

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, 7 November 1659

I shall not have to write to you today of the reunion of the army; there appears rather a disposition to an entire rupture, as the last advices received here state that the troops in Scotland have, with great demonstrations of joy, promised Monck to live and die with him, and that on his part he has given them reason to hope for the payment of their arrears, and has since detached some troops to take possession of Newcastle, a large town without fortifications, from whence is obtained all the coal used in England, which would render its capture very prejudicial, especially to London. Some of his letters to other towns have also been intercepted, in which he invited them to join his party and represented London to be well-disposed towards him.

To counter-act these measures, Major-General Lambert set out post-haste three days ago, leaving the army in march, but without hoping that it could make haste enough to secure the frontier towns if they had any inclination to join the said General Monck. In order to divert them from this by the example of the London militia, this body has also been requested to write a letter to that leader, inviting him to peace.

But the greater part of the assembly have not yet judged it fitting to show any partiality, and seem desirous to put off a declaration until it shall more certainly appear what is his design. The public voice has maintained, during the last few days, that he is in communication with the King of England, and his enemies affect to fear something of the kind. Nevertheless, the Republicans defend him from this charge and declare that his sole object is to re-establish the Parliament. He has, moreover, written to the army here, in conformity with this statement.

Nevertheless, whether his words do not meet with credence, or whether he judges that necessity may lead him to adopt other sentiments, and that, if the war continues, a third party may be formed in England, new levies are being made. This precaution is the more necessary because the City of London is beginning to hold the same views as the militia, and to change the officers whom the Parliament appointed, and some of the most influential citizens even talk of having a free Parliament. If Monck used the same language, he would be more readily supported; whence it follows that all sorts of means are employed to gain either him or his troops.

With this view, the Committee has appointed a sub-committee to form a government which shall meet the wishes of all parties and dis-engage them honourably from the step they have taken. Sir Harry Vane has consented to be of the number of these sub-delegated commissioners, although he does not publicly engage in other matters of state; but some others who had felt scruples about acting in virtue of a commission given them by the army have become more bold; and last week there was published an act of this assembly which continues all the officers and civil magistrates in the performance of their duties, and orders the payment of the taxes already imposed, under penalty of having to give free quarters to the soldiers. This threat has been considered extraordinary, and has given the discontented a pretext for finding fault with the present condition of England. But the Council of War feels no alarm at this, and has lately even been upon the point of suppressing tithes and the Court of Chancery, as being both a burden to the people and very unnecessary; if the wishes of the subaltern officers had been attended to, this reform would have been accomplished.

The leaders must find it inconvenient to offend so many people at the present conjuncture, the sequel of which cannot clearly be foreseen; only it is probable that, if there is no secret understanding with the King of England, the quarrel will soon come to an end, and the troops will re-unite, as neither are at all desirous to come to conflict with each other, and those in England have been entirely at union since the Governor of Hull rejected the propositions made him by Monck, to which rejection their private enmity greatly contributed.

There is nothing said about Ireland which should excite jealousy, nor about the affairs of England.

François Guizot, *Monk, or, The Fall of the Republic*, Andrew R. Scoble, translator (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866):I:123–124.