

# AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND

Antoine de Bordeaux-Neufville, French Ambassador to England (1652–1660)

to Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), chief minister of France (1642–1661)

London, Monday, 5 May 1659 <sup>[NS]</sup>

If my last letters have not been detained in England, they will have prepared Your Eminence to receive without surprise some news of what has happened here since the first of this month.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the evil did not appear so pressing and that it was still hoped, on that very day, to find some way of accommodation. But the leaders of the army, finding that they were being amused by negotiations whilst the friends of the Protector were pressing the Parliament to take resolutions tending to his establishment and their ruin, judged it fitting to provide for their own safety, and to do by force what they could not obtain by fair means.

With this intent, on Thursday, at midnight, they placed the troops under arms in the neighbourhood of Whitehall. And the principal men among them having met together in Saint James without admitting to their council those who were known to be well-intentioned to the court, they sent Major-General Desborough<sup>2</sup> with a dozen officers to demand of the Protector that he should himself dissolve the Parliament on the next day.

These deputies found him with a few officers who were his friends and already informed of the resolution taken by the council of war, but also deprived of the confidence which he had had in some regiments, all the subordinate officers of which had abandoned their colonels to join other corps; to that degree even that a squadron of cavalry refused to follow their captain who was leading them to Whitehall.

Although the Protector was aware of this general alienation and that his friends had scarcely been able to find two hundred men in all the troops willing to follow them, he did not cease to display boldness and to declare that he would suffer all kinds of violence rather than grant the request which had been made to him. This refusal obliged the said General Desborough to come to threats, and to let him know that he was not in a position to defer, even for an hour, the resolution which the army had taken; leaving him, nevertheless, the liberty, if he would not go in person to dissolve the Parliament, to grant a commission for that purpose to some member of his council.

His Highness, seeing the necessity inevitable, and those who were with him having agreed that they must submit to force, after having given some signs of his displeasure and repugnance promised that which he could not refuse. The said General Desborough and the other deputies retired upon this promise, and went to await its performance in a neighbouring house, where the Secretary of State<sup>3</sup> brought to them, between two and three o'clock in the morning, the orders addressed to the Keeper of the Seal.<sup>4</sup>

In the meanwhile, some companies of cavalry and infantry entered into the courtyard of Whitehall and there conducted themselves with considerable license, especially in the cellars, and there were also many comings and goings. And they say that it was agreed not entirely to destroy the Protector, but to let him govern with the council which will be given to him; without, however, allowing him to meddle with the army, which remains in London and near Whitehall, opposite to which there was a body of guards who arrested some officers and soldiers, considered to be partisans of the court, who wished to enter.

This great movement did not prevent the members of Parliament from repairing to Westminster at the accustomed hour. So, when they were seated, the Chief Keeper of the Seals, the president of the new House, declared the intention of His Highness and it was resolved to call in the Commons to read to them the letters of

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<sup>1</sup> "The First of this month" —21 April [OS] in England

<sup>2</sup> Major-General John Desborough (1608–1680), Member of the Other House and uncle of Richard Cromwell

<sup>3</sup> John Thurloe (1616–1668), Secretary of State (1652–1660)

<sup>4</sup> Bulstrode Whitelocke (1605–1675), Keeper of the Great Seal (1654–1660)

the Great Seal announcing the dissolution of the Parliament. But this message being sent to them by the Usher of the Black Rod,<sup>1</sup> as it had been previously determined not to receive any message from that chamber except from one of its Members, and that moreover the invitation was not very agreeable, after a debate of two hours it was resolved to take no notice of it. And to prevent the order of dissolution being notified to them in some other way, they adjourned the assembly to this day and separated immediately.

In this deliberation the violence of the officers of the army was greatly reprehended. Some proposed to declare them all traitors, and others to request the concurrence of the town of London and to assemble there. The Presbyterians, among others, appeared very animated, and General Fairfax<sup>2</sup> was malignant. Some republicans also affected discontent. Nevertheless, no conclusion was arrived at; many of the deputies wishing, and having underhand fomented, the dissolution of the Parliament because they saw it was too blindly attached to the interest of the Protector.

Some also apprehend that the troops in Scotland and Ireland disapprove of the conduct of those in England, and that my Lord Henry<sup>3</sup> and General Monck<sup>4</sup> are fomenting division among them.

François Guizot, *Monk, or, The Fall of the Republic*, Andrew R. Scoble, translator (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866):I:113–115.

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<sup>1</sup> The Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod served as the Secretary to the Lord Chamberlain and as Serjeant-at-Arms for the Other House

<sup>2</sup> Thomas (1612–1671), Lord Fairfax, commande-in-chief of Parliamentary forces (1645–1649). Since 1649 retired to his Yorkshire estate

<sup>3</sup> Major-General Henry Cromwell (1628–1674), Lord-Deputy of Ireland (1657–1659) and younger brother of Richard Cromwell

<sup>4</sup> George Monck (1608–1670), Commander-in-Chief in Scotland