explained in it that he knew of no person in the country better acquainted with the national finances and therefore better qualified to assist Wellington in making the arrangements to supply both the British and their allies with the necessary resources to stay in the field. The Prime Minister also reassured the Field Marshal that steps had been taken in response to the reports from Harrowby and Wellesley Pole to increase the size of the army under his command as far as possible and, to this end, the decision had been taken, at some risk to national security, to withdraw some troops from Ireland for service on the continent: 'We have determined, however, to draw as largely as possible from Ireland on the credit of the force which will return from Canada in July or August, and to leave the internal state of that country in a great measure to chance for the present.' Liverpool was not afraid, however, to caution the Field Marshal as well. Harrowby had informed the Foreign Secretary on 7 April 1815 that Wellington wished to wait for the arrival of the

¹³ *Supplementary Despatches*, x, 31-40; It was rumoured in early April 1815 that the cabinet was divided over the course of action to adopt with Liverpool struggling to maintain a state of peace and Castlereagh demanding a return to war. This rumour was passed on by observers of the government rather than members of it, but there is not much evidence to confirm this rumour. Both politicians asked parliament on 7 April to authorise a policy of rearmament in the face of the threat from Napoleon. Castlereagh adopted a rather more aggressive tone in his speech in the lower chamber than Liverpool did in his to peers, but this may be just a reflection of their different temperaments rather than an indication of a policy dispute. Less than a week after this debate the premier wrote to Wellington to urge him to strike first at the front; *The Creevey Papers*, pp. 129-30; J. W. Kaye, *Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight, Lady Companion to the Princess Charlotte of Wales* (2 vols., London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1861), ii, 52; *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ii, 401-4, 404-5; *Parliamentary Debates*, xxx, 356-72, 417-63; *Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, M.P.*, ed. Leonard Horner (2nd edn., 2 vols., Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1853), ii, 250-3; Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, pp. 345-6.

Russians before entering France. The Prime Minister concluded his letter on 14 April by accepting the need for an overwhelming invasion force but also by emphasising the importance of an early incursion before Napoleon succeeded in significantly enlarging his armed forces and before the French became fully reconciled to his authority.¹⁴

Despite the critical situation, there were British politicians who hoped to use the issue of Napoleon's escape from the island of Elba as a stick with which to beat the government. Marquess Wellesley launched an attack over the matter in the House of Lords on 12 April 1815. He argued that the administration was at fault for entering into the Treaty of Fontainebleau and granting the emperor too much freedom. It was his opinion that far more attention should have been paid by the ministry to the issue of Napoleon's confinement. The authorities were also criticised by Wellesley for failing to ensure that Napoleon received his pension from the new French regime and that the terms of the agreement were fulfilled.

Napoleon's escape from Elba was a crisis that was not easy for the government to manage. The agreement with Napoleon signed almost exactly a year before had been far from satisfactory. Above all the emperor was unwisely granted the sovereignty of an island close to France. Furthermore, the British government had never been happy with the terms of the deal. The Treaty of Fontainebleau was largely the work of the Russian tsar, reflecting his wish to show a degree of magnanimity to his enemy and the desire of the allies to remove the emperor from the scene as quickly as possible. By the time Castlereagh arrived in Paris on 10 April 1814 the details had already been finalised and could not practically be rewritten. Yet, on 12 April 1815, the administration could hardly jeopardise the unity of the renewed allied coalition by

¹⁴ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, pp. 345-6; *Memoir of the Public Life of the Right Hon. John Charles Herries*, i, 96.

placing the blame for the agreement squarely on the Russians, or readily admit to past failures when it faced a major international challenge and required the full confidence of parliament and the nation. Nor could it provide some legitimacy for Napoleon's actions by accepting the case that he had been treated in any way unfairly. In short, the ministry had little choice, but to defend the Treaty of Fontainebleau and its execution as best it could.

Liverpool himself rose from the government benches to reply to Wellesley. He had been accused by Wellesley of sneering contemptuously throughout the debate and he now poured scorn on the former Foreign Secretary's opportunistic philippic. He pointed out to his fellow peers that Wellesley had not objected to the Treaty of Fontainebleau when that document had originally been laid before parliament in the course of the last session. The premier asked:

Now, if it were a measure so fraught with danger, that the noble marquis conceived no man who deserved the name of a statesman could look to it without apprehension, why did he not exercise a sound discretion, why did he not perform that which was manifestly his duty, and call the attention of the House to a transaction, which was a complete matter of notoriety?

In essence, Liverpool claimed that Wellesley was simply being wise after the event. Liverpool also claimed that not to have entered into the agreement with Napoleon could have prolonged the war and it was necessary for honourable terms to be offered to the emperor in order to secure the assent of his military commanders to the deal. The premier denied that any failure to pay Napoleon his pension had furnished him with an excuse to break from his chains. The emperor on landing in the south of France, Liverpool argued, had not identified a breach on the part of the allies of the Treaty of Fontainebleau as the cause of his return, but had insisted that he was simply answering the call of his nation. Furthermore, the Prime Minister informed the upper chamber, if Napoleon believed that there had been a contravention of the agreement

between him and the allies, then he should have appealed to them for redress not taken matters into his own hands. Some of Liverpool's claims were rather shaky, however. He argued that Napoleon could have escaped from wherever he had been exiled to, but surely it would have been much harder for the emperor to monitor European events so closely and to return to France so readily if he had been stationed several thousands of miles away from the continent he had once dominated. Both Bathurst and Melville felt the necessity to help their colleague to defend a particularly sticky wicket and Wellesley's motion calling for the release of papers connected with Napoleon's escape was defeated.¹⁵

Liverpool also took it upon himself to justify the resumption of hostilities to the House of Lords on 23 May. This was not an entirely straightforward task. There were several members of the political nation who queried the government's war policy. Lord Grenville supported the administration, but Earl Grey argued both that it was dubious in principle to go to war to remove the ruler of France and that such an enterprise would be perilous in the extreme. It was therefore very important for a powerful case to be delivered by the government to parliament. Liverpool sensitively opened the debate by stating that war was always something to be avoided if possible and acknowledging the burdens that had been carried by the nation for over twenty years. He then carefully explained why it had become necessary for the country to take up arms once again. Napoleon, the premier stated, had seriously violated the Treaty of Fontainebleau by returning to France and reclaiming his throne. It was clear from this and Napoleon's past behaviour that the emperor's word could not be trusted and his ambition could not be satisfied. Napoleon's occupation of the throne of France was incompatible with the peace of Europe, Liverpool insisted, and it was better to act

¹⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxx, 545-83.

now against him before he had time to build up his forces, and while the allies were united in their determination to bring him down and while their armies were still mobilised. The Prime Minister stated to the upper chamber that he was confident of success on the battlefield. He concluded by summoning his countrymen with almost evangelical fervour to join in the vital work of finally crushing the greatest evil in living memory. The government secured a majority in favour of renewed war of over a hundred.¹⁶ Joseph Farington called on the earl of Lonsdale the following day and recorded in his diary: 'We then talked of the debate in the House of Lords last night on the question of *War* or *Peace* with France. He said Lord Liverpool made a very good speech for above an Hour.'¹⁷

In the middle of May 1815 it was rumoured among the Grenvillites that Liverpool was ill and suffered from constant fretting.¹⁸ Recalling his nervous disposition and considering the enormous pressure which the government was under at this time, it is hardly surprising if the premier were low in spirits. Liverpool's correspondence during the month prior to the renewal, however, suggests that the premier continued to act as one might wish a statesman to in a crisis of this magnitude, with confidence but not recklessly so. His cousin provided Liverpool with several more reports on the preparations of the allies and the premier forecast a speedy end to the looming contest on 13 June.¹⁹ On the same day the Prime Minister also wrote to George Canning and expressed his confidence, but he refused to conceal from himself the risks that lay ahead: 'During the twenty years we have passed in political life we have never witnessed a more awful moment than the present. It is

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 316-71.

¹⁷ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xiii, 4628.

¹⁸ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 400.

¹⁹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 58, fos., 37-40, 41-2, 43-6, 47-9.

impossible ever to answer for the result of military operations, but the chances are certainly all in our favour.²⁰ Liverpool had already begun to think about the problems that would arise after a victory over Napoleon. He recognised that Louis XVIII might have considerable trouble regaining his throne on account of the unpopularity of some members of the royal family. He singled out the king's brother, the count of Artois, as a figure of hate for the people of France: 'There appears to me to be a great resemblance between his character and that of many of the princes of the Stuart family. He is a perfect chevalier, but has no quality which belongs to a king or a prince in difficult times.'²¹ (This was a most perceptive character assessment. Artois ascended the throne of France as Charles X in 1824 but was forced to abdicate during the July Revolution in 1830.) Another threat to the stability of the monarchy came from the duke of Orleans, the son of Philippe Égalité, who could win the support of the Jacobins and Constitutionalists in France, but Liverpool mentioned that it was thought by those that knew him that Orleans lacked the resolution to move against the king.²² Orleans became king of France in 1830 and ruled as Louis-Philippe until the Year of Revolutions in 1848.²³

- The Corn Law and Catholic Emancipation

The transition from war to peace was not easy for those engaged in agriculture. With the return to the market of competition from abroad at the end of the war, the price of wheat began to fall. The average price of a quarter of wheat in 1812 was 126s. 6d., in 1813 it was 109s. 9d., but in 1814 the average price of a quarter of wheat was 74s. 4d.

²⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 179.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, ii, 175-7, 178-80.

²³ Pamela Pilbeam, *The Constitutional Monarchy in France, 1814-48* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

and in 1815 it was 65s. 7d.. The farmers demanded protection, but the workers in industry feared a rise in the price of bread. Something had to be done. The government intervened in the dispute in 1815 and proposed a bill, a Corn Law, to prohibit the import of wheat to the country from abroad until the price at home rose to 80s. a quarter.

Liverpool did not regard the Corn Law of 1815 as a piece of class legislation, only of benefit to one part of the community, the owners of land. He explained to Canning on 6 January 1815 that the measure would provide a stimulus to agriculture and enable the country to meet her need for food in due course. He continued:

The deficiencies of Great Britain may certainly be made up from Ireland, if due encouragement is given to investing capital in agriculture in that country; and the measure will have the further advantage of civilising and improving that part of the empire more rapidly and in a greater degree than any other project that could be devised.²⁴

He expanded on this theme in a speech to peers on 15 March. Liverpool opened the debate on the proposal to move the second reading of the corn bill by acknowledging that the subject of the wheat price was of interest to the entire country and insisting that his opinion on it was ‘the result of long, anxious and unbiased consideration.’ He added:

He had been for the last three years revolving the subject in his mind, and looking at it in every possible light, and in all its bearings and consequences; he had read, with all the attention in his power, all the evidence which had been given on the question, and all the publications which had been given to the world, many of them of great value, on both sides; and he had done so certainly without any particular bias on his mind, either one way or the other. There were subjects on which perhaps any mind must be under some degree of bias, in favour of one view of the subject rather than another; but if there ever was a question on which his mind was totally destitute of all prejudice, completely free from any undue bias towards one particular view of it rather than another, this was that question.

²⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 136.

The Prime Minister admitted that the power and prosperity of the nation was founded upon both her agriculture and her industry, and he argued that one ought not to be sacrificed in the interest of the other, that they ought to be encouraged in equal measure, and that help for one was of benefit to the other. Liverpool explained to his fellow peers in the upper chamber that he did not like to interfere in the operation of the market, but that it had been necessary in the past to introduce an element of protection in order to bolster a sector of the economy and that not to act to encourage agriculture now was in effect to discourage it. It was in the interests of the consumer, not just the farmer, that the bill was passed and agriculture was protected, the premier continued. He suggested that if agriculture was stimulated, the production of wheat would be increased and the price would be reduced. Liverpool examined the argument that a rise in the price of bread would lead to a rise in the cost of labour and a rise in the cost of labour would lead to the emigration of manufacturers. He argued that the success of manufacturers in the country did not rely on reductions in the cost of labour, but on the availability of capital, the system of credit, the abundance of fuel and the excellence of machinery. The protection of agriculture, Liverpool also contended, was of importance to the general welfare of the nation. It was of significant advantage to the whole country that Great Britain became self-sufficient and did not have to rely on the supply of essential resources from foreign countries. The Prime Minister concluded with the point that if the measure did give rise to any problem then a solution would be found at once.²⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet and philosopher, criticised the Prime Minister, but admitted that Liverpool raised a number of points that required his attention. He wrote to R. H. Brabant on 21 March: 'Then how disgraceful that in the two Houses of Legislature there was not a single

²⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxx, 175-205.

Speech on the part of the Supporters of the Measure, which a Philosopher could answer, with the single exception of Lord Liverpool's.'²⁶

The Prime Minister sought to frame the legislation and direct its passage without failing to address the concerns of country gentlemen inside parliament, but also without escalating the protests of industrial workers outside parliament. In late 1814 and early 1815 a number of meetings of MPs from both sides of the lower chamber was organised by the government in order to discuss the issue of the Corn Law prior to its introduction. At least two of them were held at Fife House and attended by the Prime Minister himself. The price of 80s. a quarter was the average cost of wheat over the last twenty years and the recommendation of an investigation by a Select Committee in 1814. Liverpool declared in favour of a price at this sort of level and it was accepted by MPs at these meetings. He supported the introduction of a sliding tariff scale rather than a complete import ban under 80s. a quarter, but the administration secured one or two concessions from MPs in return for an agreement on this point. Wheat from the colonies would be admitted at 67s. a quarter and wheat would be stored in warehouses at no cost. The support of the country gentlemen and representatives from Ireland was secured by the government, but it was recognised by the premier that even at a price of 80s. a quarter for wheat he could expect significant objections to the proposals. He wrote to Canning on 6 January 1815: 'We do not propose to push the protecting price beyond 80s. per quarter, but we shall meet with serious opposition in going thus far.'²⁷ Liverpool hoped to get the bill through parliament as soon as possible. He wrote to Wellington on 28 February:

The House of Commons is almost exclusively engaged at present on the Corn question. If it depends upon numbers within doors, there can

²⁶ *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), iv, 556.

²⁷ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 136.

be no doubt of the result; but every effort is making to excite a clamour amongst the people, and it is of the utmost importance, therefore, that the Bill should be carried through with as little delay as possible. We have all the Irish with us, and almost all the country gentlemen who are in opposition.²⁸

The corn bill won the support of a clear majority in the House of Commons and it received the royal assent on 23 March 1815, but there were many people out-of-doors who did not accept the argument of the Prime Minister that the measure was not a piece of class legislation and they made their point in petitions and protests.²⁹

There was one other important domestic political matter that was raised on the floor of the Houses of Parliament at this time and required the attention of the Prime Minister. That was the issue of Roman Catholic emancipation. Lord Donoughmore raised the controversial matter in the upper chamber on 8 June 1815 and called for the establishment of a committee to examine the political rights of Roman Catholics. The last thing that the premier wanted was to enter into a discussion on this subject that would expose ministerial division and undermine government cohesion while the country prepared to go to war with Napoleon and required the guidance of a firm hand and a clear head from the captain of the ship of state. Liverpool avoided a repetition of his views in any detail on the issue of emancipation, and he opposed the motion on the grounds that there was not much time left in the session to come to a conclusion on the subject. He added that it was unnecessary to form a committee to look into the matter because the upper chamber was far from ignorant of the status of Roman Catholics in the country. He expressed a wish to reserve his extensive observations on the subject until such a time when a specific measure to alter the constitution was

²⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 582.

²⁹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, 100-25; Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*; Norman McCord, *The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846* (2nd edn., London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968).

brought to the attention of peers. The house divided and the motion was defeated by a majority of twenty-six.³⁰

³⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxxi, 666-86.

Chapter Fifteen

The End of the Emperor

18 June–31 December 1815

- The Problem of Napoleon

Napoleon was finally defeated at the battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815. Nathan Mayer Rothschild was reputedly the first notable person in London, through the exceptional intelligence network maintained to support his business, to learn of this occurrence. This claim is supported by a letter from John Roworth in Paris on 27 July. Roworth referred to the commercial advantage gained by his master, Rothschild, from having early knowledge of the result from the battlefield. It seems that the information was quickly shared with Lord Liverpool, but the details of this transaction are extremely unclear. What is certain is that Henry Percy, Lord Wellington's adjutant, brought official confirmation of the great victory to the capital on 21 June 1815.¹

Liverpool wrote to George Canning on 4 August:

The result of the victory at Waterloo must have surprised you nearly as much as the magnitude of the victory itself; for I know of no instance in the history of the world, at least in that of modern times, of one battle producing such decisive effects. Our difficulties, however, are not over.²

Indeed they were not. The government was immediately confronted with a fresh series of difficult problems in the wake of the battle. The administration had to decide quickly and carefully what was to be done about Napoleon. The Prime Minister asked Viscount Castlereagh rhetorically on 7 July 1815: 'What is to become of Buonaparte?'³ The thing was that Napoleon still posed a threat to European peace. His

¹ Reginald Colby, *The Waterloo Despatch* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965); H. M. Chichester, rev. James Falkner, 'Percy, Henry (1785-1825),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xliii, 714-15.

² *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 95.

³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 188.

army had been defeated and his campaign had been ended. He had even abdicated once more on 22 June 1815. While he lived and was free, however, it was widely feared that he uniquely could and probably would lead an army into battle and disturb the peace of the continent once again. Liverpool grasped this clearly:

If it is asked why so much importance is attached to one man, it is because I am thoroughly convinced that no other man can play the same part as he has done, and is likely to play again if he should be allowed the opportunity.

Independent of his personal qualities, he has the advantage of fourteen years' enjoyment of supreme power. This has given him a title which belongs to no other man, and which it would be very difficult for any one to acquire.⁴

Liverpool took a keen interest in this matter. He took urgent steps to deprive Napoleon of his freedom should he not be found dead. Immediately after Waterloo acute pressure was immediately placed on Louis XVIII and his ministers to seek Napoleon's capture. The premier told the Foreign Secretary in June and July that additional securities, including the occupation of several border fortresses by the allies, would have to be exacted from the French if the emperor remained alive and at large.⁵ Castlereagh reported to Liverpool on 8 July 1815 that he had conveyed this message to both Louis XVIII and Talleyrand.⁶ Legal channels of emigration overseas were peremptorily closed to Napoleon. The Prime Minister signed a draft note on 30 June 1815 refusing the emperor a passport to the United States of America.⁷ The Royal Navy was commanded to patrol the French coast to prevent an escape by sea. Liverpool informed the Foreign Secretary on 7 July that he was confident of seizing Napoleon if the emperor sailed for either Cherbourg or Rochefort.⁸

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 189.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, 184-6, 188-9, 193-6.

⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 3.

⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 188-9.

⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 188-9.

Napoleon eventually surrendered to the British. He famously appealed to the Prince Regent from Rochefort on 13 July:

En butte aux factions qui divisent mon pays et à l'inimitié des plus grandes Puissances de l'Europe, j'ai terminé ma carrière politique, et je viens, comme Thémistocle, m'asseoir sur le foyer du peuple Britannique. Je me mets sous la protection de ses loix, que je réclame de votre Altesse Royale, comme du plus puissant, du plus constant, et du plus généreux de mes ennemis.⁹

Napoleon was transferred aboard the *Bellerophon* and into British custody two days later.

Liverpool originally hoped to hand the emperor over to the French authorities to be summarily dealt with by his own countrymen. He believed that the easiest thing would have been to deliver him up to the king of France to be tried as a rebel, but he wanted a guarantee that Napoleon would not be allowed to flee from justice.¹⁰

Liverpool demonstrated marked ruthlessness in this design. He wrote to his foreign minister on 20 July, concluding this letter with the observation that the most convenient and appropriate solution to the problem of Napoleon was for the king of France to have him executed.¹¹

The premier expressed a similarly hard-nosed attitude towards those key Frenchmen who had sided with Napoleon during his hundred days' campaign. He encouraged the French government to make a severe example of them, specifically commanders of garrisons and corps, in order to discourage rebellion.¹² Liverpool told

⁹ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 31. 'Your Royal Highness, exposed to the factions which distract my country and to the enmity of the greatest powers of Europe, I have ended my political career, and I come, like Themistocles, to throw myself on the hospitality of the English people; I put myself under the protection of their laws, which I claim from Your Royal Highness as the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of my enemies. Napoleon.' Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon and Wellington* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), p. 194.

