

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, 14 November 1659 [OS]

The letters which General Monck wrote last week were followed, three days afterwards, by his officers. These are three officers of different corps who arrived in London the day before yesterday, and have today begun their conferences with the leaders of the army. They had, on their way, seen my lord General Lambert and their propositions must have appeared reasonable to him, as he immediately halted his troops, according to their desire. It is said that they are charged to insist principally upon the recall of the old Parliament, or the convocation of a new one, on the maintenance of the ancient laws of the nation, and on the support of the ministers by the ordinary mode, that is, by tithes.

The last two points seem to be ill-received by the sectaries, who wish to employ the tithes for other purposes and establish another fund for the support of the ministers. They also have it very much at heart to change many of the laws; but as for the Parliament, there will be no difficulty in obtaining it, provided that it be with such restrictions that the people shall not be able to elect persons opposed to the republican government and that there shall also be established, at the same time, a senate with equal power in some cases; it is even said that the committee resolved to convoke this body instead of the assembly of 200 which was projected, and it is not probable that any of these conditions will be refused to the troops in Scotland if they can thereby be brought to union.

Some are persuaded that Monck is not treating in good faith, and that he is advancing his demand in order to gain time and to render his cause more popular, in the hope that they will not be granted. Nevertheless, the most general opinion is that he really intends to come to an accommodation, seeing no likelihood of success for the cause which he maintains, since the army in Ireland has refused to join him. Besides, he is not a man to pursue a course of conduct so utterly at variance with his views, and his troops would quickly abandon him if they had the least suspicion of any understanding with the King's party, without whose assistance he cannot maintain himself against the whole army. It is true that the Presbyterians would readily join him if the existing authorities were to persecute them; but whatever their inclination may be, it will not be manifested in the present conjuncture, and it was only three days ago that, in order to calm the minds of the citizens of London, who appeared still to apprehend a change in religion, General Fleetwood, Colonel Desborough, and Mr. Whitelocke went to the town-hall and delivered three harangues in different style.

The first professed entire dis-interestedness of the army and promised that no prejudice should be done to either the liberties of the nation or the government of religion. The second spoke in terms more military and more in conformity with his rather stern character, declaring that they had not come to natter the town, that the army would never put itself in a position of dependence upon those whom it had conquered, and that it would rather support the sectaries than suffer the adoption of any resolution to its prejudice. The last, who is now keeper of the Seal, exhorted the company to union and peace, for the maintenance of which are posted, in the principal places, troops, but not sectaries.

The mayor is very active, manifesting by his conduct his wish that no tumult should take place; for such would be doubtless followed by great confusion as the people are not of the same mind and the sectaries find themselves sufficiently numerous, together with the rest of the army, to balance the power of the other citizens; a state of things which will keep the former in their duty until the negotiation has met with some success. But if fortune decreed that it should not produce an accommodation, the town would probably give some trouble to the present government, which is still occupied with home affairs....