

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, 31 October 1659 ^[OS]

I shall continue to inform Your Eminence of the sequel of the divisions of England. Since the letter which I did myself the honour to write to you by the preceding post, news have come from Scotland which confirm the report that Monck persists in his intention to re-establish the Parliament; that he has arrested all the officers of his troops who held other views, even a colonel who had been sent to him from hence; that the garrisons of Berwick, Carlisle, and another fortified castle on the frontier of England have declared for him; and that, finally, he is taking every measure to strengthen himself.

Lieutenant-General Fleetwood has, at the same time, received his declaration in conformity to these advices; he has also written to the churches in the same terms, promising them assistance for the maintenance of their prerogatives. This proceeding has caused the Council of War to come to a resolution to send an army of 8000 to give him battle, or at least to arrest his progress; and on this very day there have left London a body of infantry and cavalry drawn from the veteran troops, whose place will be supplied by new levies. Major-General Lambert will again command in this expedition, it having been judged that General Fleetwood was more necessary in the town to maintain peace.

Monck, having in all Scotland only nine regiments of infantry and three of cavalry, will not be able to bring so many forces into the field as will be sent against him unless he makes new levies or un-garrisons all the towns of Scotland; which would make him suspected by his troops of an understanding with the King of England and would entirely alienate them, their inclination tending more towards the republic than towards any other form of government.

Mild measures are at the same time being practised to influence them and there took place yesterday, at the instance of the officers here, a meeting of ministers, which resulted in their sending them four deputies, two of whom are colonels who were cashiered when the Parliament was restored. It is not an easy thing to divine what will be the success of this deputation, as this leader is very popular and has now advanced too far to draw back. It is feared here that he will join the King's party if he does not feel himself strong enough, and that he has even already formed the plan of doing so, and only makes use of the name of the Parliament to secure his troops, for he cannot have the preservation of that body so much at heart as to go to war on its account. Besides that, it is not so agreeable a cause that he must wait until no one is willing to authorize it, or he alone is able to defend it, the army in England being united, as it now appears, and having only the governor of Hull, whose inclinations are doubtful.

Great umbrage has been caused by the conduct of the Commandant of Ireland; he has arrived in London and he will not be permitted to leave again. If the troops in Ireland do not follow his inclinations, and if those in England remain constant to those which they at present exhibit, it will be necessary for Monck either to come to an accommodation or to seek assistance elsewhere. This last step would be very easy to him, the Scotch and English being quite disposed to revolt, but he must use great address in order to deceive his troops and although, according to public report, they are said to be very averse to a reconciliation, they will with difficulty be induced to fight against each other.

It is also hoped here that, Lambert being on the spot, his presence will give courage to those whom the fear of evil treatment prevents from declaring themselves in favour of the army; otherwise the war will be indefinitely prolonged, as neither the season nor the forces of England permit the undertaking of sieges in a very wild country, although some artillery has been embarked upon the Thames.

I have thought it right, in this doubtful conjuncture, to inform General Fleetwood that if my intervention could possibly contribute to re-union, I would exert myself with all the zeal which might be expected from the known affection of His Majesty to England. He has this evening sent to thank me for this offer without either declining or accepting it, excusing himself by the great perplexity of affairs for not having come in person to express to me the gratitude which the government could not but feel for a civility which it has not received from any other foreign minister.

There is no inconvenience connected with being the first to take such a step as cannot fail to obtain the thanks of both parties; I nevertheless did not address myself to the Committee, so that my offer might not be made public; and, up to this hour, no notification has been sent to me of its establishment, which took place at the end of last week without much ceremony. Part of the ministers chosen having met in the room generally used by the council, a colonel brought and read to them the act of the army. Sir Harry Vane and two others asked time to consider if they should act, taking as a pretext for this postponement that this commission gave them a legislative power which belonged only to the Parliament. Lambert wished to remove this scruple; but his reasons did not prevent them from retiring, and they have not presented themselves again today; whence we may infer that they are in doubt about the stability of the present government and apprehend that Monck will prevail; it being certain that these same persons were at first for the dissolution of the Parliament and that they would not now make any difficulty about taking their seats, unless they apprehended its return or the establishment of some authority which would prosecute them for having taken part in the government without any legitimate title for so doing. By the retirement of Sir H. Vane, this assembly finds itself greatly destitute of capable persons, and there only remains Lambert, who must set out in two days, probably not to return very soon....

François Guizot, *Monk, or, The Fall of the Republic*, Andrew R. Scoble, translator (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866):I:120–123.