¹⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 188-9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 198-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, ii, 184-6, 193-6.

Canning bluntly on 4 August that, 'at the same time one never can feel that the King is secure upon his throne till he has dared to spill traitors' blood.' He continued:

It is not that many examples would be necessary; but the *daring* to make a few will alone manifest any strength in the government. It is a curious circumstance that, after the sanguinary scenes which we recollect at the beginning of the French Revolution, all parties appear now to have an insuperable repugnance to executions. This arises not from mercy, but from fear. Every government that has been recently established in France has felt its own situation so weak and uncertain, that the persons composing it have not ventured to make examples of their enemies for fear of retaliation.¹³

In November the premier was approached by Lord Holland on behalf of Marshal Ney's wife. Holland hoped to secure an audience of the Prince Regent and to persuade the government to intervene to save the Marshal from execution. Liverpool politely refused to lift a finger to help the soldier and strongly advised the Prince Regent that there was no ground for clemency in this instance. Ney was taken before a firing squad on 7 December.¹⁴

It soon became clear, however, that the French king and his ministry were not in a sufficiently strong political position to judge and execute Napoleon as a traitor. Liverpool had already anticipated this scenario. He wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 15 July 1815 and suggested that if the French administration were not up to the task of bringing Napoleon to justice, then Britain was prepared to undertake the onerous duty of keeping him in captivity instead. He stated, furthermore, that it was probably better that Britain should step forward under these circumstances rather than any other European power.¹⁵ It appears unlikely that Liverpool regarded the person of Napoleon as some kind of war trophy. Presumably the premier made this offer believing that Britain could be most trusted to handle this matter properly and he was determined

¹³ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 95.

¹⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 236-8, 240-2, 241; *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 232-5, 245, 245-6.

¹⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 196.

not to repeat the mistakes that led to the hundred days' campaign. Whatever the reason, Castlereagh informed the premier on 17 July that there was no realistic alternative and the other major powers were content to let Britain take a lead in this affair: 'You must make up your mind to be his gaolers.'¹⁶

Although Liverpool was prepared to keep Napoleon in custody, he did have one important condition. He argued that if Britain was to undertake this unpleasant task, then she must be granted complete discretion by her allies to decide where and how Napoleon was to be confined.¹⁷ The Foreign Secretary recommended on 12 July 1815 that each of the European powers should nominate a commissary to exercise a joint surveillance over Napoleon in captivity.¹⁸ Liverpool responded politely but unenthusiastically to this scheme on 20 July. He explained that the government was disinclined to the appointment of commissaries and predicted that these men would probably become frustrated with the boredom of their posting after a while and would begin to quarrel amongst themselves, possibly endangering the secure custody of the prisoner:

To conclude: we wish that the King of France would hang or shoot Buonaparte, as the best termination of the business; but if this is impracticable, and the allies are desirous that we should have the custody of him, it is not unreasonable that we should be allowed to judge of the means by which that custody can be made effectual.¹⁹

Castlereagh added a postscript to his correspondence on 24 July and admitted that on reflection the idea of nominating allied commissaries was open to considerable objection.²⁰ On 18 August, however, the premier cheekily suggested that the allies

¹⁶ Webster, *British Diplomacy*, p. 350.

¹⁷ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 196.

¹⁸ Webster, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 341-2.

¹⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 199.

²⁰ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 54-5.

might nevertheless like to meet part of the expense of Napoleon's confinement and it was then Castlereagh's turn on 24 August to urge second thoughts.²¹

Having agreed to take Napoleon, the British government was then required to grapple with an awkward legal conundrum. By what right could Britain despatch Napoleon into exile? This question was debated at some considerable length by the administration's senior law officers. Liverpool favoured one tidy solution to this problem. He wrote to the earl of Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, on 1 October, proposing to bring a measure before parliament during the next session to authorise the government to detain the emperor.²² Legislation to this effect was duly passed in 1816.

Liverpool was determined to act with propriety in another matter relating to Napoleon's imprisonment. He wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 1 September 1815. Allemand and Savary had accompanied Napoleon into British custody. These two senior officers were regarded as serious culprits and prime candidates for extradition to France for trial and were therefore forbidden to stay with Napoleon during his journey into exile. Liverpool came to agree with a number of his colleagues, however, that because Allemand and Savary had been accepted into British custody in the full knowledge of who they were this amounted to an assurance that they would not be handed over to the French authorities without their consent. The Prime Minister informed Castlereagh that it had been decided to detain Allemand and Savary as prisoners of war on Malta and then allow them to escape overseas after the arrangements for a lasting European peace had been concluded.²³ Allemand and Savary were subsequently imprisoned and duly escaped in 1816.

²¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 131-2; Webster, *British Diplomacy*, p. 370.

²² Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon*, ii, 270-1.

²³ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 151-2.

There is no evidence to suggest that Liverpool gave any serious thought to placing Napoleon on trial before some kind of international tribunal once he fell into allied hands. The British government simply offered to undertake the task of confinement. Even this was not an entirely straightforward matter, however. As far as Liverpool was concerned, it was completely out of the question from the very beginning of this drama for Napoleon to be given asylum in Britain, whether that meant him retiring into private life, as the emperor seemed to indicate was his wish, or being kept under lock and key at the Tower of London or Fort George, as the Foreign Secretary implied. It appeared to be unwise to keep Napoleon so near to France. He would not have far to travel if he managed to escape in order to raise the standard of rebellion again, and he would be in a position to keep himself informed and ready to take advantage of sudden and momentary changes in European affairs. Furthermore, his confinement so close to the continent would not encourage the people of Europe, and especially Frenchmen, to forget about Napoleon and settle back into the ways of peace. Finally, radicals and eccentrics in Britain might have sought to find legal loopholes to secure Napoleon's release or even use him to further their own political ambitions. The premier clearly understood the temperament of the British people too well. He explained his reasoning to Castlereagh on 20 July 1815:

We are all decidedly of opinion that it would not answer to confine him in this country. Very nice legal questions might arise upon the subject, which would be particularly embarrassing; but, independent of these considerations, you know enough of the feelings of people in this country not to doubt that he would become an object of curiosity immediately, and possibly of compassion in the course of a few months; and the very circumstances of his being here, or indeed anywhere else in Europe, would contribute to keep up a certain degree of ferment in France.²⁴

²⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 198-9.

Liverpool's fears were confirmed during the very short time Napoleon was held on ship just off the British south coast in July and August 1815. Tourists and others flocked to see the celebrity and attempts were made to end his detention. Capel Lofft, a radical writer and admirer of Napoleon, sought to serve a writ of *habeas corpus* on the emperor's gaolers at Plymouth.²⁵ Liverpool reported to the Foreign Secretary on 3 August: 'Bonaparte is giving us great trouble at Plymouth. ... We have had abundant proof that it would have been quite impracticable to have detained him here, without the most serious inconvenience.'²⁶ The Prime Minister ordered the ship on which Napoleon was a prisoner to cruise off shore until arrangements had been made for his departure overseas.²⁷

The Prime Minister gave careful consideration to a suitable place of permanent exile for Napoleon. He mentioned a number of imperial outposts to Castlereagh on 15 July 1815, including Gibraltar, Malta and the Cape of Good Hope.²⁸ The final choice of destination for the prisoner was the main subject of another letter to the Foreign Secretary on 20 July. Discussions with Viscount Melville, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and John Barrow, a senior and knowledgeable official within the naval department, had led the premier to pick the island of St. Helena, a small isolated base well over four thousand miles away from France and right in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean.²⁹ At such a distance and

²⁵ G. M. Ditchfield, 'Lofft, Capel (1751-1824),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiv, 295-7.

²⁶ *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), ii, 453.

²⁷ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon And The British* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

²⁸ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 196.

²⁹ J. M. R. Cameron, 'Barrow, Sir John, first baronet (1764-1848),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, iv, 102-4; Christopher Lloyd, *Mr. Barrow of the Admiralty* (London: Collins, 1970).

in a place where there was only one point for vessels to harbour and where shipping could be easily regulated, it was hoped that Napoleon would soon be forgotten and conspiracies discouraged. The climate of the island was healthy and accommodation there was suitable for occupation.³⁰

Liverpool had the arrangements for Napoleon's exile settled before the end of July. Henry Edward Bunbury, Liverpool's assistant when the Prime Minister had worked at the War Department, was chosen to convey the details to Napoleon. The premier informed Castlereagh on 28 July that Sir George Cockburn, 8th Bt., the man who burned the White House, would escort the emperor to his place of exile, that the island's security had been thoroughly reviewed, that steps had been taken to control the traffic of ships in the vicinity of St. Helena, that troops had been assigned to garrison the outpost, and that Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War, had offered the governorship of St. Helena to Sir Hudson Lowe.³¹

Castlereagh expressed to Liverpool his complete satisfaction with the arrangements on 29 July.³² The Prime Minister himself was also confident about Napoleon's future. He wrote to Castlereagh the day before and observed that when the allies came to evacuate France it was possible that the monarchy would be overthrown and replaced by another system, 'though not that of Buonaparte'.³³ Napoleon was transferred aboard the *Northumberland* on 7 August. The ship set sail two days later and the emperor landed on St. Helena on 17 October. He died, still in

³⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 198-9.

³¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 80; J. K. Laughton, rev. Roger Morriss, 'Cockburn, Sir George, eighth baronet (1772-1853),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, 335-7; Roger Morriss, *Cockburn and the British Navy in Transition* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997); H. M. Chichester, rev. John Sweetman, 'Lowe, Sir Hudson (1769-1844),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiv, 567-70.

³² *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 80-1.

³³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 208.

exile on the island, in 1821.³⁴ He surrendered as Themistocles, but ended up as Prometheus.

- The Restoration of France and the Future of Europe

The allies had another major difficulty to deal with after the battle of Waterloo, the restoration of France. Louis XVIII was quickly and quietly restored to the throne with the help of Fouché, Napoleon's former police chief, and Talleyrand was appointed to head the government, but the allies now had to negotiate another peace treaty with France. (Fouché and Talleyrand lost power after the election of an assembly with a conservative majority in the summer of 1815.) This was no easy task. In 1814 it had taken five weeks to agree a settlement. In 1815 it would take five months. France could not expect to escape some form of punishment for the events of the Hundred Days and the allies would also want to take firm action to prevent further revolution in France, but it was important that this should not involve the humiliation of the country and the destabilisation of the monarchy, and should not sow the seeds of resentment and unrest. This would be a difficult balance to strike and it was made rather more difficult by divisions among the allies.³⁵ Prussia argued in favour of major territorial concessions and significant financial reparations, but the British, with Russia and Austria in support for the most part, supported a moderate and honourable final peace agreement that would lead to the pacification of the French and the rehabilitation of France as a responsible and reliable member of the community of nations.

³⁴ Jean Duhamel, *The Fifty Days* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969); Frank Giles, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (London: Robinson, 2002).

³⁵ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 94-6.

The Foreign Secretary returned to Paris for the negotiations on 6 July 1815 and did not leave for home until 23 November. He carried with him a memorandum from the Prime Minister. It was drawn up on 30 June 1815 and raised the subject of modifications to the First Treaty of Paris of 1814 for the future peace of Europe, but it did not go into much detail and Castlereagh was left to exercise his discretion as at Châtillon and Vienna.³⁶ For the duration of his residence in Paris, Castlereagh provided Liverpool with a flow of correspondence, and the Prime Minister also requested and received a number of reports on events on the continent from George Jenkinson, his cousin, Edward Cooke, who served under Castlereagh at the Foreign Office, and Charles Arbuthnot, a secretary at the Treasury.³⁷ The premier was able to be less diplomatic and more frank in his letters to Jenkinson, Cooke and Arbuthnot. He wrote to Cooke on 2 October 1815:

You have got into a troubled sea again, but I trust all will end well, though the unaccountable conduct of the King in removing his ministers at so unseasonable a moment makes me sometimes despair of his having the good sense, steadiness, and consistency to carry on such a government in such times. It is most extraordinary that the French Princes after living so many years in this country should remain as ignorant of all the principles and practice of a popular or mixed government as if they had known no atmosphere but that of Versailles under its former Sovereigns.³⁸

Liverpool also wrote to Castlereagh and it is clear that he still had a role to play in the negotiations.

The Prime Minister sketched out various constraints on policy formation to the Foreign Secretary. In the summer of 1815 the press and the public demanded revenge on the French in the form of major territorial concessions for the sacrifice made by the British and the premier conveyed this reaction on a number of occasions to

³⁶ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 184-6.

³⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, x, 634-5; xi, 170-1, 181-2, 220-6; B. L., Loan 72, vol. 58, fos. 52-5; Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 77-8; Loan 72, vol. 34, fos. 82-3.

³⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 182.

Castlereagh.³⁹ On 15 July 1815 he wrote: 'The prevailing idea in this country is; that we are fairly entitled to avail ourselves of the present moment to take back from France the principal conquests of Louis XIV.'⁴⁰ Liverpool also urged the Foreign Secretary to demand the return of the pictures and statues looted by France and retained by her in 1814.⁴¹ Castlereagh was directed by the Prime Minister to consider the strain put on the national finances by foreign expenditure. The Foreign Secretary was also reminded by Liverpool on 11 August 1815 of the importance of the principle of value for money.⁴² The premier even exerted a degree of pressure on the Foreign Secretary over the pace of the negotiations. He encouraged Castlereagh to reach an agreement with the allies on the most important and controversial points before France had a chance to organise an efficient and effective campaign to protect her own interests.⁴³

Liverpool also provided the Foreign Secretary with his assistance and support throughout the negotiations. The king of the Netherlands wished to confer an honour and a reward on Lord Clancarty for his diplomatic services and Castlereagh asked the Prime Minister to consider if it was acceptable for his ministerial colleague to accept it. Liverpool discussed the matter with the Prince Regent and in cabinet, carried out a thorough investigation, and concluded in a letter on 27 July 1815 that it was a very important principle that no one in civil service under the crown should accept honours

³⁹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 188-9, 189-91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 194.

⁴¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 193; *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 130-1, 158-9, 163-4, 180-1; *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), ii, 453-4.

⁴² *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 112-14.

⁴³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 207-9, 214-16; *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 158-9.

or rewards from any sovereign, but his own and, in support of this conclusion, he cited the opinion of Elizabeth I in the case of Lord Arundel. She stated:

that there was a close tie of affection between the prince and the subject; and that, as chaste wives should have no glances but for their own spouses, so should faithful subjects keep their eyes at home, and not gaze upon foreign crowns: that she, for her part, did not care her sheep should wear a stranger's mark, nor dance after the whistle of every foreigner.

The premier added that Clancarty should not be disappointed because he had of late received the Order of the Bath and a peerage of the United Kingdom from his own sovereign.⁴⁴ The premier addressed a further problem for the Foreign Secretary the next day. The tsar of Russia had offended the Prince Regent on his visit to London in 1814 and Liverpool was asked by the Foreign Secretary to persuade the Prince to write to the emperor in order to clear the air. Castlereagh hoped to work in concert with the Russians in the negotiations.⁴⁵ Liverpool replied:

The Prince wishes you to express to the Emperor of Russia that His Royal Highness is perfectly satisfied that if there was any misconception, it was perfectly unintentional, and that he can never entertain any sentiments but those of cordiality and friendship towards His Imperial Majesty.⁴⁶

On 24 July 1815 the Foreign Secretary also complained to the premier about the

⁴⁴ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 72-3; G. Le G. Norgate, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Trench, Richard Le Poer, second earl of Clancarty (1767-1837),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lv, 297-9.

⁴⁵ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 54-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xi, 79.

coverage of the negotiations by the press at home.⁴⁷ British newspapers subjected French ministers to a torrent of abuse and undermined the Foreign Secretary's diplomatic work. Liverpool sympathised with Castlereagh on 15 September, explained that the administration had only a certain amount of indirect control over the general line adopted by the main papers, which enjoyed enormous profits and had no wish to enter the pay of the government through the supply of intelligence and placement of advertisements. He invited him to use this letter to help the regimes on the continent to understand the position.⁴⁸ The Prime Minister also provided the Foreign Secretary with reports on diplomatic developments in other parts of the world and suggested one or two arguments that could be of use to him at the talks in Paris.⁴⁹ Liverpool sympathised with the Foreign Secretary when he had a serious accident in September 1815 and had to take to his bed to recover. The Prime Minister concluded a letter to Castlereagh on 5 October 1815: 'I was happy to find that you were able to walk out.'⁵⁰ Liverpool helped Castlereagh to persuade the Prussians to accept the final deal. Bathurst was asked by the premier on 15 October: 'Pray have the goodness to

⁴⁷ Liverpool demonstrated a fine knowledge of ministerial contact with the press the previous year. Lewis Goldsmith applied to the Prime Minister for a subsidy for his *Anti-Gallican Monitor*. Liverpool complained to Charles Philip Yorke on 27 May 1814 that Goldsmith 'received more money than has been given by Government to all other periodical Publications put together for the last few years', but admitted that he 'may have rendered some service by his writing up the cause of the Bourbons at a Time when that cause was almost forgotten.' Semmel, *Napoleon and the British*, p. 125; Roland Thorne, 'Yorke, Charles Philip (1764–1834),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30239>, accessed 24 Feb 2006> A. Aspinall, *Politics and the Press* (Brighton: The Harvester Press 1973).

⁴⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 159.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xi, 82-3, 180-1.

⁵⁰ *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), iii, 48.

give directions for the supply of arms for the Prussians, according to Castlereagh's letter. It is very desirable to keep them in good humour.'⁵¹

In July and August 1815, the government, influenced by the demand for retribution made by the people, sympathised with the proposal for territorial concessions by France and other severe measures.⁵² The Prime Minister offered his view on 18 August 1815 in favour of the destruction of the fortifications at Lille and Strasbourg.⁵³ The Foreign Secretary queried this proposal, despatched his brother to London for discussions with the cabinet and reminded the premier of the arguments in support of a moderate settlement in a long letter on 24 August.⁵⁴ Liverpool did not withhold his support from Castlereagh at this crucial point. He carefully examined Castlereagh's letter, attentively listened to Castlereagh's brother and responded on 28 August. The Prime Minister had started to backtrack in a letter of 23 August, arguing that the destruction of the fortifications at Lille and Strasbourg ought not to be a *sine qua non*, but now he clarified the situation stating his acceptance of the proposal for the temporary occupation of the frontier strongholds and adjustment to the border of France as suggested by Castlereagh and approved by the tsar of Russia.⁵⁵ He concluded the letter:

Whatever may be the first popular impression on the result of the negotiations according to the principles which have been agreed upon, your brother will be authorised to assure you that you will be most cordially and zealously supported and upheld by all your colleagues in this country.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 389.

⁵² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 207-9, 209-12, 212-13; *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 132.

⁵³ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 130-1.

⁵⁴ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815*, pp. 467-70.

⁵⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 214-16, 217-19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 219.

The Second Treaty of Paris was signed on 20 November 1815. France was reduced to her borders of 1790, and she was also required to pay a fine of £700,000,000, accept the temporary seizure by the allies of fourteen frontier fortresses, support an army of occupation of 150,000, and strip the Louvre of the stolen art treasures. With the exception of one or two points which the Prime Minister queried, and which the Foreign Secretary promised to take a look at again, Liverpool gave his approval to the treaty.⁵⁷ He believed that the right balance had been struck between punishment and preservation, and that this would be accepted by most people in the country. He stated to Bathurst on 12 October 1815:

I am quite satisfied from all I hear that the treaty will satisfy the public in general, and that you will find it to be the opinion of most persons that the terms are as *severe upon France* as would in any way be consistent with maintaining Louis XVIII upon the throne.⁵⁸

He repeated this view to Viscount Sidmouth.⁵⁹ Such was his confidence in the diplomatic soundness and political acceptability of the treaty that Liverpool did not return to London to defend it or summon a cabinet to discuss it. Bathurst circulated the despatches to his colleagues in town, Sidmouth, Nicholas Vansittart and William Wellesley Pole, discussed the treaty with them and conveyed their general approval to the Prime Minister on 19 October.⁶⁰

Another treaty was also signed on 20 November 1815. The British, Russians, Prussians and Austrians established the Quadruple Alliance, pledging to uphold the settlement imposed on France, by force if necessary, and indicating a disposition to meet up again in the future to discuss matters of concern to the great powers.

⁵⁷ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 180; *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), iii, 40-1, 47-8, 55-6, 59-60; Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 387.

⁵⁸ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 388.

⁵⁹ Pellew, *Life and Correspondence*, iii, 135-6.

⁶⁰ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, pp. 390-1.

Liverpool was also relaxed about this. Bathurst was informed by the premier on 17 October 1815: 'I think you may as well, however, call together such of our colleagues as are in town, and read it over with them; and if the King's Advocate should be in the way, you might as well let him see it.'⁶¹ The tsar of Russia, however, also proposed the establishment of the Holy Alliance, a commitment by the monarchs of Europe to act in the future on the basis of the principles of Christianity. A treaty was signed by the king of Prussia and the emperor of Austria on 26 September 1815 and the Prince Regent was also invited to join the union.⁶² Castlereagh wrote to Liverpool on 28 September, famously describing the Holy Alliance as 'this piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense' and amusingly noted: 'The Duke of Wellington happened to be with me when the Emperor called, and it was not without difficulty that we went through the interview with becoming gravity.'⁶³ It was his opinion, however, that the Prince Regent should put his name to the spiritual union in a personal capacity to indulge the emperor and avoid a crisis in the alliance.⁶⁴ The Prime Minister did not share the Foreign Secretary's opinion. Liverpool unusually issued Castlereagh with a thinly veiled rebuke and clearly stated instruction. The premier wrote to him after an audience with the Prince Regent and a meeting of the cabinet to discuss the proposal on 3 October. Liverpool wished that the scheme had not got as far as it had, doubted that it was of any use, and stated that it was quite impossible for the Prince Regent to sign up to the alliance. It would be unprecedented for him to do so. Liverpool argued that the Prince Regent could not be party to an act of state such as a treaty without the approval of the government, the people held to account by parliament for it. A plenipotentiary would negotiate, conclude and sign a treaty and the prince would

⁶¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 202.

⁶² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 226-7, 227-8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, ii, 229.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 226-31.

ratify it. That was the custom. Liverpool stated that the Prince Regent could not sign the treaty, but he did suggest that he could write a letter to the emperor explaining the constitutional objections to a formal accession and expressing his approval of the sentiments in the treaty.⁶⁵ In the event, this was enough for the tsar of Russia.

Liverpool wrote to George Rose on 25 November 1815. The Prime Minister reflected on the course of events over the past year and remarked that the country had risen to a pinnacle of glory unknown in her history, but he characteristically refused to become complacent. He appealed to God to grant the nation the ability to maintain this situation and the wisdom not to throw away her gains.⁶⁶ In this spirit, Liverpool acted to ensure that the army under Wellington in Paris did not let its guard down over the winter. He wrote to Castlereagh on 17 October 1815, stated his confidence that Wellington would take every precaution against the possibility of a surprise renewal of conflict, and asked the Foreign Secretary to insist that the Field Marshal did not take any risks with his own life. He warned:

We ought never to lose sight for a moment of the consideration that, with whatever humanity and indulgence the French may have been treated by us, they hate us far more than any other nation, and that they would most willingly embark in any project for the destruction of the force which has saved them, if they only thought that it was likely to prove successful.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, 232-4.

⁶⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 42774 B, fos. 342-3.

⁶⁷ *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), iii, 52.

Part Four

Chapter Sixteen

The Maintenance of Support in Parliament

1812-15

- The Leadership of the House of Lords

Lord Liverpool was never one to take the support of his friends and followers in parliament for granted. He used a variety of means to maintain it.¹ The Prime Minister continued to lead from the front in the House of Lords. Liverpool had earned for himself a reputation as a fine and willing speaker in the upper chamber. George Tierney, although a government opponent, was none the less impressed by the premier's oratorical efforts.² It was noted in September 1813:

He told North that he thinks Lord Liverpool one of the most prudent ministers and debaters in Parliament he ever knew, and that he is, besides, a man in the House of Lords who is ready to turn out in all weathers – a figure of speech formerly much in use in Ireland to describe ready and daring speakers, the last being a quality peculiarly useful, and therefore highly estimated in the Irish Parliament.³

Even when the political weather was fine for the government, the Prime Minister did not shirk his duty as Leader of the House of Lords. Liverpool could look forward to the new parliamentary term with a certain degree of justifiable optimism at the end of 1813. Over the previous twelve months, through a mixture of Liverpool's political prowess and Lord Wellington's military might, the main threat to the survival of the government as identified by the premier immediately after the last general election, namely the third parties led by Marquess Wellesley and George Canning, had been substantially removed. The success of British and allied forces on

¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

² D. R. Fisher, 'Tierney, George (1761-1830),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, liv, 767-9.

³ *The Glenbervie Journals*, ed. Walter Sichel (London: Constable, 1910), p. 203.

the continent had brought the premier increased support from the crown. George, the Prince Regent, heartily congratulated Liverpool on the favourable turn of events in the war in a postscript to a letter on 1 September.⁴ The debate in the House of Lords following the Prince Regent's speech opening the new session was markedly less fraught than the one that had taken place at the start of the previous parliamentary session. Wellesley and Lord Grenville both expressed satisfaction with the latest developments in the long conflict with France, and Liverpool was moved to acknowledge a spirit of unanimity prevailing in the legislature on the topic of the war.⁵ On 30 December 1813, the Prime Minister, who a year earlier had feared the claims of others to Pitt's mantle, was informed by John Gifford, a devoted follower of the nation's youngest ever premier, that the Pitt Club, the keepers of the Pittite ideological flame, had passed a motion congratulating the administration on the state of the country's affairs and acknowledging the ministry's commitment to the Pittite line of thinking, and that the association's members had unanimously agreed to award Liverpool the Pitt Club's Gold Medal out of respect for his public works and private character.⁶ Liverpool thanked the Pitt Club and seized the opportunity to restate that he and his colleagues had 'endeavoured to make the Principles of Mr. Pitt the chief guide of our Political conduct', but, with characteristic modesty, he insisted on sharing the society's praise with the rest of the government.⁷

Complacency, however, was not one of Liverpool's characteristics, and he continued to take his parliamentary responsibilities entirely seriously. On 6 December 1813, it was the Prime Minister who rose from the Treasury front bench to respond to

⁴ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, viii, 412.

⁵ *Parliamentary Debates* (41 vols., London: T. C. Hansard, 1812-20), xxvii, 1-22.

⁶ Leslie Stephen, rev. Adam I. P. Smith, 'Gifford, John [formerly John Richards Green] (1758-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 145; B. L., Add. Mss. 38255, fo. 235.

⁷ Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative*, p. 89; B. L., Add. Mss. 38255, fos. 315-16.

inquiries about the slave trade and the annual passage of the Mutiny Bill.⁸ It was also Liverpool who made the case in the upper chamber on 20 December 1813 and 1 March 1814 for an adjournment of parliament until the end of March 1814 on the grounds that all of the urgent legislative business had now been attended to and it would allow the administration to focus on negotiations leading to a termination of the conflict with France.⁹

The management of parliament was an important part of the job of the Prime Minister even in the middle of a crisis. When the news of Napoleon's escape reached the capital in the middle of March 1815, Liverpool reacted by hoping to cut down on the number of his appearances in the House of Lords and concentrating on the problem at hand. The premier stated to Earl Bathurst on 20 March 1815: 'As far as my own personal convenience goes, I would rather have only two debates instead of three in the next week, particularly considering the more important and anxious interests which must occupy our attention at present.' He also discussed the matter with Wellesley that day.¹⁰ Liverpool was under great pressure and would find it difficult to supervise the proceedings in the legislature with as much care as usual, but he did not neglect his duties.

- The Leadership of the House of Commons

Liverpool also closely monitored the political temperature in the lower chamber and carefully ensured that the House of Commons was well led at all times. At the end of 1812 Liverpool informed Wellington that the government had withstood his eldest brother's fierce assault and passed through the short session satisfactorily. The Prime

⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvii, 243-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xxvii, 286-99, 324-9.

¹⁰ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 342; B. L., Loan 57, vol. 9, fo. 955; Add. Mss. 37297, fo. 235.

Minister, furthermore, was not simply referring to the proceedings in the House of Lords, where he personally had led the fight on behalf of the government. Liverpool had been careful to monitor the administration's progress in the lower chamber as well and had reason to be satisfied: 'Lord Castlereagh has done admirably, and has raised himself very considerably in the eyes of the House of Commons.'¹¹

The war may have ended and the government may have hoped for a period of calm in the world of politics as a result, but the premier was not allowed to rest and he was confronted with a whole host of difficult problems to sort out in the summer of 1814. The opposition sought to embarrass the government in April 1814 by asking questions in the House of Commons on the subject of foreign affairs, while Viscount Castlereagh was away at the negotiations on the continent and while there was no one on the front bench in the lower chamber able to answer them satisfactorily. Liverpool had feared this and had asked Castlereagh on 9 April 1814 to let Frederick John Robinson, his temporary secretary who was familiar with the details of foreign policy and the delicate nature of the peace negotiations, and who would be able to answer the questions put by the opposition, to return to Britain in order to take his place at the despatch box in the House of Commons.¹² On 29 April the Prime Minister informed the Foreign Secretary that the opposition was seeking political capital and putting difficult questions, and repeated his wish for Robinson to return to parliament.¹³ Finally and fortunately, Castlereagh himself returned and resumed his important position in the lower chamber on 6 June.

After the first week of the new parliamentary session in late 1814, the Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction with the course of proceedings in the legislature

¹¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 448.

¹² C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-1815* (2nd edn., London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1934), pp. 530-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 539-40.

though he acknowledged that there might be trouble ahead. He wrote to Castlereagh on 18 November 1814: 'Our Parliamentary campaign has hitherto gone on very well, but the Opposition are particularly rancorous, and evidently mean to find us good employment.'¹⁴ It was not long before it became apparent, however, that the new session would be an extremely arduous one for the ministry. Liverpool continued to manage the House of Lords successfully, but the premier soon became exceedingly concerned about the defence of the ministry in the lower chamber. The premier stated to Wellington on 15 January 1815: 'The restoration of general peace, though it may relieve the country from great difficulties, does not make the government more easy to be conducted in the House of Commons.'¹⁵ On the same day the Prime Minister predicted to Castlereagh: 'Believe me, the conduct of the government in the House of Commons will for some time be more difficult than during war.'¹⁶ Members of Parliament were impatient to receive the benefits of peace, above all a reduction in the financial burden on the country. The opponents of the government, furthermore, were determined to make life as miserable as possible for the ministry. On 28 December 1814 the premier reported to George Canning: 'I have not seen for several years so much party animosity as appeared during the three weeks of November whilst Parliament was sitting.'¹⁷ The Foreign Secretary was informed by Liverpool on 15 January 1815: 'It may appear extraordinary, but I can assure you that it is some years since I have seen party spirit and rancour exist in the same degree as they do at present.'¹⁸ Moreover, Castlereagh, the Leader of the House of Commons, was absent

¹⁴ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 73.

¹⁵ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 536.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ix, 537.

¹⁷ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 77.

¹⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 537.

at the start of the session in Vienna and his colleagues in the lower chamber struggled to put up a good defence of the ministry. Liverpool told Castlereagh on 12 January:

Our friends *en première ligne*, in the House of Commons, have proved themselves not equal to the burden. Those *en seconde ligne* might do, viz., Manners Sutton, Robinson, and Peel; but they cannot well come forward, except upon business connected with their own departments, unless they have a leader to whom they can look up. I am sorry to say Robinson was very idle, scarcely opened his mouth; the others have gained great credit, particularly Peel.¹⁹

The Prime Minister concluded that he needed Castlereagh to return home as soon as possible. Liverpool even advanced the opinion that the survival of the government was now at stake. He shared his opinion with Bathurst on 17 January: 'I am strongly impressed with the idea that we shall have the greatest difficulty in going on, as the government is now formed, if he does not return.'²⁰

Liverpool acted to prevent a further deterioration in the government's position in the lower chamber. Parliament was adjourned, for as long as it was possible to do so, from 1 December 1814 until 9 February 1815 and the Prime Minister despatched a series of letters to the continent prevailing on Castlereagh to return home as soon as possible. On 1 December 1814 the premier wrote to the Foreign Secretary: 'Your necessary absence had been the cause of a great deal of inconvenience in the House of Commons, and it is quite essential, therefore, that you should be in your place when we meet again in February.'²¹ Liverpool reiterated his concern to Castlereagh on 16 January 1815:

I must at the same time inform you that it is the unanimous opinion of all my colleagues and of those members of the House of Commons whom we are both in the habit of consulting on such matters, and who are perhaps better acquainted with the House of

¹⁹ *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. The Marquess of Londonderry (3rd ser., 4 vols., London: John Murray, 1853), ii, 239.

²⁰ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 541.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ix, 461.

Commons than any ministers, that it is absolutely necessary that you should be here as soon as possible after the meeting of Parliament.²²

The Prime Minister also explained the situation to Castlereagh's assistant at the talks in Vienna. He stated to Edward Coke on 9 December 1814:

It will be absolutely necessary that Lord Castlereagh should return home by the meeting of Parliament. The Opposition are determined to show no forbearance, and the experience of our short Session has proved that it would be impossible to go on in the House of Commons without some one person who is competent from information to know when answers can be given and when they ought to be refused, and who, from his situation in other respects, commands the confidence of the House.²³

The Foreign Secretary was understandably reluctant to leave Vienna at a precipitate moment in the delicate negotiations. Wellington ultimately took Castlereagh's place at the congress and the Foreign Secretary resumed his seat in the House of Commons on 6 March 1815.

- Preparations for Parliament

It became a habit of the premier's to take steps to ensure that each new parliamentary session got off to a good start. The Prime Minister made careful preparations for the start of the new session of parliament in November 1813. He hoped that the earl of Clare would accept his invitation to second the address to the Prince Regent after he had delivered the speech from the throne opening the proceedings in the House of Lords. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland informed the premier on 16 October that Clare had agreed to undertake this assignment.²⁴ The selection of Clare proved to be sound. The earl of Digby introduced the motion, but spoke only briefly and so quietly that his comments were not recorded for posterity. Clare, however, delivered a fine speech

²² *Ibid.*, ix, 538.

²³ *Ibid.*, ix, 468.

²⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 114-17; Add. Mss. 40181, fos. 47-50.

acknowledging the gratifying state of the armed contest on the European mainland. ‘Whichever way they turned their eyes,’ he directed his fellow peers, ‘British valour shone conspicuous, and the British standard waved triumphant.’²⁵ The Prime Minister also gave some thought to the measures that would need to be passed by the legislature to maintain the nation’s forces at their current level. He informed Wellington on 20 October that the government intended to squeeze as much money as they could out of parliament before Christmas.²⁶

A new parliamentary session was opened on 8 November 1814 and, as usual, the Prime Minister had taken steps to ensure that the legislative term got off to a good start for the administration. Liverpool’s political adversaries had begun to notice how the Prime Minister artfully manoeuvred controversial matters through the legislature at moments in the parliamentary calendar when there were fewer politicians around to make a fuss about them. Lord Grenville observed on 17 October 1814 the premier’s ‘system of two distinct sessions – one in which all the money shall be voted in thin houses before Christmas, and another in which all the business shall be done in still thinner houses in the dog-days’.²⁷ In preparation for the start of the new parliamentary session in November 1814 the Prime Minister recalled to the capital those ministers who would be required to carry the heavy burden of defending the government in the House of Commons in Castlereagh’s absence. (The Foreign Secretary attended the Congress of Vienna in late 1814.) Robinson replied on 4 November to a letter he had received from the premier ordering him to be in town for the start of parliament, by stating that he would set out for London at once.²⁸ Liverpool rallied his supporters in

²⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvii, 6.

²⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, viii, 318.

²⁷ Boyd Hilton, ‘The Political Arts of Lord Liverpool’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 38 (1988), p. 155.

²⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 89-90.

the House of Lords. Lord Mountcashell explained to the premier on 10 November that he would be absent from the upper chamber at the beginning of the session, but promised Liverpool his support.²⁹ The Prime Minister also struggled to find someone suitable to introduce the motion in favour of the government's programme outlined in the Prince Regent's speech from the throne delivered at the opening of parliament. Liverpool nominated Lord Abingdon to undertake this task. Abingdon admitted in a letter to the premier on 25 October 1814 that he was attached to the government, but he suggested that he could not face such a challenge at that time.³⁰ Abingdon was nevertheless persuaded, despite his extreme reluctance, to speak at the opening of parliament.³¹

There was an important step taken by Liverpool at the beginning of the session to avoid weakening the government's position in parliament. Lord Walsingham had served as Chairman of Committees in the upper chamber since 1794. The Chairman of Committees acted as deputy speaker to the Lord Chancellor and enjoyed considerable influence over the passage of legislation. Walsingham was forced to retire in late 1814 on account of his health. It was essential that someone both competent and friendly to the government was appointed as a replacement. As an inducement to the next occupant of the chairmanship, and to encourage him to follow in his predecessor's footsteps, it was important to reward Walsingham, a loyal Pittite and much admired parliamentarian. A central role was taken by the premier in the decision to reward Walsingham with a pension of £2000.³² On 10 November, to replace Walsingham, Liverpool nominated the earl of Shaftesbury, who had experience of the role and who had been of assistance to the premier in the matter of

²⁹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 9, fos. 123-4.

³⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fo. 17.

³¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxix, 4-6.

³² *Ibid.*, xxix, 27-8, 91-2, 493-4.

finding a seat for the Solicitor-General.³³ (Samuel Shepherd was appointed Solicitor-General at the end of 1813 and the premier arranged with Shaftesbury for him to be elected as MP for Dorchester in April 1814.)³⁴ Although he was apparently an unpleasant man in some respects, Shaftesbury was appointed and proved to be an efficient Chairman of Committees.³⁵

- The Relationship with the Speaker of the House of Commons

The Prime Minister maintained a close and cordial relationship with the Speaker of the House of Commons. Charles Abbot recorded in his diary on 10 May 1815:

Lord Liverpool lent me Bernier's Voyages to India, a scarce book, in two vols., 12mo, 1710. He was physician to Aurungzebe; and this little book is considered by Mr. Hastings and Lord Wellesley, and all persons acquainted with India, as containing by far the best account of the country and manners that exists, even to this time.³⁶

The Speaker of the House of Commons wrote to thank the Prime Minister in February 1814 for a measure of ecclesiastical preferment.³⁷

- The Distribution of Patronage and Acts of Friendship

Liverpool continued to foster a cordial relationship with sympathetic politicians with judicious dollops of government patronage. Lord Eliot solicited the command of a regiment for a certain general in April 1814 and Liverpool promptly satisfied his

³³ *Ibid.*, xxix, 92.

³⁴ W. P. Courtney, rev. Robert Shiels, 'Shepherd, Sir Samuel (1760-1840),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 1, 251-2; B. L., Add. Mss. 38458, fo. 185.

³⁵ S. M. Farrell, 'Grey, Thomas de, second Baron Walsingham (1748-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiii, 888-9; J. C. Sainty, *The Origin of the Office of Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1974); Geoffrey B. A. M. Finlayson, *The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury 1801-1885* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981); John Wolffe, 'Cooper, Anthony Ashley-, seventh earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiii, 223-7.

³⁶ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 542.

³⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38256, fos. 121-2.

request.³⁸ Eliot thanked the Prime Minister in May, declared his happiness with the government, and offered Liverpool the use of his proxy vote in the upper chamber at the start of the new parliamentary session in November.³⁹ Lord Sandwich inherited his seat in the House of Lords from his Pittite father in the summer of 1814. About a week after the premier agreed to grant him a favour in September, Sandwich informed Liverpool that he had left his proxy vote with Lord Cornwallis, a government friend.⁴⁰

Acts of friendship were also utilised by the Prime Minister in parliament. The renewal of the East India Company's charter did not have a smooth passage through parliament in 1813. Lord Aberdeen, a future Prime Minister, attended the upper chamber regularly at this time and sat on the India Committee. Perhaps this was one reason why he was invited to an intimate and agreeable dinner with the premier on 23 March.⁴¹ The thought occurred to Robert Peel in the second-half of 1813 that he might have to stand for re-election in Chippenham on account of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland planning to retire shortly and he raised the matter with the Prime Minister. Liverpool informed the Chief Secretary on 8 October that he would ask for advice from the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General and the Speaker of the House of Commons.⁴² No one pressed Peel to vacate his seat however, and the matter was dropped.

Liverpool's ability to win the respect of MPs by acts of kindness and consideration was demonstrated in a letter sent to the premier on 2 March 1815. James Stephen, MP for East Grinstead, was committed to the abolition of the trade in

³⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 79-80, 104.

³⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 300-1; Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 186-7.

⁴⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 112-13, 136, 184-5.

⁴¹ R. H. Darwall-Smith, 'Gordon, George Hamilton-, fourth earl of Aberdeen (1784-1860),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 900-10; Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen* (London: Longman, 1983).

⁴² B. L., Add. Mss., vol. 40181, fos. 45-6.

slaves and worked to this end in parliament with William Wilberforce. In February 1815 he wrestled at some length with his conscience and decided at last to resign the seat, that he had won as a friend of the government, on a matter of principle, because of his failure to win the immediate support of the administration for a bill to establish a scheme of registration to prevent the stealthy reintroduction of the slave trade in the British West Indies.⁴³ He informed the Prime Minister of his decision, but also reiterated his attachment to the premier:

I find myself placed in a situation which calls on me, with your Lordship's permission to resign that seat in Parliament which through your obliging recommendation I had the honor to obtain.

I do so with unfeigned sentiments of respect towards your Lordship, and of gratitude for the very handsome, liberal and condescending treatment I have always received from you, both in the manner of conferring that favour, and upon every other occasion on which I have had the honor to correspond with or approach you.⁴⁴

The Prime Minister continued to pander to the feelings and alleviate the concerns of his friends and followers. Daniel O'Connell, who strongly campaigned for the emancipation of Roman Catholics and savagely criticised the administration of Ireland, was challenged to a duel by the Chief Secretary in August 1815. O'Connell was arrested in London on his way to the fight in Ostend and it did not take place.⁴⁵ Lord Whitworth, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, informed the Prime Minister of the row on 1 September.⁴⁶ Liverpool responded on 6 September and expressed his constant deep interest in the travails of his able young colleague.⁴⁷ Whitworth happily reassured Peel on 14 September that Liverpool entirely approved of his conduct in

⁴³ Patrick C. Lipscomb, 'Stephen, James (1758-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, lii, 433-5.

⁴⁴ *The Memoirs of James Stephen*, ed. Merle M. Bevington (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), pp. 20-1; B. L., Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 81-2.

⁴⁵ R. V. Comerford, 'O'Connell, Daniel [known as the Liberator] (1775-1847),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xli, 439-49; Oliver MacDonagh, *O'Connell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991).

⁴⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 5-6.

⁴⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38573, fos. 42-4.

this business.⁴⁸ William Wilberforce approached the premier on 22 November on the subject of the persecution of Protestants in the south of France.⁴⁹ Liverpool asked the ambassador to Paris, Sir Charles Stuart, to raise the issue with the French as a matter of urgency.⁵⁰

- The Friends of Spencer Perceval

His predecessor's friends were courted by Liverpool. The death of the marquess of Buckingham on 11 February 1813 allowed Liverpool to appoint his predecessor's son immediately to the vacant Tellership of the Exchequer, a lucrative sinecure. Spencer Perceval had died almost penniless and had left a large family, and doubtless this act of compassion by Liverpool served to endear the Prime Minister to parliamentarians across the political spectrum, but especially to Perceval's former friends and supporters. The Prince Regent responded to the nomination: 'Nothing in my opinion can be so honourable to your feelings or so agreeable to mine *in every respect*, as the appointment of young Mr. Percival to the vacant Tellership of the Exchequer.'⁵¹

William Ralph Cartwright, MP for Northamptonshire, helped to raise the money to erect a monument in memory of Perceval. Cartwright informed Liverpool on 16 December 1813 that his donation of £21 had been one of the most generous made. The Prime Minister issued an order to his bankers three days later to make the sum available to the subscription fund.⁵² This gesture must have reassured those friends of Perceval, who had shifted their allegiance to Liverpool, that he was still one of

⁴⁸ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 195-6.

⁴⁹ *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, ed. Robert Isaac Wilberforce & Samuel Wilberforce (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1840), ii, 322-3.

⁵⁰ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 244-6.

⁵¹ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, viii, 407.

⁵² B. L., Add. Mss. 38255, fos. 128-30.

them.⁵³ On 12 December 1814 a Perceval devotee, Benjamin Hall, was congratulated by the Prime Minister on the occasion of his re-election to the lower chamber the previous month.⁵⁴

- The Resolution of Arguments in the Ministry

Ireland was the scene of one particularly thorny issue in the second half of 1813.

William Fitzgerald, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, was disenchanted with his role in the ministry and what he regarded as the encroachments into his areas of responsibility by the Chief Secretary. The new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland informed the Prime Minister on 10 September that Fitzgerald was determined to resign from the government over the affair.⁵⁵ It fell to Liverpool to bring an end to the conflict between the offices of Chief Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, and to prevent Fitzgerald from destabilising the administration. Liverpool's first thought was to reunite the office of Chancellor with that of Chief Secretary. Peel, however, believed that the burden of work would be too great for him. It then occurred to the premier to unite the treasuries of Ireland and Great Britain under Nicholas Vansittart. Having consulted with Castlereagh and Sidmouth and won their backing, he put this suggestion to Peel on 21 October and the two treasuries were ultimately united in 1816.⁵⁶

Liverpool also dealt with Fitzgerald. The premier handled him sensitively and successfully. Liverpool wrote a letter to Fitzgerald on 4 October. He asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland to remain in the government and offered to

⁵³ R. G. Thorne, 'CARTWRIGHT, William Ralph', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 411-13.

⁵⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 285-6; P. A. Symonds, 'HALL, Benjamin', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 123-4.

⁵⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 202-3.

⁵⁶ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 113.

enter into a dialogue with him over the affair. The Prime Minister also invited Fitzgerald over to see him for a chat.⁵⁷ Liverpool sent Peel a copy of the letter and told him, 'I have endeavoured to make it as kind personally to him as possible.'⁵⁸ Fitzgerald responded positively to the Prime Minister on 16 October.⁵⁹ Liverpool divulged the contents of this letter to Peel some days later: 'I have had a letter from Fitzgerald, which is so far satisfactory that he appears very much pleased by the manner in which I opened the subject to him.'⁶⁰ Fitzgerald was persuaded to withdraw his threat to resign and to continue to serve as Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland. He remained in that office right up until its abolition three years later.⁶¹

⁵⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 264-5; Add. Mss. 40181, fos. 43-4.

⁵⁸ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 110.

⁵⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 282-3.

⁶⁰ *Sir Robert Peel*, i, 113.

⁶¹ H. M. Stephens, rev. Peter Gray, 'Fitzgerald, William Vesey-, second Baron Fitzgerald and Vesey, and Baron Fitzgerald (1783?-1843),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xix, 855-6.

Chapter Seventeen

The Extension of Support in Parliament

1812-15

- The Canningites

The extension of support in parliament was also a priority for the Prime Minister.¹

The most obvious way in which he could do this was by reuniting the Pittites and, to this end, focused a great deal of attention during his early premiership on the Canningites. An attempt to bring them into the government had failed in 1812, but another opportunity to achieve this objective appeared the following year.

Military success was not the only factor that improved the standing of the government in the summer of 1813. Immediately after the parliamentary session came to an end on 22 July, George Canning, dispirited by his failure to transform the political landscape in his favour over the previous twelve months, disbanded his small party of devoted followers. An attempt was then made to affect his return to the ministerial fold. William Wellesley-Pole acted as an intermediary between the Pittites' prodigal son and the Prime Minister. Liverpool expressed great satisfaction at Canning's initiative, but he made little subsequent effort to engineer Canning's return at this time. Viscount Melville informed Canning that the premier and some other ministerial colleagues were trying to find a way to bring him back into the Cabinet. Melville himself was prepared to surrender the Admiralty to Canning. The earl of Buckinghamshire, however, was not willing to give up the Board of Control for Melville. No concrete proposals were actually ever made and the scheme consequently foundered.

¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

It was an inopportune moment for a reconstruction of the ministry. It was not in the personal or political interests of Liverpool's senior colleagues to make room for Canning around the Cabinet table right now just when their labours in the conflict with France were at last beginning to show fruit, when they were basking in the reflected glory of military victory, when the corner in the war seemed to have been turned, when they had a duty to see the struggle through to the end, and when they could start to look forward to a share in the praise and prizes that would be showered upon the government in the event of Napoleon's downfall. The Prime Minister was arguably in less need of a further extension of parliamentary support in the summer of 1813 than at any time since his accession to the highest political office. Canning and his friends, furthermore, had not exactly been making themselves useful in the eyes of the government in parliament during the session which had only just ended.²

Liverpool, nevertheless, maintained a cordial relationship with his old university pal and therefore leaving open the possibility of a later reconciliation at a more appropriate juncture. Canning corresponded with the Prime Minister from time to time over the next nine months when matters requiring the attention of the government were raised by his constituents. The Prime Minister responded swiftly and fully, though not necessarily entirely helpfully, to all Canning's inquiries.³ On 24 December 1813 Canning appealed to the Prime Minister on behalf of ship-owners in his constituency damaged by a dispute between Russia and Great Britain in 1801. Liverpool replied before the end of the year that no decisions had yet been taken on this subject and that he would let Canning know the outcome of the government's

² *The Huskisson Papers*, ed. Lewis Melville (London: Constable, 1931), pp. 91-2; *The Wellesley Papers*, ed. Lewis Melville (2 vols., London: Herbert Jenkins, 1914), ii, 131-2.

³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38568, fos. 37-43; Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 33-5; Add. Mss. 38256, fos. 223-6.

deliberations, but admitted that relief was unlikely to be forthcoming.⁴ The Prime Minister also dealt sensitively with concerns raised by Canning's friends. John Gladstone, a merchant and Canning's election manager in Liverpool, and the father of William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98), informed the premier in July 1813 that cargoes of cotton were getting through the British blockade of American ports.⁵ Before the end of the month, Liverpool replied that he had spoken to the First Lord of the Admiralty, that orders had been sent out demanding the strict enforcement of the naval blockade, and that no recurrence of the inconveniences mentioned by Gladstone was expected.⁶

As well as not taking his friends and followers for granted, the Prime Minister also sought to extend the base of his support in the summer of 1814. First and foremost he succeeded in bringing Canning back into the government fold. Hearing that the former Foreign Secretary intended to go abroad in search of a healthier climate for the sake of his invalid eldest son, the premier offered Canning an attractive diplomatic posting. Charles Rose Ellis acted as an intermediary between Liverpool and Canning, and attended a meeting with the premier on 10 July 1814 to discuss the details of the deal.⁷ Canning wrote to thank Liverpool the next day.⁸

The Prime Minister was being characteristically kind on a personal level. It was also a politically magnanimous gesture on the part of the premier to create an

⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 28-30; Add. Mss. 38255, fos. 236-8; Add. Mss. 38568, fos. 44-5.

⁵ H. C. G. Matthew, 'Gladstone [Gladstones], Sir John, first baronet (1764-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 380-1; S. G. Checkland, *The Gladstones* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); H. C. G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, William Ewart (1809-1898),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxii, 383-409; H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38253, 306-7, 339-40.

⁷ H. M. Stephens, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Ellis, Charles Rose, first Baron Seaford (1771-1845),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xviii, 217.

⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 41-2.

opening for Canning at this time. The Prime Minister, at the head of the administration that had finally brought Napoleon to his knees and an end to the long, hard war, did not need Canning in the summer of 1814. His own position was now virtually unassailable and his administration was stronger and more stable than it had ever been before. There was no obvious reason for Liverpool to extend the hand of friendship to Canning, to restore to high office, resurrect the public career and resuscitate the political life of the man who had bullied him in parliament and undermined him in government, the man who had destabilised Pittite premiers and offended Pittite ministers, the man who had hoped to storm into power and had disbanded his party in despair. Perhaps a more ruthless man bent on revenge might have taken the opportunity, while Canning was out of the country, to separate him from his friends and marginalise him yet further. Liverpool was not one to bear a grudge however and it was also a politically wise move to approach Canning at this time. Liverpool recognised that Canning, for all his faults, remained an exceptionally talented politician who could benefit both the administration and the nation. The government did not possess a lot of members who could hold their own in debates in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister could also make use of the Canningites, some of whom were also gifted such as William Huskisson, and he would want to prevent them from moving into permanent opposition. The return of Canning was also an important step in the reunification of the Pittites, a priority for the premier. Liverpool may also have calculated that Canning deserved a reward for the disbandment of his party. The government was stable and strong in the summer of 1814, but there was no guarantee that this would continue to be the case and it could not be guaranteed that Canning and his friends would not return to the fray and strike when the administration became vulnerable to attack once again. In fact, Huskisson

was already making a nuisance of himself criticising the measures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Liverpool probably concluded that it would be better to negotiate with Canning from a position of strength now than from one of weakness in the future.⁹

Canning agreed to leave for Lisbon to welcome the Prince Regent of Portugal back from Brazil. To encourage the former Foreign Secretary to accept the offer, the Prime Minister had told Ellis that he was willing to turn the embassy into 'a great, splendid, anomalous situation wholly out of the line of ordinary missions'.¹⁰ He was also willing to pay a salary of £14,000 and to shower the Canningites with honours and places. Huskisson joined the Privy Council and entered the government as First Commissioner of Woods and Forests.¹¹ Barrington Pope Blachford and William Sturges Bourne were also promoted to office.¹² Lord Granville Leveson-Gower was promised a promotion in the peerage and Lord Binning was provided with a seat in the House of Commons by Liverpool.¹³

The effort made by Liverpool to tie the Canningites to the administration did not end with the departure of their leader for the continent. Canning and his friends were made to feel welcome on the front bench, as part of the ministerial team. The Prime Minister treated the Canningites in much the same way he did other members of the government and he demonstrated his respect for and confidence in them. When

⁹ Also, in the words of Lyndon Baines Johnson: 'Better to have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside pissing in.' *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 196.

¹⁰ Hinde, *George Canning*, p. 269.

¹¹ A. C. Howe, 'Huskisson, William (1770-1830),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxviii, 974-80.

¹² Arthur Aspinall & R. G. Thorne, 'BLACHFORD, Barrington Pope', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iii, 210-11; David Eastwood, 'Bourne, William Sturges (1769-1845),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vi, 863-4.

¹³ R. G. Thorne, 'HAMILTON, Thomas', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 135-8.

a Member of Parliament applied to Liverpool for a position in the gift of the First Commissioner of Woods and Forests in July 1814, the Prime Minister replied that it was an appointment for Huskisson, and not for him, to make.¹⁴ On 28 November 1814 a grand house put up for sale was brought to the attention of the premier for purchase by the ministry. Liverpool responded on 3 December and stated that Huskisson should be the one to take the decision to make a recommendation for purchase by the ministry to the Treasury.¹⁵

Liverpool also managed Canning respectfully and thoughtfully, and aimed to retain his services. The Prime Minister personally corresponded with the ambassador. Liverpool provided Canning with reports from London on the movements of the Prince Regent of Portugal and offered advice on how to deal with the government in Lisbon.¹⁶ On his departure from Britain in November and again on his arrival in Portugal in December, Canning had asked Liverpool to write to him and requested the Prime Minister to consult him on developments in the negotiations at the Congress of Vienna.¹⁷ In fact, Liverpool did more than correspond with Canning on foreign affairs. The Prime Minister treated the ambassador as if he was a senior member of the Cabinet and provided him with revelations on the course of the negotiations for a settlement on the continent and peace with the USA, copies of treaties, reviews of the situation in parliament, and information on the passage of legislation.

Liverpool sought to rekindle and reinforce his friendship with Canning. The premier expressed his sympathy for Canning's health and demonstrated his concern for the welfare of Canning's wife and children. He included in his letter on 28 December 1814:

¹⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38258, fos. 151-5.

¹⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 244-5.

¹⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 482-3.

¹⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 49-50; Add. Mss. 38568, fo. 46.

I have received your private letters of the 9th inst. I am sorry to find that you should have been visited at Lisbon by a fit of gout. As a warm climate has, however, generally been found to be the most effectual remedy for this disorder, I trust the next packet will bring us an account of your entire recovery. ...

I shall be most happy to hear that Mrs. Canning and your family are well, and have not suffered in consequence of the passage, and particularly how the climate agrees with your eldest son, and whether you think he gains ground in consequence of it.¹⁸

The Prime Minister also accommodated a number of requests made by Canning. On 23 January 1815 the ambassador explained to Liverpool that he had lost his secretary and asked the premier to let a clerk at the Treasury leave the department and work for him.¹⁹ Liverpool consulted the Chancellor of the Exchequer and replied on 16 February. The favour was granted and a clerk at the Treasury was permitted to take a leave of absence in order to join Canning.²⁰

The Canningites continued to be courted by the Prime Minister in 1815.

Liverpool corresponded with Canning and cemented him to the ministry. The ambassador was provided by the premier with a description of events at home and abroad, and an explanation of the attitude of the government to measures in parliament and developments on the continent. The Prime Minister expressed a degree of remorse at times when he could not afford to take a break from his work to write to Canning. Liverpool wrote to Canning on 19 April 1815 at the height of the crisis in Europe:

I am quite ashamed of not having written to you since the late extraordinary change which has taken place in France, but Huskisson promised me that he would keep you generally *au courant des affaires*, and my time has been really so incessantly occupied by official and other duties that I feel confident you will excuse me.²¹

¹⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 513 & 515.

¹⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 69-71.

²⁰ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 565-7.

²¹ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 175.

Liverpool also demonstrated an interest in his welfare and that of his family. The premier wrote again to Canning on 13 June: 'I shall be glad to hear when you write again of the state of the health of your eldest son, which I hope has not suffered in consequence of the summer heats.' The premier begged Canning to be kindly remembered to his wife.²²

The ambassador extended his gratitude to the Prime Minister for his solicitude, and Canning resisted the temptation to return to London and to use the situation, the crisis over Napoleon, to his advantage. He wrote to Huskisson on 15 April 1815: 'Bonaparte, to be sure, has shown that abdications are not always final; but I see nothing in the state of affairs, not even in his re-establishment, which tempts me to imitate his example and to land at Falmouth by surprise.'²³ Canning remained in touch with his friends and followers at home while he was abroad, and he encouraged them to get on with the Prime Minister. He wrote again to Huskisson on 17 March 1815: 'I am very happy to hear that your habits of intercourse with Ll. have been renewed. I have no doubt of the friendship and sincerity of his disposition towards you, both on your own account and on mine.'²⁴

After the battle of Waterloo, the Prime Minister continued to correspond closely and cordially with his envoy in Lisbon, Canning. Liverpool also respected the Canningites in his government, providing Lord Granville Leveson-Gower with a peerage, and promoting Lord Morley to an earldom, and elevating a friend in the Church of England.²⁵ Canning was recalled at the end of the year and a ship was

²² *Ibid.*, ii, 180.

²³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 75-8, 79, 80-2, 83, 84-6.

²⁴ *The Huskisson Papers*, p. 100.

²⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fos. 92-3, 87-91; Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 204-6; Add. Mss. 38568, fos. 47-51; *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 94-6 & 114-15; Alex. M. Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch*. (London: Richardson & Co., 1880), pp. 750-1.

placed at his disposal by the Prime Minister to bring him back home.²⁶

- Wellesley

The premier also sought to nurture cordial relations between himself and those other leading prodigal Pittites with whom he had once served in office, including Marquess Wellesley. Contact with Wellesley did not cease altogether in early 1813 after the former Foreign Secretary launched a ferocious attack on the government in parliament over the conduct of the war in the peninsula and Liverpool treated him courteously as a fellow parliamentary member. The premier wrote in his own hand to Wellesley on 5 April 1813 informing him of the arrangements for various upcoming debates.²⁷

Respect was also shown by the Prime Minister to the views of Wellesley's followers. Michael George Prendergast, a MP and associate of Wellesley, asked the Prime Minister on 20 February 1813 for compensation on account of a measure included in the budget.²⁸ Liverpool replied just two days later, stating that any further suggestions could be directed to Nicholas Vansittart, although he refused to grant remuneration.²⁹

Of course news of the victory at Vitoria in 1813 had an effect on the domestic political situation. Triumph on the battlefield usually results for obvious reasons in an increase in support for the government across the nation, but victory at Vitoria was of political benefit to Liverpool and his administration in another more specific way as well. On two occasions in the upper chamber during the current parliamentary session the government's performance in terms of supporting the armed forces in the Iberian

²⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38262, fo. 216; A. Aspinall, 'Canning's Return to Office in September 1822', *The English Historical Review*, 78, 308 (1963), 531-45.

²⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 37297, fos. 197-8.

²⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 300-3.

²⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 338-40; J. W. Anderson & R. G. Thorne, 'PRENDERGAST, Michael George', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 882-3.

Peninsula had been roundly and savagely condemned by Lord Wellington's own brother, Wellesley, and in both debates Liverpool had been compelled to defend the ministry himself. The result of the contest on 21 June 1813, however, served to vindicate the administration's conduct in the Peninsular War and to provide the Prime Minister with the perfect riposte to the dreadful accusations repeatedly levelled at him and his government by Wellington's eldest brother. When the House of Lords came to offer their thanks to Wellington and his army on 7 July, Wellesley, who in the course of the session had predicted military disaster in the Iberian Peninsula, now admitted that for the last six months his brother's exertions had been well seconded by the government and that the army had been provided with adequate resources, at least this time. Wellesley sought to save face by declaring that Vitoria was an example of what could be done when the full energy of the country was directed towards the attainment of military success and, by implication, when his own advice was accepted.³⁰

Politicians finding themselves in a similar position to Liverpool, suddenly vanquishing a parliamentary opponent after months of heated confrontation, have been known to indulge in a spot of unattractive but understandable public gloating. Liverpool characteristically chose not to do this. Since he must have hoped one day for a reconciliation between his colleagues and those Pittites still withholding their support from the government, it was politically astute for the premier not to risk driving a permanent wedge between himself and Wellesley by kicking the former Foreign Secretary when he was down. Liverpool continued to seek a reconciliation with Wellesley. Wellesley Pole had resigned from the government in 1812 to avoid a breach with his brother. In the summer of 1814 he was appointed Master of the Mint and awarded a seat in the Cabinet.

³⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvi, 1123-33.

- The Grenvillites

The Grenvillites were also wooed by the Prime Minister. Liverpool was of assistance to Lord Grenville in his role as Chancellor of the University of Oxford. Grenville wrote to thank the premier on 29 December 1812 for his help in securing an income for the Professor of Chemistry.³¹ Liverpool was happy to do another favour for Grenville in his capacity as Chancellor of the University of Oxford eighteen months later. The Prime Minister supported an application from Grenville for a grant in aid of the Bodleian Library and presented it to the Prince Regent in August 1814.³² Grenville wrote to thank the premier for his help in this matter on 4 November.³³ The Prime Minister paid Grenville the courtesy of consulting him over the order of business in the House of Lords.³⁴

On the death of his father, the marquess of Buckingham received condolences from the Prime Minister.³⁵ Liverpool also approved of Buckingham's intention to succeed to the position of Lord Lieutenant of the county of Buckinghamshire.³⁶ The new marquess thanked Liverpool on 17 February 1813 and observed that his father had always had a satisfactory relationship with the Prime Minister even though they had generally opposed each other politically.³⁷

³¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 82-3.

³² B. L., Add. Mss. 58936, fos. 53, 56-7.

³³ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 12, fos. 58-9.

³⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 58936, fo. 52.

³⁵ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Grenville, Richard Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-, first duke of Buckingham and Chandos (1776–1839),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11496>, accessed 24 Feb 2006>.

³⁶ Buckingham & Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of England*, ii, 22.

³⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 12-15.

- The Whigs

Wellington received a note from the Prime Minister on 17 February 1813 expressing Liverpool's continued satisfaction with the progress of the legislative programme in parliament: 'At present there is little union between the different branches of Opposition. The old Opposition are evidently disheartened, and our friends are in good spirits.'³⁸ Liverpool did not simply observe the weakness of the political forces arrayed against him, however. The premier continually sought new ways of strengthening the base of his support in both houses of parliament. His instinctive kindness and judicious dollops of ministerial patronage were Liverpool's weapons of choice in the battle for continued political supremacy. Even opposition parliamentary members could not escape the advances of the Prime Minister and his determination to extend the base of his support as far as possible. The Prime Minister also sought to detach talented men from the old opposition, though with a singular lack of success.

In 1813 Sir James Mackintosh was informed by an acquaintance who had spoken to Charles Arbuthnot:

There is a place now vacant of £1,000 a year, not tenable with a seat in Parliament but of which government would feel honoured by your acceptance until, upon ascertaining your wish to be in Parliament and take an active part with the government, a seat will be vacated for you and a more efficient office proffered for your acceptance which might be held with a seat.

He added that this attractive offer was, 'expressive of the wishes of Lord Liverpool.'³⁹

Mackintosh turned the offer down, however, and became a leading opposition spokesman.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Supplementary Despatches*, vii, 556.

³⁹ Patrick O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), p. 107.

⁴⁰ Christopher J. Finlay, 'Mackintosh, Sir James, of Kyllachy (1765-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxv, 674-9.

Sir Arthur Leary Piggott was an admirer of the French Revolution, an adviser of Earl Grey in the latter's attempt to introduce a measure of parliamentary reform in the 1790s, an appointee of Fox and the Attorney-General in the Ministry of All the Talents in 1806-7. He was also keen to retain the island of Tobago in the peace negotiations with France and the premier sought to use this issue to woo Piggott and his friends. The MP raised his concern over the island with the Prime Minister on 10 April 1814.⁴¹ Liverpool secured the colony for the country, and informed the MP of the fact and invited him to share the good news with his friends in a letter of 2 June.⁴² The Prime Minister corresponded timely and politely with Piggott on the subject of the island of Tobago again in October, but the MP continued to speak for and to vote with the opposition. Despite Liverpool's efforts to win him over, he opposed the resumption of war in 1815.⁴³

- Wellington

Liverpool sought to extend the base of his support not only by reuniting the Pittites but also by winning new friends. In the summer of 1814 the Prime Minister started the long process of gentle persuasion that led to the duke of Wellington joining the government and entering the cabinet. On 23 April 1814 the Convention for the Suspension of Hostilities between France and the Allies was signed by Viscount Castlereagh. With the war over, the Field Marshal would be leaving his army and returning to Great Britain. As a great hero and with a seat in the House of Lords, Wellington could have quite an effect in the field of politics if he wanted to and if he played his cards right. It was in the interests of the Prime Minister therefore to attach

⁴¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 86-7.

⁴² B. L., Add. Mss. 38258, fo. 6.

⁴³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 351-2; M. H. Port, 'PIGGOTT, Sir Arthur Leary', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 802-5.

him to the ministry both to strengthen it and to prevent him from being a source of instability or becoming a threat to the administration. For five years Liverpool, both as Secretary of State for War and Prime Minister, had struggled to maintain a cordial relationship with Wellington and he was determined not to lose his support now.

The Prime Minister showered the Field Marshal with praise. Liverpool opened the debate in the House of Lords on 11 May 1814 on the subject of a grant to Wellington. He compared the duke of Wellington to the great duke of Marlborough and declared the former greater than the latter, and as the greatest general in British history.⁴⁴ The Prime Minister also showered the Field Marshal with honours.

Liverpool informed Wellington that he had been promoted to the rank of a duke and that his generals had been elevated to the peerage on 3 May 1814,⁴⁵ and proposed a gift of £300,000 and a rise in his annuity to £17,000 to support him in his new dignity. Wellington also became a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter on 2 January 1815.

Liverpool was also very kind to Wellington on a personal level. He took an interest in the welfare of his family in his absence on the Continent. The premier wrote to the general on 3 May 1814:

I am happy to find that your boys have taken so kindly to school, and that Lady Wellington continues to receive such favourable accounts of them from the master under whom they have been placed. I have had occasion to be acquainted with the school at East Sheen for several years, and I do not believe it possible that they could have been placed at their age in a way more satisfactory to you.⁴⁶

Liverpool and his wife cared for the duchess of Wellington while her husband acted the part of the hero in London in the summer of 1814.⁴⁷ There was a party at Carlton

⁴⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxvii, 655-6, 767-8, 813-18.

⁴⁵ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 59-60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ix, 60.

⁴⁷ Joan Wilson, *A Soldier's Wife* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

House on 21 July and while Wellington paraded in front of the Queen in his uniform and attracted almost all of the attention, his wife walked with the Prime Minister and Lady Liverpool.⁴⁸ Liverpool helped Wellington to find a piece of land on which to build a ducal residence.⁴⁹ The Field Marshal thanked the Prime Minister for the trouble he had gone to on 29 October.⁵⁰ At the end of 1814 the premier offered to interrupt his relaxation and recuperation in Bath and return to London to see Wellington if he decided to make a short trip back home.⁵¹ Liverpool also responded positively to patronage requests made by Wellington. Wellington asked Liverpool on 18 May 1814 to provide for a widow of his acquaintance and added that the Prime Minister was so good at this sort of thing.⁵² The Prime Minister informed the duke on 6 December that a pension had been granted to the mother of a senior officer killed at the battle of Toulouse as requested by Wellington.⁵³

Wellington was provided with suitable and useful employment by the Prime Minister. On 22 August 1814 he arrived in Paris as ambassador to France and on 3 February 1815 he succeeded the Foreign Secretary as Plenipotentiary to the Congress of Vienna. The Prime Minister sought to make his stay on the continent as agreeable as possible. He arranged for Wellington to pay a visit to Britain, to see his family and friends and to sort out his affairs before he had to take up his post in Paris.⁵⁴ After he had taken up his post in Paris and chosen a palace in which to live, the Prime Minister insisted on excusing the Field Marshal the rent and arranging for the Treasury to

⁴⁸ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xiii, 4561-3.

⁴⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38196, fos. 65-6; Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 130-1, 172-3.

⁵⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38196, fo. 72.

⁵¹ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 518-19.

⁵² B. L., Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 298-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ix, 455.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ix, 59-60.

cover it.⁵⁵ Liverpool also continued to correspond at length and on a regular basis with Wellington, while the latter was in Paris and Vienna, and to entrust him with confidential information on developments in the negotiations not just with France and the allies, but also with the United States of America, in order to involve him fully in the affairs of government.⁵⁶

The Field Marshal was rewarded by Liverpool for his services on the battlefield at Waterloo. On 22 June 1815, just four days after Napoleon was defeated and just one day after the despatch from Waterloo was received in London, the Prime Minister showered the duke with praise in the House of Lords and proposed a further grant of £200,000 for him.⁵⁷ Throughout the months of July and August he gave up his time and effort to supervise the plans to build a palace for Wellington on the scale of Blenheim.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ix, 216.

⁵⁶ Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon and Wellington* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001).

⁵⁷ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 548-9; *Parliamentary Debates*, xxxi, 977-9.

⁵⁸ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 551; *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xiii, 4667-8, 4690-2, 4698.

Chapter Eighteen

Lord Liverpool and the Royal Family

1812-15

- The Prince Regent

During his early premiership, Lord Liverpool did not have a major dispute with George, the Prince Regent, and therefore risk losing the goodwill of the crown.¹

Liverpool's relationship with the Prince Regent seems to have been in a particularly fine state during the year following the end of the war with France in 1814. In a letter on 16 February 1815 the Prince Regent described himself to Liverpool as the premier's most affectionate friend.² Of course, the prince had very good reason to be pleased with Liverpool. In 1814 the war had been won and the Prime Minister had presented the prince with a perfect opportunity to indulge his passion for dressing up and putting on a show when the allied sovereigns were invited to London to celebrate their victory over Napoleon.

The difficult relationship between the Prince Regent, and his wife and daughter, however, was a cause of trouble for Liverpool in the course of his early premiership. During the final six months before he became Prime Minister, the situation had deteriorated and shown every sign of getting worse in the near future. The Prince Regent had become increasingly jealous of his only legitimate child's relative popularity. Moreover, Princess Charlotte Augusta had severely reproached her father for confirming Spencer Perceval in power when the restrictions on his authority were finally removed in early 1812 and had publicly sympathised with the Prince Regent's former friends amongst the parliamentary opposition. The Prince Regent sought to curb his daughter's wilful behaviour by forbidding Charlotte from

¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

² B. L., Loan 72, vol. 2, fos. 1-2.

corresponding with Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, her close friend, who was correctly suspected of filling Princess Charlotte's head with liberal ideas. He packed her off to stay for the summer at Lower Lodge in the grounds of Windsor Castle under the attentive gaze and conservative influence of her grandmother, the queen. The Prince Regent's estranged wife, however, chose this particular moment to test the flexibility of the restrictions placed on her access to Charlotte.

- Caroline

There were a few skirmishes between the Prince Regent and his wife before the end of 1812 over the issue of Princess Caroline's contact with Princess Charlotte. So long as his daughter was closeted at Windsor, the Prince Regent informed his wife, Charlotte would visit her mother only once every two weeks. On Henry Peter Brougham's advice, Caroline travelled down to see her daughter at Lower Lodge on 10 July and Liverpool was subsequently commissioned to ask Caroline not to visit her daughter at Windsor again. On 16 July the Prime Minister was summoned to see Caroline and an agreement was hammered out whereby Caroline was granted a visit from her daughter once a week. In defiance of the prime ministerial ban, Caroline turned up again in Windsor on 27 September, demanded to see her daughter and was diplomatically refused entry by the queen. Liverpool acted immediately to prevent this drama from turning into a crisis. That same day the Prime Minister advised the Prince Regent that it was essential for him to proceed with caution and he told him that he would consult the Lord Chancellor, the earl of Eldon. Liverpool promised to call on him early the next morning and offered to come over that very night if necessary.³ The Prime Minister also rushed off a letter to the queen in which he

³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38565, fos. 4-5.

explained why he had not been able to prevent Caroline's visit. He enclosed a copy of the note he had posted to the Prince Regent and praised the queen's conduct towards her daughter-in-law.⁴ It would appear that Caroline did not receive a communication from the Prime Minister until 30 September. Presumably, Liverpool did not wish to give Caroline the satisfaction of knowing that her ploy had succeeded in ruffling royal feathers and the incentive to repeat the exercise. In the letter the Prime Minister avoided any explicit reference to the trying scene at Windsor and simply, patiently, and politely explained the arrangements for contact between Charlotte and her mother.⁵ Princess Caroline sought to reignite the argument with a provocative letter to the queen on 21 November in which Queen Charlotte was accused of neglecting her granddaughter's education. The Prime Minister waited on the queen for a reply and counselled, with the support of the Lord Chancellor, against further correspondence in the immediate future.⁶

In January 1813 Brougham composed a letter for Caroline to send to her husband, but the note was returned unopened to the princess. Liverpool behaved as helpfully as he could towards Caroline. He delicately explained to her on 19 January that he had shown the letter to the Lord Chancellor as she had requested and had placed the note before the Prince Regent. The Prime Minister stated that he was content to act as the channel of communication between the princess and the Prince Regent, but that he could not force Caroline's husband to enter into any direct correspondence with the princess.⁷ The contents of the letter were eventually made known to the Prince Regent, but Liverpool informed Caroline on 28 January that her

⁴ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fo. 1.

⁵ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fos. 2-3.

⁶ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fos. 9-15.

⁷ Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon*, ii, 231.

husband had not made any response.⁸ The Prime Minister continued to placate the princess. When Caroline wrote to the premier on 8 February asking to see her sick daughter,⁹ Liverpool replied the same day informing the princess that Charlotte was better and would be able to wait upon her mother on Wednesday or Thursday at the latest.¹⁰

The letter composed by Brougham and known as ‘the Regent’s Valentine’ was published in the *The Morning Chronicle* on 10 February. In the letter the princess appealed against the restrictions placed on her contacts with her daughter. Caroline’s latest manoeuvre could not be ignored by the Prince Regent and his counsellors. The princess had made serious public charges against her husband that could not honourably be allowed to stand and the understandable popular outcry in favour of Charlotte’s mother compelled the government to rule on the issue. Liverpool was immediately obliged to cancel the meeting between Charlotte and her mother, which earned him a stinging rebuke from Caroline. The princess denied leaking her letter to the press and accused the premier of unbecoming conduct for insinuating that she had.¹¹ The public naturally supported Caroline and the death of her mother in March brought her yet more sympathy. Regent’s Valentine prints and crockery went on sale for a time and the opposition designed schemes to prolong the embarrassment felt by the administration. The government instigated a Privy Council review of the regulations imposed on the princess which concluded at the end of February 1813 that the restrictions should remain in place.

⁸ Herbert Maxwell (ed.), *The Creevey Papers* (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1903), i, 177.

⁹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fo. 30.

¹⁰ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fo. 32.

¹¹ *The Diary of a Lady-in-Waiting by Lady Charlotte Bury*, ed. A. Francis Stuart (2 vols., London: The Bodley Head, 1908), i, 216-17.

The Prime Minister had a rather more successful time handling Charlotte's mother in the summer of 1814. Princess Caroline had resolved to leave the country and informed Liverpool of her wish on 25 July.¹² The premier jumped at the chance to rid the nation of this embarrassing woman and her destabilising political influence. He replied within a matter of days and expressed the Prince Regent's approval of her plan.¹³ The Prime Minister did what he could to ease her departure. He granted the Princess of Wales the use of a ship to carry her and her party to the continent.¹⁴ He also sought to dismiss any fears that she had about changes to her status that might be proposed by her enemies in her absence.¹⁵ Caroline left Great Britain on 8 August 1814 and the premier determined to persuade her to stay abroad. Liverpool wrote to the duke of Wellington on 15 September and stipulated how the princess ought to be treated by the ambassador if she passed through the French capital. He added: 'I am satisfied that it is good policy to make foreign countries agreeable to her, in order that she may have no inducement to return to England.'¹⁶ Even while she was overseas, however, Caroline did not cease to be the cause of headaches for the Prime Minister. Liverpool subtly expressed his displeasure in a letter on 18 September at her decision to reside in Naples, a country that was still not at peace with Britain.¹⁷

- Charlotte

The Prime Minister demonstrated compassion for Charlotte when the Prince Regent and Caroline fought over her in late 1812. Charlotte informed a correspondent on 26 October that the Prime Minister had come to see her a few days after Caroline's

¹² Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 7-8.

¹³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38258, fos. 238-41.

¹⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38258, fos. 243-4.

¹⁵ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, ii, 11.

¹⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 259.

¹⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 26664, fos. 19-20.

unscheduled visit to Windsor in September. She reported that Liverpool had said that he felt for her and would shield her from the furore.¹⁸ It would appear, however, that Charlotte remained entirely suspicious of government ministers and was instinctively committed to the parliamentary opposition. She wrote about Liverpool on 16 November: 'But believe me, not any exertions on his part to flatter, to please me, will ever gain him favor with me, as I know his despicable meanness too well to have my eyes & ears blinded in that way.'¹⁹

Towards the end of 1812 Charlotte was permitted to pass some of her time in London and to enjoy greater personal freedom. The Prime Minister facilitated this development and even suffered the wrath of the queen, who did not want to let her daughters accompany Princess Charlotte.²⁰ An attempt was made by the premier to ensure that the heir presumptive was content with these arrangements and he sought to befriend her. Charlotte reported on 23 December that she had encountered Liverpool at a function and that the Prime Minister had been very civil to her and had expressed the hope that everything had been settled to her satisfaction.²¹ Charlotte was not permitted to retire that evening without it being made quite clear to her how kind the Prime Minister had been. Charlotte conversed with Lady Bathurst:

She then told me it was *all* Lord Liverpool's doing, that he had worked hard to get it done, & that he was all anxiety about it. This his wife took care to sing to me, said that he had not forgot me, or the wish I had expressed of being more gay in the winter, & whether she might tell him from me that I was obliged to him & felt so. To wh. I said, certainly.²²

¹⁸ *Letters of the Princess Charlotte 1811-1817*, ed. A. Aspinall (London: Home & Van Thal, 1949), pp. 28-34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁰ Ernest Taylor, *The Taylor Papers* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), pp. 78-81.

²¹ *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, pp. 43-5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

This rather unsubtle attempt to ingratiate the Prime Minister with Princess Charlotte failed, though through no fault of Liverpool's. In January 1813 the Prince Regent was outraged to hear that his daughter, wishing to be treated now as an adult, refused to have a governess. A terrible row ensued. The Prince Regent took the Lord Chancellor along with him to confront his daughter and Eldon foolishly told Princess Charlotte that if she had been his daughter he would have locked her up until she came to her senses. Princess Charlotte's attitude towards the government consequently hardened. On 27 January 1813 Charlotte wrote secretly to her old friend, Elphinstone, and stated that the ministers had all behaved ill and that she had ceased to communicate with them.²³ The publication of 'The Regent's Valentine' had the effect of poisoning relations not only between Caroline and Liverpool, but also between the premier and Princess Charlotte. The Prince Regent visited his daughter to explain the course of action adopted by the administration and he asked a reluctant Liverpool to attend this audience. Charlotte thoroughly objected to his close involvement in a delicate family affair.²⁴ The Prince Regent's daughter, continued to have a very low regard for the Prime Minister. In August she wrote:

I believe Ld. Eldon to be as inimical to me as possible, & indeed to everything but where his immediate interest lies. I rather think that with him on one side & the folly of Ld. Liverpool on the other, with his intriguing wife of his, even that they make the Prince act & believe the things he does.²⁵

Lady Liverpool proffered advice when the Princess fell ill that month, but such acts of kindness from the premier and his wife were greeted with intense suspicion by Charlotte.²⁶ In December Charlotte bowed to her father's wish that she marry the

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Prince of Orange.²⁷ She described the scene the moment after she gave her approval for the match: 'Lord & Ly. Liverpool then talked with me & congratulated me, but *as they do everything*.'²⁸

In late 1813 Princess Charlotte had become engaged to the Prince of Orange and Liverpool worked hard to ensure that the marriage went ahead without a hitch. In April 1814 he sought to identify and resolve with the Lord Chancellor any constitutional difficulties that might arise from the proposed union.²⁹ In May the premier was on hand after a dinner at Carlton House in the presence of Princess Charlotte and the queen to escort home the Prince of Orange who had become drunk.³⁰ The marriage, however, never took place. Having had second thoughts about the intended arrangement for some time, the princess first insisted in April 1814 that certain stipulations were inserted into the marriage contract especially about her residing in Great Britain not in the Netherlands and then finally broke off the engagement on 16 June. This decision brought shame on the country, embarrassed the government and wasted the Prime Minister's time and energy.

Liverpool's troubles with Charlotte were not over yet, however. Her father discovered the following month that she had been enjoying an illicit romantic liaison with a disreputable foreign prince. This, on top of her other behaviour in recent years, persuaded the Prince Regent to take decisive and harsh action against his daughter. On 12 July the prince informed Charlotte that her servants would be dismissed and companions replaced, and that she would be confined to Cranbourne Lodge in Windsor Great Park, where she would see no one apart from the queen. That evening Charlotte fled to her mother's house. Liverpool acted as an intermediary between the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁹ Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon*, ii, 250-1.

³⁰ Blake, *An Irish Beauty of the Regency*, pp. 225-6.

Prince Regent and Charlotte in this crisis. George wrote to the premier that night and promised that he would forgive and forget the incident, if Charlotte returned at once.³¹

Charlotte had no choice but to return home. Liverpool was left to cope with the political fallout from this affair. The duke of Sussex, a royal prince with liberal views, raised the issue of his niece's confinement that same month in the House of Lords.³²

Liverpool insisted that it was not acceptable for parliament to interfere in the right of the Prince Regent to bring up his child and heir as he saw fit and that no improper treatment had been meted out to Princess Charlotte.³³

- Other Members of the Royal Family

In 1815 Princess Caroline was not a serious concern for the premier now that she had left the country and Liverpool was prepared to pass on letters to her daughter. Nor did Princess Charlotte cause a lot of trouble for the premier at this time. She hoped to wed the Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld and asked the premier in July 1815 to raise the matter with her father.³⁴ Liverpool obeyed, but the Prince Regent refused to give a decision until the crisis on the continent was settled and the negotiations were completed.³⁵ Charlotte married Leopold in 1816. She died in 1817 after giving birth to a stillborn child.

The main source of royal trouble in this period was the royal dukes. Prince Edward, the duke of Kent & Strathearn, the fourth son of George III and future father

³¹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fo. 47.

³² T. F. Henderson, rev. John Van Der Kiste, 'Augustus Frederick, Prince, duke of Sussex (1773-1843),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ii, 950-1; Roger Fulford, *Royal Dukes* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 252-80; Mollie Gillen, *Royal Duke* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1976), pp. 147-51.

³³ *Parliamentary Debates*, xxviii, 755-8, 837-9.

³⁴ Janet L. Polasky, 'Leopold I (1790-1865),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiii, 405-8.

³⁵ *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, pp. 190-1, 198-200, 202-3.

of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), appealed to his brother the Prince Regent in June 1815 for money to pay his debts. The Prime Minister was charged with the task of replying to Kent and refusing his demand.³⁶ Kent was forced to economise and moved to Brussels.³⁷

Prince Ernest Augustus, the duke of Cumberland & Teviotdale, the fifth son of George III and future king of Hanover, was the cause of the greatest headache for the Prime Minister at this time. In 1815 he married the Princess Dowager of Solms-Braunfels, but Queen Charlotte refused to receive her on account of her decision to break her engagement to the duke of Cambridge in 1798.³⁸ Liverpool struggled to contain the dispute and limit the damage that it did to the reputation of the royal family at home and on the continent. He attempted to persuade the queen not to put down on paper her objections to the duchess in a letter to the duke in June.³⁹ The Prince of Mecklenburg-Strelitz defended his sister, the duchess, in a bullying and insulting letter to the queen in September. Liverpool encountered the prince and encouraged him to apologise to the queen, and hoped to secure some sort of reconciliation.⁴⁰ In November the affair was leaked in detail to the press and the Prince Regent was advised by the premier not to react, but to let it drop and so avoid a renewal of the controversy.⁴¹ Cumberland was supplied with a sum of money by the

³⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38564, fos. 142-5.

³⁷ Elizabeth Longford, 'Edward, Prince, duke of Kent and Strathearn (1767-1820),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xvii, 806-8; Fulford, *Royal Dukes*, pp. 161-204; Mollie Gillen, *The Prince and his Lady* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970), pp. 189-212.

³⁸ Alan Palmer, 'Adolphus Frederick, Prince, first duke of Cambridge (1774-1850),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, i, 350-2; Fulford, *Royal Dukes*, pp.281-304.

³⁹ *The Letters of King George IV*, ii, 72-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 97-8, 99-100, 108.

⁴¹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 3, fo. 67.

Prime Minister and urged to leave the country.⁴² He went with his wife into exile in 1818.⁴³

⁴² *The Letters of King George IV*, ii, 106.

⁴³ Alan Palmer, 'Ernest Augustus (1771-1851),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xviii, 508-9; Fulford, *Royal Dukes*, pp. 205-51; Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Charlotte [Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz] (1744-1818),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xi, 179-84.

Chapter Nineteen

The Pressure on the Premier

1812-15

- Correspondence

The pressure on the premier at this time must have been constant and considerable.¹ On top of the duties already outlined, and in addition to presiding over the war effort and seeking an honourable peace, Lord Liverpool was also required to handle a daily stream of mundane tasks, such as replying to the flow of correspondence he received from various members of the political nation on a whole range of miscellaneous concerns.² Correspondence from this period, however, indicates that the Prime Minister was not distracted from fulfilling the more everyday responsibilities of his office by the invariably exciting and eventually encouraging events taking place on the other side of the English Channel, and that the premier remained on top of his work and retained a keen interest in the details of government activity. It would appear that the Prime Minister gained a reputation as a statesman who took notice of the contents of his letter-bag. A correspondent, who had suggestions for improvements in agriculture, stated to the premier in June 1813 his understanding that Liverpool paid attention to the letters he received.³

A number of letters that crossed the Prime Minister's desk could be dealt with easily and simply. People from across the country often wrote to the premier with their thoughts on the issues of the day, scraps of information that they believed might

¹ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 100-25.

² Liverpool received his fair share of peculiar letters of course from the general public. For example, Augustus Markett shared his view on the role of the British in the world with the Prime Minister on 20 February 1813: 'In short the Lion of England, seems for the present to have taken Place of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.' He also believed that Napoloen wished to become the Pope; Semmel, *Napoleon and the British*, p. 89.

³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 225-32.

be of interest to the government and that sort of thing, and they usually required and frequently received no more than a polite acknowledgement from Liverpool or they were referred to the relevant department, minister or official. For example, on 23 January 1813, Lord Kenyon, a diehard opponent of Roman Catholic emancipation, presented a scheme to the premier for raising additional revenue through taxing turnpike tolls. Liverpool responded within a week that such a project had been considered before and that there were too many objections to it.⁴ Edward Daniel Clarke, an antiquary, wrote to the Prime Minister on 1 February offering to acquire certain Greek manuscripts for the nation from the island of Patmos. Liverpool replied five days later that steps had already been taken to safeguard the documents.⁵ Monsieur Sarrazin intended to publish a history of the war in Spain and Portugal, and he hoped to dedicate the book to the Prime Minister. In keeping with his general reluctance to claim the political limelight and personal credit for the achievements of his administration, Liverpool declined the honour on 29 March 1813.⁶ An inventor from Newcastle Upon Tyne informed Liverpool on 8 May that he had discovered how to extract tar from coal and was swiftly referred by the Prime Minister to the Admiralty.⁷ On 13 September Charles Taylor informed the premier that he had become suspicious of some foreigners who had appeared on the Devonshire coast and wondered if they were in fact spies. Liverpool thanked Taylor for this intelligence a

⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 190-1; John Wolffe, 'Kenyon, George, second Baron Kenyon (1776-1855),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxi, 343.

⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 217-18, 242-3; Anita McConnell, 'Clarke, Edward Daniel (1769-1822),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xi, 863-5.

⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 102-3, 106.

⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 350-1, 369.

few days later.⁸ Views on and inquiries about government revenue were invariably forwarded to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁹

Other correspondents demanded and received a more considered response from the Prime Minister. Thomas Glyn, the Commissioner for Emigrants, reported to Liverpool in January 1813 on fraud committed by French asylum seekers and a thorough investigation was immediately ordered by the Prime Minister.¹⁰ In July 1813 a correspondent in Glasgow appealed to the Prime Minister for a grant to help a disabled child. Liverpool occasionally responded positively to requests for exceptional financial assistance from the government for those in pecuniary difficulties, but this time he recommended raising money from private individuals, though he doubted that money in this case would be of any use in alleviating the child's suffering.¹¹ The following month Henry Perkins, a book collector, informed Liverpool that he had come into possession of some letters belonging to Mary Anne Clarke, the former mistress of the duke of York who had caused a scandal that had rocked the government in 1809, and wished to pass them on to the administration. The Prime Minister asked Perkins to send them to John Beckett at the home office.¹² In January 1814 the marquess of Douglas asked for Liverpool's advice on a tax demand on Holyroodhouse, the royal palace in Edinburgh for which his family was

⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 217-18.

⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 252-5, 271-2, 290-1.

¹⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 180-1, 187.

¹¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 29472, fo. 135; Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 257, 314; Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 349-52, 357; Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 1-2.

¹² B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 34-5, 54; H. J. Spencer, 'Perkins, Henry (bap. 1777, d. 1855),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xliii, 775; K. D. Reynolds, 'Clarke, Mary Anne (1776?-1852),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xi, 899-900; H. M. Stephens, rev. John Van Der Kiste, 'Frederick, Prince, duke of York and Albany (1763-1827),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xx, 900-2; Fulford, *Royal Dukes*, pp. 52-101.

hereditarily responsible. The Prime Minister made a careful inquiry into the matter and responded to Douglas' satisfaction.¹³

Emma, Lady Hamilton, appealed to the government for financial assistance in 1813. Nelson had made an adequate provision for his mistress in his will, but Lady Hamilton had failed to curb her extravagance and she was eventually arrested for debt. Lady Hamilton applied to the government for a pension and she initially approached Nelson's old friend, the Home Secretary. Viscount Sidmouth referred her case to the Prime Minister, but he rejected the claim. Lady Hamilton then wrote directly to Liverpool on 15 March 1813.¹⁴ When no reply came, she wrote to the premier again. Lady Hamilton explained to Liverpool on 4 April that she was in poor health and pleaded with him to help her.¹⁵ The Prime Minister informed Lady Hamilton two days later that he would not recommend her for a pension.¹⁶ Lady Hamilton pathetically asked the Prime Minister what she ought to do now and Liverpool curtly replied on 19 April that he had absolutely nothing to add to his last letter.¹⁷ It would appear that Liverpool made a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. He was perfectly willing even to dip into his own pocket and give up his valuable time to support charitable endeavours that sought to ease the suffering of those who had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own, but he was seemingly not prepared to show compassion towards those who had apparently

¹³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38256, fos. 60-1, 109-10, 210, 267.

¹⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fo. 56.

¹⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 136-7.

¹⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fo. 151.

¹⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 215-16.

brought their misfortune upon themselves and demonstrated serious character flaws.

Lady Hamilton took to drink and died in Calais on 15 January 1815.¹⁸

William Bullock made a strange request of the Prime Minister on 24 April 1813. Bullock was the proprietor of the Egyptian Hall, an extremely popular museum in Piccadilly. He collected curiosities and informed the premier that he had been offered Oliver Cromwell's head! (This may have been the case. Cromwell died in 1658, but his body was exhumed at the Restoration. His head was cut off and impaled on a spike. It remained there for over twenty years before disappearing during the Exclusion Crisis.) Bullock asked the Prime Minister whether or not the head should be placed on display. Liverpool stated that it would be inappropriate to put a human head on show where it might be seen by women and children, and the item was consequently removed from the exhibition. (A head, thought to be Cromwell's, was buried in the grounds of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1960.)¹⁹

- Patronage

Liverpool was inundated during his early premiership with requests from correspondents for patronage and a significant proportion of his time was taken up with making appointments and bestowing honours. For example, one of the most important public offices that he was involved in filling in late 1813 was that of Poet Laureate. Liverpool, in consultation with George, the Prince Regent, initially picked

¹⁸ Tom Pocock, 'Hamilton [née Lyon], Emma, Lady Hamilton (bap. 1765, d. 1815),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiv, 789-93; Flora Fraser, *Beloved Emma* (London: Papermac, 1994).

¹⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 265-6; Elizabeth Baigent, 'Bullock, William (b. early 1780s, d. after 1843),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 647-8; Nicholas Rogers & Christopher Parish, *Cromwell and Sidney Sussex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver (1599-1658),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv, 321-53; Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell* (London: Phoenix, 2002); Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 235-52.

Walter Scott to replace the late, but not great, Henry James Pye, but Scott declined the offer, in the belief that the office was not quite right for him, and Robert Southey succeeded to the title on the recommendation of Scott and proceeded to use the position to support the war on the continent and to condemn the spread of radicalism at home.²⁰

As we have already seen, Liverpool granted patronage requests made by those public figures who could be of help to him politically. Generally speaking, however, the Prime Minister behaved with a sense of decorum when it came to the distribution of the spoils at his disposal. Of course, the premier was not above using the patronage system to bolster his ministry, but favours were not granted to friends and followers, actual and potential, willy-nilly. Even for the Canningites, the floodgates of government assistance were not opened. Lord Granville Leveson-Gower had to wait until 12 August 1815 for his peerage.

The premier strictly observed the rule that an application that he received for an appointment, when a ministerial colleague had a better claim to deal with it, should be forwarded to that minister for a decision. The earl of Dysart, for example, solicited Liverpool for a commission in the Royal Navy in September 1813, and the letter was passed to the First Lord of the Admiralty.²¹ Liverpool was a stickler for the rules and invariably insisted upon the strict observance of precedent and procedure when it came to making appointments and granting titles. He time and again refused point blank to infringe Viscount Castlereagh's right to appoint diplomats even when the

²⁰ David Hewitt, 'Scott, Sir Walter (1771-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlix, 490-510; John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997); John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* (London: Cassell, 1987); James Sambrook, 'Pye, Henry James (1745-1813),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv, 608-10; Geoffrey Carnall, 'Southey, Robert (1774-1843),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, li, 694-700; Mark Storey, *Robert Southey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 219-20.

Foreign Secretary was abroad unless it was a matter of real urgency.²² Nor was he usually willing to interfere with the Lord Chancellor's responsibility for the vast majority of clerical promotions.²³ When the earl of Buckinghamshire asked Liverpool for a pension for Lord Auckland in June 1814, the Prime Minister refused to go further for his colleague than precedent would allow him to do in this case.²⁴ The marquess of Buckingham made a request for patronage of the Prime Minister in October but Liverpool presented his heartfelt apology and turned the request down because it would require him to break the rules.²⁵ In December the premier responded to a complaint from the duke of Wellington and explained, politely and carefully, to the general that he was not prepared to grant a baronetcy to Sir Robert Kennedy until he had completed the same process of assessment as every other candidate for the honour.²⁶ That same month the Prime Minister also informed Robert Peel that he would have to go through the proper channel to acquire a position under the East India Company for a friend.²⁷

Liverpool often brought a higher purpose to the distribution of patronage than the purchase of political support, the rewarding of friendship or the support of relatives. He expressed the belief that the candidate for a position who would best fulfil its original practical purpose should be the one who was offered it. This

²² B. L., Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 131-2, 349-50; Liverpool encouraged his colleagues to appoint the best candidates to vacant positions. He passed on a letter to the earl of Eldon on 3 September 1813 and insisted that the appointment was not his concern, but advised the Lord Chancellor to take no notice of the application because if it was approved it would eliminate an opportunity to promote in the church 'good and right' people; Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 175-6.

²³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 238-9, 369-70.

²⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 34459, fos. 88-9; Add. Mss. 38258, fos. 3-4; Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 212-13; Add. Mss. 46519, fos. 159-60.

²⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 321-2; Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 38-9.

²⁶ *Supplementary Despatches*, ix, 455.

²⁷ *English Historical Documents*, pp. 299-300.

approach to the distribution of patronage was demonstrated in two appointments made by Liverpool during the first half of the second year of his premiership.

In the summer of 1813 the Prime Minister was required to nominate a churchman to occupy the see of London. As the premier explained in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the last day of July, Liverpool's main concern was to choose someone who would be of benefit to the Church of England, rather than someone, perhaps a mediocre cleric, who first and foremost could be relied upon to turn up and vote for the administration in the upper chamber.²⁸ The Archbishop of York was informed by the Prime Minister, having put forward a name, in August: 'It is unnecessary for me, I hope, to add that I have had no object whatever in this recommendation but to make the arrangement which appeared to me, under all the circumstances, to be most likely to promote the interests of the Established Church.'²⁹ The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Durham were both closely consulted by Liverpool during the selection process.³⁰ William Howley, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, was nominated by the Prime Minister in August 1813. The Bishop of Durham thanked Liverpool for the way he went about making the appointment and the Archbishop of York approved the candidature.³¹ Howley turned out to be an inspired ecclesiastical appointment. He took his pastoral responsibilities seriously. He resisted clerical non-residence, supported church building and defended the work of both the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury in

²⁸ L. P. L., Mss. 1727, fos. 103-4.

²⁹ *The Harcourt Papers*, ed. William Edward Harcourt (14 vols., Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1880-1905), xii, 196.

³⁰ L. P. L., Mss. 3274, fos. 59-60; B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fo. 67.

³¹ L. P. L., Mss. 2184, fos. 108, 112.

1828.³² Happily for the government, as well as being an asset to the Established Church, Howley was also politically conservative. He strongly opposed Roman Catholic emancipation.³³

At the end of 1813 it fell to the premier to appoint a man to the Professorship of Modern History at the University of Oxford. Edward Nares was chosen by the Prime Minister. This choice was made primarily in the interests of scholarship and learning. Nares was a distinguished academic, but he was still offered the position by Liverpool on the condition that he would undertake to read a course of lectures annually or at least every alternate year. This was a relatively demanding requirement in the early nineteenth century.³⁴

This approach to the distribution of patronage was demonstrated in another appointment made by Liverpool eighteen months later. Berkeley Thomas Paget, MP for Anglesey and a Lord of the Treasury, asked the premier to take a look at his nomination for a place in the Church of England on 3 May 1815.³⁵ The Prime Minister agreed to do so, but added on 5 May that the candidate must be qualified to attend to his flock.³⁶

The premier was also careful to avoid undermining the effectiveness of the government machine. On 19 January 1815 he wrote to the Chancellor of the

³² Promotion in the church on the grounds of merit was not accepted by all of his colleagues in the cabinet even after his death. The earl of Westmorland was not pleased with this development in 1835: 'Merit, indeed! ... We are come to a pretty pass if they talk of *merit* for a bishopric.' *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 385.

³³ J. R. Garrard, 'Howley, William, (1766-1848),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxviii, 537-9.

³⁴ Nigel Aston, 'Nares, Edward (1762-1841),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xl, 204-6; *A Versatile Professor*, ed. G. Cecil White (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1903), pp. 207-8.

³⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 132-3.

³⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38261, fo. 136; R. G. Thorne, 'PAGET, Hon. Berkeley Thomaas', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, iv, 707.

Exchequer after Nicholas Vansittart had proposed rewarding an official in his department by placing him on the same footing as the secretaries of the Treasury. Liverpool objected to this idea. He argued that some other remuneration ought to be provided for the official and believed that such a promotion would lower the status of the secretaries of the Treasury who were the principal instruments through which much of the administration's business was conducted.³⁷

Liverpool took particular care over the elevation of peers. This attitude is clear from certain points that he made in his correspondence. In July 1813 the premier admitted in a letter that he had one criticism of William Pitt 'the Younger' and that was his creation of too many peers.³⁸ He explained his outlook in this area of patronage in a letter on 5 November 1814. He stated that it was his decision to continue not to create any peers for the present except on account of some notable public service and argued that it was damaging to the constitution to remove a significant proportion of the great and the good from the House of Commons in order to place them in the House of Lords.³⁹ In order to contain the size of the upper chamber and to maintain its character, both of which, in Liverpool's opinion, had changed considerably as a result of Pitt's many creations, the Prime Minister was prepared to turn down requests from even his best friends. Lord Enniskillen, an Irish peer, firmly and continuously supported the government and wanted to become an English peer in early 1815. Liverpool turned him down, but promised to remember him when it became necessary to create some new peers.⁴⁰

The Prime Minister had several reasons to be cheerful at the end of 1815. Napoleon had been defeated and the affairs of the continent had been settled. There

³⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 31231, fos. 216-17.

³⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38410, fos. 279-83.

³⁹ *English Historical Documents 1783-1832*, pp. 205-6.

⁴⁰ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 11, fos. 101-2.

was much for the government and the nation to celebrate. In one of the final letters he wrote that year, however, Liverpool, no doubt exhausted by the trials and tribulations of the past twelve months, contemplated his resignation over an aspect of patronage. In the middle of 1815 he recommended a number of men for honours to the Prince Regent. Lord Anglesey had commanded the cavalry at Waterloo and had lost his leg in the battle. He was promoted in the peerage by the premier. Anglesey wrote to Liverpool to thank him on 29 June 1815.⁴¹

The Prime Minister was plagued with requests for honours, places and other favours in the months after the war came to an end. More people than usual were encouraged to apply at this time because they saw largesse being made available to reward those politicians, diplomats and soldiers who had played an important role in the conflict and who believed that they also deserved a share in the spoils. Of course, this had the effect of raising the hopes for preferment of others, but Liverpool was not prepared to deluge the political nation, or even just his friends and followers, with government patronage nor to break the rules he had long adopted or reward the entirely unworthy and completely unsuitable. Hence, he was forced to disappoint quite a few people. He refused to grant the applications for peerages to Lord Westmeath and Sir Thomas Hussey Apeece, Bt., in 1815.⁴² He also turned down the request of Lord Redesdale, Speaker of the House of Commons in 1801-2.⁴³

⁴¹ B. L., Loan 72, vol. 7, fos. 47-8; Anglesey, 'Paget [formerly Bayly], Henry William, first marquess of Anglesey (1768-1854),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlii, 355-9.

⁴² B. L., Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 177-7, 179, 180-1, 182-3; Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 260-1, 323, 344-5.

⁴³ B. L., Add. Mss. 38261, fos. 222-3, 232-4, 239-43, 260-1, 266-71, 296, 296; Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 67-74; Add. Mss. 74091, fos. 74-5; D. S. Greer, 'Mitford, John Freeman-, first Baron Redesdale (1748-1830),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxviii, 451-3.

Liverpool wrote to Peel on 14 August 1815 on the subject of patronage in Ireland. He accepted the nominations for peerages put forward by his colleague with the exception of one. He advanced the case that to promote Lord Waterford to the rank of a duke in the peerage of Ireland would open up a sea of troubles for the administration:

Irish Dukes could not be made without at the same time making English Dukes. The King has not made an English Duke (except the Princes of the Blood and the Duke of Wellington) for nearly fifty years. All claims of this nature are at rest, but I know they would all start up if a dukedom was conferred on any person of either part of the United Kingdom.⁴⁴

No exception therefore would be made for Waterford.⁴⁵ On 6 September the Liverpool wrote again to Peel. Lord Glandore was offended because he had supported and served the government, but had not received a reward. The Prime Minister promised to discuss the matter with Peel and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, but stated that Glandore had no right to expect or demand a reward just because he was of service to the ministry.⁴⁶

Some men did not take the rejection of their applications for preferment at all well. Sir William Manners, Bt., in control of a number of seats in the House of Commons and in possession of a promise of a peerage from the Prince Regent in 1807, demanded a barony. It failed to materialise and in a letter to the Prime Minister on 4 September he threatened to cause a scandal and not to support the administration at the general election.⁴⁷ Liverpool was not going to be blackmailed. He replied to

⁴⁴ *English Historical Documents*, p. 206.

⁴⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 40190, fos. 244-5.

⁴⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 40181, fos. 64-5.

⁴⁷ *The Letters of King George IV*, ii, 104-5.

Manners on 9 September and refused to recommend him to the Prince Regent for the honour.⁴⁸ Manners went to his death in 1833, not as a peer but as a commoner.

Wellington also directed his anger at the Prime Minister over a matter of patronage. The Field Marshal was rewarded by Liverpool for his services on the battlefield in 1815. This did not stop the Field Marshal from criticising and complaining about his treatment by the premier, however. He continued to pester the Prime Minister over the bestowal of a baronetcy on Kennedy, but Liverpool repeated his refusal to recommend the honour on 2 October 1815 until the personal accounts of the candidate had been properly opened and thoroughly examined.⁴⁹ Liverpool infuriated the Field Marshal at the end of the year when Wellington applied to the premier for a see in the Church of England for his brother, Gerald Valerian Wellesley, and Liverpool refused to grant the request. Liverpool continued to make his ecclesiastical appointments with much care. He stated to Charles Manners Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 22 December 1815 his determination to put the interests of the church before the demands of the government in the matter of clerical preferment.⁵⁰ He refused to transfer Wellesley to a bishopric on the grounds that his marriage was in trouble. (Liverpool continued to refuse for the rest of his time as Prime Minister.) Wellington vented his fury at the premier and Liverpool concluded in a letter to Earl Bathurst on 23 December that this was a crisis, 'which makes me most unwilling to remain at the head of the Government.'⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, 107.

⁴⁹ *Supplementary Despatches*, xi, 182-3.

⁵⁰ L. P. L., Mss. 3274, fos. 66-7.

⁵¹ Bickley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst*, p. 408.

- Events

All Prime Ministers have to learn to cope with tricky miscellaneous problems suddenly and unexpectedly arising, and acting as a distraction from the main issues on the political agenda. Liverpool was no exception. The affairs of Ireland were never far from the premier's mind not only because of the obvious reasons but also because the Chief Secretary was arguably the closest thing the premier had to a political *protégé*. Peel believed that it was necessary for the administration to be prepared for an outbreak of lawlessness during the long parliamentary recess between July and November 1814 and proposed the revival of emergency powers to deal with any eventuality before the adjournment of parliament. Liverpool was strongly inclined not to act in order to avoid a fraught confrontation in parliament at the end of the session, but Sidmouth persuaded him to agree to the Chief Secretary's proposals. Peel was far from being in agreement with Liverpool, but he secured the powers he wanted by reviving the Insurrection Act of 1807-10. He told the Lord Lieutenant on 13 July 1814:

Lord Liverpool was decidedly against the attempt to revive it, but, as I said to Lord Sidmouth, Lord Liverpool is much too pacific a minister for Ireland, and, if we had taken his advice, we should have had the Catholic Board in full force at this moment. Lord Liverpool said it was very inconvenient to have violent debates and angry discussions at so late a period of the year. No doubt it is. But I ventured to predict that there would be no angry debates, and if there were, it is much better to have a conflict in Parliament than a massacre in Ireland.⁵²

It was going too far to suggest that someone like Liverpool would be soft on rebellion or place political expediency above public safety. Nevertheless, Peel's parliamentary prediction proved correct. There were no angry debates. Clearly, the Prime Minister

⁵² *Sir Robert Peel*, ed. Charles Stuart Parker (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1891-9), i, 149-50.

was entirely capable of being somewhat overcautious in his treatment of parliamentarians.⁵³

Liverpool was distracted from the important events on the continent in early 1815 by a couple of developments at home. Thomas Cochrane, MP for Westminster, was imprisoned for fraud in 1814. He was expelled from the House of Commons, but re-elected. He escaped from gaol and then turned up in parliament on 21 March 1815. Lord Cochrane was forcibly removed from the chamber and subsequently returned to his cell. Liverpool, Castlereagh and Vansittart gathered with the Speaker of the House of Commons in his library and voiced the opinion that the arrest did not constitute a breach of privilege.⁵⁴

Liverpool also contributed to the search for a resolution to the problem of the Elgin Marbles. The earl of Elgin had recovered a vast collection of ancient items from Athens in 1801 and hoped to put it up for sale to the nation to cover his debts. Lord Byron rejected the view in 1812 that Elgin had saved the antiquities from damage and destruction, and accused him of plunder. This led to the establishment of an investigation by parliament into the circumstances of the removal of the Elgin Marbles. On 9 June 1815 the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to hear a proposal from Elgin on the sale of his collection to the nation at a price put upon it by a Select Committee of the House of Commons. Elgin was eventually cleared by the inquiry and his marbles were finally purchased by the

⁵³ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

⁵⁴ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 534-5; Andrew Lambert, 'Cochrane, Thomas, tenth earl of Dundonald (1775-1860),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, 315-22; Donald Thomas, *Cochrane* (London: Cassell, 2002).

government in 1816.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *Diary and Correspondence*, ii, 546; William St. Clair, 'Bruce, Thomas, seventh earl of Elgin and eleventh earl of Kincardine (1766-1841),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 329-31; William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Chapter Twenty

The Private Life of Lord Liverpool

1812-15

- Appearance, Character and Health

A study of the early premiership of Lord Liverpool would not be complete without a chapter on the more personal aspects of his life between 1812 and 1815.¹ Liverpool had an interesting and noteworthy appearance and character. He looked rather odd, even quite strange. He had a long neck and a melancholy face. He was lanky and untidy; awkward and clumsy. Liverpool was religious and honest, even quite censorious. (These were not traits typical of the age.) He was a stickler for the rules and the strict observance of proper procedure. He was sensitive and emotional. In a crisis, personal or political, Liverpool could be overcome by nervousness, petulance and even depression.

Liverpool struggled to win respect in parliament during his early career on account of his appearance and character. Lady Bessborough related a conversation with James Hare, a wit and a Whig, in 1802:

Hare was in great Spirits to-night, but not in a way that can tell again, tho' he made us laugh very much at the time. Amongst other things, Robinson ask'd in his earnest manner what kind of talents Ld. Hawkesbury's were, and whether he was very much woke up. Hare answer'd talents fit to roast pigeons and the longest neck in England. Robinson went on with the utmost gravity, saying he heard Ld. Hawkesbury look'd very proud and happy when he came to the House as Minister, and to declare Peace. H. said: "He look'd as he always looks – as if he had been on the rack three times, and saw the wheel preparing for a fourth."²

¹ Norman Gash, 'Lord Liverpool: A Private View', *History Today*, 30, 5 (1980), 35-40; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 21-125, 192-216.

² Philip Carter, 'Hare, James (bap. 1747, d. 1804)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxv, 251-2; *Lord Granville Leveson Gower (First Earl Granville)*, i, 329.

Even during his early premiership, Liverpool was occasionally and mercilessly derided and criticised for his appearance and character. George Bryan ‘Beau’ Brummell had a collection of snuff-boxes and one day at Carlton House in 1812 he passed a curious one with an intricate lock round at dinner. When the Prime Minister sought to prise it open with a knife, Brummell exclaimed: ‘My Lord! Allow me to observe that’s not an oyster but a snuff-box!’³ Brummell was not content with mocking Liverpool’s inelegance in front of the Prince Regent and his other guests. As Saul David notes: ‘As oysters were mainly eaten by the lower echelons of society at this time, the put-down was doubly insulting.’⁴ Lord Byron described a visit to a zoo in a letter in 1813: ‘There was a “hippopotamus”, like Lord Liverpool in the face; and the “Ursine Sloth” had the very voice and manner of my valet – but the tiger talked too much.’⁵ Robert Southey mentioned the Prime Minister in a letter in 1814: ‘Lord Liverpool is a cold man; you may convince his understanding, but you can only obtain an inert assent, where zealous co-operation is wanted.’⁶ Lord Grenville was informed in 1815 about a month before the battle of Waterloo: ‘The two chiefs Liverpool and Castlereagh are both said to look very much out of spirits, and Chilvers tells Lady S. that Liverpool is quite ill with no other illness than constant fretting.’⁷

Liverpool remained quite well during his early premiership, though occasional breaks were taken in fashionable Bath for the benefit of his health. Remarks made in his correspondence suggest that he was ill in both early 1813 and early 1814, but only

³ Hubert Cole, *Beau Brummell* (London: Granada Publishing, 1977), p. 93.

⁴ David, *Prince of Pleasure*, p. 283.

⁵ *Byron*, ed. Peter Quennell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 207.

⁶ *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (6 vols., London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1849-50), iv, 89.

⁷ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1927), p. 400.

for a brief spell on each occasion.⁸ Liverpool recuperated in Bath at the start of 1815. On 7 January he wrote to Nicholas Vansittart from the ancient spa town and ended his letter with the claim that he had benefited from the waters.⁹ George Canning expressed his hope in a note to the premier from Lisbon on 30 January that Liverpool had found his time in Bath good for his health.¹⁰

- Marriage

Liverpool fell in love in 1794 and embarked on a brief courtship. He wed Lady Louisa Theodosia Hervey on 25 March 1795. This union was originally frowned upon by his father. The first earl believed that his son was far too young to be tied down by the responsibilities of marriage. She was, having been born in 1767, a few years older than his son, came from an eccentric, even scandalous, family and was not an heiress to a fortune. Her father, the earl of Bristol and bishop of Derry, was a freethinker, separated from his wife and often absent from his diocese abroad. The Earl-Bishop dressed extravagantly and swore freely, and Elizabeth ‘Bess’ Christiana, one of Hervey’s sisters, infamously engaged, whilst still married to John Thomas Foster, in a *ménage à trois* with the duke & duchess of Devonshire! Liverpool, however, courageously stood up to his father and eventually won him over with the support of

⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 183-4, 229; Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 178, 179-80.

⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 31231, fos. 214-15.

¹⁰ B. L., Add. Mss. 38193, fo. 74.

both the premier and the king.¹¹

Hervey was in fact ideally suited as a wife for Liverpool and must have been a vital source of support for the Prime Minister during his early premiership. She was similar to her husband in many ways. She had been strictly brought up. She was serious, pleasant and reserved. Pious, even a bit sanctimonious, Lady Liverpool was also a respectable spouse. She did not bear her husband any children and so devoted herself instead to various philanthropic activities and the care of her husband. Though lacking robust health, she threw herself enthusiastically into the role of Prime Minister's wife. In 1814 she witnessed the departure of Louis XVIII for the continent and reported on the event to her sister:

I was sadly afraid I could not have gone thro' it all but I *did*, & am very, very thankful, for not only it was most highly Gratifying to my own feelings, but it was pleasing to Lord Liverpool's, & from peculiar circumstances I was *really & truly useful*. It so happen'd I was the only Englishwoman on Board. You may guess therefore *Some* of the good offices I perform'd. In the next place *None* of the Femmes de Chambre arriv'd in time to put their Ladies to Bed, so that but for Mrs. Rosling & me I know not what they would have done. Your poor old friend the Duchess de Serrent & her daughter were both unwell, & therefore doubly needed all possible care & attention.¹²

In 1816 Joseph Farington recorded in his journal the view of the painter, Sir Thomas Lawrence: 'Lawrence spoke of the great affection subsisting between Lord & Lady

¹¹ Gerard O'Brien, 'Hervey, Frederick Augustus, fourth earl of Bristol (1730-1803),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxvi, 854-7; Brian Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl* (London: Century, 1988); Alastair W. Massie, 'Cavendish [née Hervey; other married name Foster], Elizabeth Christiana, duchess of Devonshire (1757-1824),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 611-13; Michael Durban, 'Cavendish, William, fifth duke of Devonshire (1748-1811),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 673-5; Amanda Foreman, 'Cavendish [née Spencer], Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 615-18; Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

¹² Grosvenor, *The First Lady Wharncliffe and her Family*, i, 196-7.

Liverpool. He communicates much to Her and takes Her opinion upon many of His letters.’¹³

Indeed, Lord Liverpool and his wife were entirely devoted to each other throughout their time together. They were rarely apart. On one of the few occasions when they were separated for a while, in late 1815 when the Prime Minister was forced to remain in London to await the arrival of a treaty from Paris while his wife remained at Walmer Castle, Liverpool expressed his deep affection for his wife in a series of letters to her. Each note opened with the words, ‘My dearest Love’.¹⁴ On 15 November he ended the letter: ‘God bless you my love, I am most affectionately yours, Liverpool’.¹⁵ On 18 November: ‘God bless you, dearest, till we are again together’.¹⁶ On 21 November: ‘I fear you will suffer from this Cold which appears likely to last. God bless you, most affectionately yours, Liverpool’.¹⁷ On 23 November: ‘God bless you, we will soon meet, Most affectionately yours, Liverpool’.¹⁸ When his first wife died in 1821, Liverpool was devastated and suffered a near complete breakdown.

It does not appear that Liverpool was ever unfaithful to his wife or had any major vices that could damage his public image. There was no dirt, no muck to be raked, on him. He earned an unrivalled and invaluable reputation for personal probity. Farington noted in his diary a conversation he had with Anthony Carlisle, a surgeon with a conservative temperament, in 1809:

Carlisle called in the evening. We talked of the Political Characters of the present day. He thought Lord Hawkesbury

¹³ Michael Levey, ‘Lawrence, Sir Thomas (1769-1830),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxii, 859-65; *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xiv, 4763.

¹⁴ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 123-4.

¹⁵ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 124; B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 66-7.

¹⁶ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 124; B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 68-9.

¹⁷ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 124; B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 70-1.

¹⁸ Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 124; B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fo. 72.

[Liverpool] appeared to be the only man of that description that stood respectable. No accusations have been brought against Him, & there is a general prudence in His conduct.¹⁹

On 3 August 1813 the lady companion of Princess Charlotte, Ellis Cornelia Knight, wrote to Lady Liverpool and noted the temperate conduct of Lord Liverpool, ‘as well as the moral propriety and domestic happiness which secure to you both the esteem of the public’.²⁰

- Houses and Homes

Liverpool moved between three main residences during his early premiership. In 1801 he bought a country estate near Kingston Upon Thames called Coombe Wood House and Sir John Soane, the architect, was engaged to make repairs and alterations to the property.²¹ (Coombe Wood House was actually demolished in 1933.) This purchase meant that Liverpool now owned a home where he could entertain people in a style more suitable for a prominent statesman. Coombe Wood House, in rural seclusion yet also near London, was perfectly suited to provide him with a convenient and comfortable refuge from the noise, stench and filth of the capital, and, to some extent at least, from the ministerial boxes, government messengers and official visitors. Coombe Wood House was a home where Liverpool could refresh and revitalise himself, so that he could cope more easily with the massive pressure of high office.

¹⁹ W. F. Bynum, ‘Carlisle, Sir Anthony (1768-1840),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, x, 135-6; *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ix, 3466.

²⁰ Richard Garnett, rev. S. J. Skedd, ‘Knight, (Ellis) Cornelia (1757-1837),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxi, 897-9; Kaye, *Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight*, i, 249.

²¹ David Watkin, ‘Soane, Sir John (1753-1837),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, li, 512-19; Gillian Darley, *John Soane* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. ix, 121, 124, 143, 175, 180, 217, 225, 241, 276, 287, 289, 295, 297; Ptolemy Dean, *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 166, 193.

The oasis-like function of this country estate is evident from these two excerpts from the correspondence of his wife in 1803:

You will I am sure be Glad to know that we succeeded in getting here & that we feel refreshed by it in spite of a spiteful East wind. We got here before two, took a walk & made our observations, gather'd Violets, & let *cesar* loose & then din'd at three – after which we took another walk, saw Smith, gave some orders & came in to Tea. Lord H. [Liverpool] & I agreeing that for this *short life* a Villa certainly was ye best calculation as giving ye most frequent pleasure.²²

Yesterday Lord H. [Liverpool] & I both pin'd for ye country. "Have we no chance of Coombe Wood," I said at Breakfast & got a shake of ye head in answer. "Must you go to ye House of Commons?" Yes. "And shall you be *kept*?" No. "Then after all why not have ye carriage at ye door at 7 or 8 & drive quietly down, & at least have an uninterrupted evening, a night in good air, & a walk, & ye drive to Town next morning." Ye proposal was much liked. At 5 he sent me word that no difficulty had occurred. I sent off Mary in ye Phaeton to order fires. At six he came Home. We din'd & got into ye chaise between 7 & 8 (with some cold meat for supper *bodkin*), & by nine we were out of ye *clatter* of this Town, & with a feel of comfort not to be express'd, & this morning we had above an Hour's walk & potter in ye midst of workmen, pigs & Turkeys.²³

Liverpool acted as a patron to the inhabitants of Kingston Upon Thames. He received a delegation from the town in 1814.²⁴ Liverpool became High Steward of Kingston Upon Thames in 1816.

George III showed his affection for Liverpool in 1806 by conferring upon him the title of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. This was a considerable mark of royal favour and public distinction. The lord wardenship was one of the most prestigious and valuable honours at the disposal of the crown. It was given to some of the greatest figures in modern British history. William Pitt 'the Younger' was given the lord wardenship in 1792. The duke of Wellington received it in 1829 and died at the official residence that went with the position in 1852. Viscount Palmerston became

²² Grosvenor, *The First Lady Wharncliffe and her Family*, i, 108.

²³ *Ibid.*, i, 108-9.

²⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 128-9.

Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1861 and the marquess of Salisbury was honoured in 1895. In 1941 the lord wardenship was given to Winston Spencer Churchill. Of course the office was filled at one time or another by rather less worthy individuals. W. H. Smith, the founder of the chain of shops, became Lord Warden in 1891.²⁵ He was satirised in 1878 by Gilbert and Sullivan in their opera, *HMS Pinafore*, as the First Lord of the Admiralty who never went to sea.²⁶ He was nominated for the honour because he was one of the richest of the premier's colleagues and therefore could afford the running costs of Walmer Castle.

The lord wardenship carried with it certain responsibilities. The office was established in the thirteenth century to organise coastal defences and to supervise the affairs of the Cinque Ports confederation. The confederation was made up of the towns of Dover, Hastings, Hythe, Romney and Sandwich. By the nineteenth century, the Lord Warden had taken on the role of a Lord Lieutenant. Liverpool took this position seriously. The volumes of his manuscripts are littered with references to the Cinque Ports.²⁷ (Liverpool became Master of Trinity House, the body responsible for lighthouses and other navigational aids, in 1812.)²⁸

The lord wardenship also brought more tangible benefits. Liverpool received a salary of £3,000 per annum. When his father died in 1808, Liverpool inherited an

²⁵ Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Smith, William Henry (1825-1891),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, li, 381-4.

²⁶ Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jane W. Stedman, 'Gilbert, Sir William Schwenck (1836-1911),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33400>, accessed 24 Feb 2006> Arthur Jacobs, 'Sullivan, Sir Arthur Seymour (1842-1900),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26772>, accessed 24 Feb 2006>

²⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 70-3, 74-5, 84-5, 262-5; Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 84, 270-2, 275, 305; Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 279-83; Add. Mss. 38254, fo. 180; Add. Mss. 38256, 195-7; Add. Mss. 38257, fos. 3-4; Add. Mss. 38259, fos. 19102, 193-4; Add. Mss. 38260, fos. 182-3; Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 95-6

²⁸ <www.trinityhouse.co.uk>

annual income of about £15,000. With the lord wardenship and the salary he received as a member of the government, this brought Liverpool's annual income to about £23,000, a very considerable sum.²⁹ The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports had an official residence, Walmer Castle, on the Kent coast. Built by Henry VIII in 1539, Walmer Castle had become the home of the Lord Warden in 1708.³⁰

In 1809 Liverpool took a lease on Fife House in London. When he became Prime Minister, Liverpool did not move into 10 Downing Street and chose to work instead from Fife House. Fife House was demolished in 1862.

- Interests

Liverpool could not have had a great deal of time or energy to devote to matters other than his work. Nor was he a highly adventurous or very sociable individual. Liverpool did not long to travel abroad. After his return from 'the grand tour', it would appear that he embarked for the continent on only two further occasions, in 1792 and 1825. Liverpool ceased to be a regular visitor to his club and in 1815 he even received a note from White's drawing his attention to the fact that he had not paid his annual subscription.³¹ He was fond of good food and fine wine. There are bills and other indicators of this fact among his papers, but there is no sign that Liverpool was in any way decadent.³² There is only one mention of him drinking excessively during his early premiership. Princess Charlotte wrote a letter to a friend about a dinner at Windsor Castle in 1813:

²⁹ This was not a great sum to John George Lambton in 1821, however: '£40,000 a year a moderate income – such a one as a man *might jog on with.*' *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 216.

³⁰ Rowena Shepherd, Virginia Hinze & Jonathan Coad, *Walmer Castle and Gardens* (London: English Heritage, 2003).

³¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 10-14, 48-9, 75; Percy Colson, *White's 1693-1950* (London: William Heinemann, 1951).

³² B. L., Add. Mss. 38580, fos. 94-7.

The other tables were perfectly sober in breaking up, but ours began, I saw, badly, & ended in a tragedy, as *all* the men but the D. of Brunswick were *dead drunk*. The D. of York *fell over* the back of his chair against a *wine cooler* & cut his head a good deal, & in recovering himself pulled the tablecloth & all *the things upon him*. Except my uncle there was none to assist. He contrived to *drag* him up & poured a quantity of ice water over his head wh. recovered him considerably. Gen. Taylor was sent for & he was blooded by the surgeon, who *took a basin* full of blood from him, when he was covered up in Col. Alexander's great coat & put into his post chaise with Col. Torrens & off for London. However at Bagshot his wounds broke out again, & by that means lost a great deal of blood. The P. of Orange was without his coat & waistcoat, & the P [Prince Regent] so cut as *not to* be able to articulate a word.

All this scene Thursday. This mg., as I only saw considerable going backwards & forwards & anxiety, as none of the Ministers that left the table could speak, Ld. Liverpool confessed he had *but just* recollection enough to know *where & with whom he was*.³³

Liverpool did have a number of interests that took him away from his work during his early premiership, however. He demonstrated a concern for the welfare and advancement of his family and friends of his family. John Ireland had been chaplain to his father and Liverpool asked him to become the Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford in 1813, but Ireland declined the offer on health grounds.³⁴ The Prime Minister promised to try to arrange a certain ecclesiastical appointment for a friend of his half-brother, Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson, that same year.³⁵ In 1815 his half-sister, Charlotte Cope Jenkinson, wrote to thank him for facilitating the promotion of her husband, the earl of Verulam, in the peerage.³⁶ Also in 1815, Liverpool settled the bill for the education of the child of a poor cousin, Fanny Jenkinson, who had married the heir to an impecunious baronetcy, Boothby.³⁷

³³ *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, p. 63.

³⁴ Tony Trowles, 'Ireland, John (1761-1842),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxix, 336-7; B. L., Add. Mss. 38254, fo. 83.

³⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38253, fo. 194.

³⁶ B. L., Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 40-1.

³⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 85-6.

The institutions in which he had been educated were not forgotten by the Prime Minister. He took a close interest in the affairs of his old school, Charterhouse. Thomas Grenville informed Lord Grenville in a letter in 1814 about a peer 'meeting Lord Liverpool at two this day on Charter House business'.³⁸ He contributed to the debate on the impact of the market near the school.³⁹ Liverpool promoted the career of the dean of his old college, Charles Henry Hall.⁴⁰

Liverpool rallied to the cause of homeland security with the threat of invasion from the continent in the 1790s.⁴¹ Pitt persuaded Liverpool to accept a commission in the defence force he had raised for this purpose on the Kent coast. Liverpool became a Colonel of the Cinque Ports Regiment of Fencible Cavalry in 1794.⁴² His military commitments took him away from the capital for periods of the time. He was quartered in Dumfries in 1796 and he commanded the escort at the funeral of Robert

³⁸ *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick & Francis Bickley (Vol. 10, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 382.

³⁹ B. L., Add. Mss. 38252, fos. 46-51; Add. Mss. 38379, fos. 140-3.

⁴⁰ J. F. A. Mason, 'Hall, Charles Henry (1763-1827),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiv, 600-1; B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 33-4.

⁴¹ Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794-1814* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

⁴² Liverpool was ridiculed in his youth by Canning and his circle of friends. He was nicknamed 'Jenky' and 'Jinks', 'Hawky' and 'Hawsbury' by them. Canning played a cruel and elaborate practical joke on Liverpool on at least one occasion in the 1790s. Liverpool was proud of his role in the home defence force and was eager to persuade his old university pal to join up too. Canning declined to take a commission as a captain in the cavalry and decided to produce a parody of the recruitment poster put up by Liverpool. Canning had a packet of the posters delivered to Liverpool at a dinner and had a note attached to them from the print shop acknowledging an order and implying that the posters had gone up across the capital. Liverpool was upset and burst into tears; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 21-34; Canning apologised but continued to be unkind to Liverpool on occasion. Pitt returned to the premiership in 1804 and invited both Liverpool and Canning to serve in his administration. About a month after the establishment of the ministry, Canning delivered a speech to parliament and launched an attack on the record of the last government. Liverpool served as Foreign Secretary between 1801 and 1804, and Liverpool contemplated his resignation; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 56-76; Liverpool was prepared to forgive Canning and did not develop a desire for vengeance.

Burns. Liverpool had not been an admirer of the poet on account of the latter's sympathy for radicalism and had avoided making his acquaintance during his lifetime, and he did not think much of the lifestyle north of the border. He wrote, 'the style of living here is rather gross, though very hospitable. The servants are few, and very dirty; but there is a great quantity of meat put upon the table, and after dinner the bottle passes rather quicker than I like.'⁴³ Liverpool continued to play a role in the military affairs of the Cinque Ports even after the immediate threat of invasion had passed. In 1806 he was awarded the lord wardenship and became commandant of the local militia regiment. His correspondence shows that he did not cease to monitor its activities after he rose to the premiership.⁴⁴

Christianity was important to Liverpool. It does not appear to be the case, however, that he was an Evangelical. He practised his religion, but it did not become such a force in his life as it did in William Wilberforce's. In short, he did not feel the need to shout about it. In 1812 Liverpool was elected President of the British and Foreign Bible Society and donated £50 to the organisation.⁴⁵ He became Patron of the Isle of Thanet Subsidiary Christian Knowledge Society in 1813.⁴⁶ In 1815 the Prime Minister was thanked for his annual subscription of £20 to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.⁴⁷

Time, energy and money were also provided by Liverpool during his early premiership in support of a range of charities. In *The Times* on 7 May 1812 he was listed as having donated £10 towards the Enquiry into the State of Mendicity in the

⁴³ Yonge, *Life and Administration*, i, 35.

⁴⁴ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fos. 69, 185-6; Add. Mss. 38256, fos. 211-12; Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 32-3, 131-2.

⁴⁵ B. L., Add. Mss. 38328, fo. 40 V; Add. Mss. 38254, fos. 240-4.

<www.biblesociety.org.uk>

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 2 November 1813.

⁴⁷ B. L., Add. Mss. 38262, fos. 222-3.

<www.spck.org.uk>

Metropolis. His wife gave a further £2 to the investigation. On 18 March 1813 he acted as a steward at the annual general meeting of the Small Pox Hospital.⁴⁸

Liverpool served as a vice-president of the Magdalen Hospital for penitent prostitutes. He also served as a vice-president of the National Society for the Education of the Poor throughout England and Wales in the Principles of the Established Church, and presented a work by Andrew Bell, a founder of the movement, to the Prince Regent.⁴⁹

Liverpool managed to fit into his extremely busy schedule the time to undertake various cultural activities.⁵⁰ In 1813 the Prime Minister was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and Liverpool promised to try to attend an early meeting of the group.⁵¹ Evidently reading continued to be an interest for him. He was asked to settle an account for books on 27 December 1815.⁵² He appreciated painting and sculpture, the fine arts. He became involved with the Royal Academy.⁵³ On 3 May 1812 Liverpool suggested charging each member of the public 5s. to view the new exhibition brightly illuminated by a lamp recently presented by the Prince Regent.⁵⁴ The following year he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy and attended an exhibition at the British Institution of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds

⁴⁸ B. L., Add. Mss. 38251, fo. 231; Add. Mss. 38252, fo. 80.

⁴⁹ Jane Blackie, 'Bell, Andrew (1753-1832),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, iv, 900-905; B. L., Add. Mss. 38572, fos. 41-55, 56-9; Add. Mss. 38253, fos. 354-62; Add. Mss. 38255, fos. 360-1; H. J. Burgess & P. A. Welsby, *A Short History of the National Society 1811-1961* (London: National Society, 1961).

⁵⁰ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ B. L., Add. Mss. 41312, fo. 25.

⁵² B. L., Add. Mss. 38474, fos. 87-8.

⁵³ Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

<www.royalacademy.org.uk>

⁵⁴ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, xi, 4121; Evelyn Newby, 'Farington, Joseph (1747-1821),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9161>, accessed 28 Feb 2006>

(1723-92).⁵⁵ Another exhibition at the British Institution was visited by the Prime Minister in 1814.⁵⁶

Science was also of interest to him. Liverpool was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1794.⁵⁷ The naturalist, Sir Joseph Banks, Bt., acknowledged his interest in science in a letter on 14 January 1814.⁵⁸ On 31 August 1815 Liverpool joined a party on board a steamboat on the Thames.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xii, 4343-6, 4384-5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii, 4516-17, 4523.

⁵⁷ Marie Boas Hall, *All Scientists Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<www.royalsoc.ac.uk>

⁵⁸ John Gascoigne, 'Banks, Sir Joseph, baronet (1743-1820),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, iii, 691-6; B. L., Add. Mss. 38255, fos. 372-3.

⁵⁹ *Miss Eden's Letters*, ed. Violet Dickinson (London: Macmillan, 1919), pp. 17-18.

Conclusion

Lord Liverpool at the end of 1815 found himself in a much stronger position than he had been at the start of his premiership. Over the last three and a half years his administration had survived its sickly birth, faced down the threat posed by Marquess Wellesley and George Canning, led the country to a great victory in the long war against France and agreed a momentous peace settlement with the other major powers in Europe. The Prime Minister, entirely characteristically, refused to take the credit for these substantial achievements, but there can be absolutely no doubt that he was entitled to a measure of praise. He had played a crucial role in the difficult first six months of his premiership stabilising the administration by, apart from several other things, reshuffling the cabinet, tackling pressing concerns, promoting young talent, exerting his authority and calling a timely general election. The challenge from the third parties had been anticipated by the Prime Minister. Liverpool had struggled both to maintain parliamentary support and to extend it. Liverpool had been instrumental in winning over the Canningites and courting the duke of Wellington, and he had also started the long process that would culminate in the reunification of the Pittites in the early 1820s. Liverpool had not abandoned his interest in the struggle on the continent when he surrendered the seals of the war department and he had crucially kept his head during the Waterloo campaign. Swift and effective action had been taken by the premier to deal with Napoleon after the emperor's final capitulation. Viscount Castlereagh had headed the British delegation at the various peace talks, but Liverpool had provided the Foreign Secretary with vital support. Above all the Prime Minister had reminded Castlereagh of the parameters within which he had to work.

A number of criticisms, however, can be levelled at Liverpool. His advice to Wellington on military matters had not always been sound. For example, he had been

foolish to suggest posting the Field Marshal to the United States of America. Indeed, the Prime Minister had been guilty of occasionally expressing the sort of arrogant attitude towards the Americans that had led to Great Britain losing the thirteen colonies in the first place. Liverpool had additionally failed to establish a satisfactory relationship with Princess Charlotte. Yet these criticisms of the Prime Minister should not be overemphasised. Liverpool had never sought to force his opinions on Wellington and he had hoped to extricate the country from the conflict with the Americans as soon as it was practicably possible to do so. He, furthermore, had facilitated the departure of Princess Caroline to the continent, done his best to mollify her daughter, and the government member who had really done most to offend Princess Charlotte and to reinforce her antipathy towards her father's ministers had actually been the Lord Chancellor. What is abundantly clear is that Liverpool did not simply preside over his government. He worked hard to keep it in power and to make it a success. He was both in office and in power. During his early premiership Liverpool essentially lived up to his family motto: *palma non sine pulvere* (no reward without effort).¹

Norman Gash concludes his biography with an attempt to identify the secret of Liverpool's success. He argues that Liverpool was quite good at a lot of things without being outstanding at anything. He was a good parliamentary manager, but not a great one like Walpole. He was intelligent, but not brilliant like Pitt. 'It can be said of Lord Liverpool, as of Dr Johnson, that he possessed ordinary virtues to a very

¹ In the book printed as his posthumous memoirs in 1836, Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, 1st Bt., recorded an anecdote about the first earl: a wit in opposition translated the motto as 'this is the reward of my dirty work'; Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 35; Katherine Turner, 'Wraxall, Sir Nathaniel William, first baronet (1751–1831),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30012>>, accessed 24 Feb 2006>

extraordinary degree.’² There is without doubt a lot of truth in this statement, but there was more to Liverpool than this. He did possess two outstanding qualities which are especially apparent during his early premiership, and, although not exactly heroic, helped Liverpool to retain the premiership and were of particular use to a statesman in his day when majorities in parliament had to be earned all the time.

First, Liverpool was a thoroughly decent man. He expressed his appreciation for the talents, efforts and achievements of other people, however difficult they could be. He was kind and considerate, loyal to his colleagues and courteous to all, self-effacing and straight-forward. Such characteristics enabled Liverpool to build strong working relationships not only with powerful personalities such as Wellington and Castlereagh, but also to remain on good terms with difficult backbenchers and trying correspondents. Liverpool did not bear grudges and therefore he placed no immovable obstacle in the road leading to Canning’s return to the government fold. Apart from a certain nervousness which got worse with age, Liverpool did not exhibit any significant character flaws and nor did he have any major personal vices that could have undermined the fulfilment of his public responsibilities.³

Second, Liverpool had great common sense. He was the ultimate safe pair of hands. He instinctively understood the politics of the age in which he lived and the need to balance competing interests. For example, during the first six months of his premiership he sought to provide relief for Dissenters, but without causing needless offence to Anglicans. Similarly, the premier intervened on behalf of William Wilberforce to promote the abolition of the slave trade by the French authorities at the end of the war, but he was not ready to pay any price to achieve this objective.

² Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 254.

³ Depression of course was not unique to Liverpool. Churchill for one was a victim of it: ‘Black dog is back again.’ *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, p. 94.

Liverpool shunned extremism, rejected idealism and championed moderation.

Ideological dogma, religious visions, popular appeals, emotional responses, sectional bias, original ideas and bold initiatives were not for him. He believed in compromise, change by consensus, and evolution over revolution. He was only interested in what was practical, in what was realistic, in what would work and in what would enable him to retain the support of the majority in parliament. This did not make Liverpool a very interesting politician, but it was right for his time. Politicians often speak of common sense, but it is surprising how few actually demonstrate it and how little it is sometimes valued. Perhaps it would be better to say that Liverpool had uncommon sense.

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