

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, 30 January 1659/1660 [OS]

The last letter which I did myself the honour to write to Your Eminence informed you that the hopes of all parties in England were based upon General Monck, and that all were impatiently awaiting his arrival. He has not yet reached London, and will not arrive here for three days, during which his troops will refresh themselves in the environs. But his views have already been ascertained by the reception which he gave to the deputies from this city, and from many of the counties.

He received the first in presence of the commissioners of the Parliament and replied to their compliments by demonstrations of astonishment that he should be thought capable of being unfaithful to the authorities from whom he held his commission, exhorted them to submit and not interfere with the measures which it would take to restore tranquility to the nation under a suitable form of government, but rather to second its good intentions by their prayers and meanwhile to have patience, the only services which the Parliament desired of the town.

He spoke with still greater sharpness to the other deputies who came to request him, on the part of the nobility of different counties, to support the re-admission of the excluded Members without their taking any oath, or the convocation of a free Parliament. After having blamed their impatience and the demand which they made, after the Parliament had rejected it, he also gave them to understand that it was not the custom to allow any deputy to take his seat in such an assembly before he had entered into some obligation. He represented to them that the present Parliament was the freest that had ever been seen in England, saying that it would fill up the vacant places as soon as they should have decided upon the qualifications necessary to prevent the ruin of a cause for which they had fought so long; that, finally, they must submit to the present government and that he was bound to defend it.

Besides these verbal declarations, he has made a similar one in writing, in the form of a letter addressed to his own county, the nobility of which had adopted the same opinions as the city of London. He therein expressed at some length the reasons which oppose the return of the royal family, and which ought to dispose the whole nation to choose in preference a republican government.

The Parliament received the news on the 26th instant, together with letters, both from its own deputies and from the said General Monck, full of assurances of his fidelity, in gratitude for which the General's commission, which had been given him during the interregnum by the Council of State, was approved. The post of Master of the Rolls of his county was given him, and an act of approbation of all that he had done was read for the first time.

From this time forth also there began to appear a great change in the disposition of the minds of this assembly, it being even resolved immediately to levy a tax of £100.000 per month; and search was afterwards made in the houses of some citizens for the money which is said to be intended for the King of England. A considerable sum was, in fact, found in the house of one very royalist merchant, but it is claimed by several individuals.

It is also now proposed to dissolve the common council and to compel the city to yield that obedience which it has up to this hour refused. If, on the one side, their boldness has increased, that of the people is not the less diminished, nor do the royalists appear less downcast; their only resource is now in the general discontent of all the nobility, who are beginning to assemble in different quarters. It is not, moreover, to be presumed that the army will always remain in such complete dependence upon the civil power. And, although just now the condition of the government appears advantageous, though the troops are under no apprehension with regard

to the return of the King, and though this fear may be strong enough to keep them united, nevertheless, I cannot but concur in the opinion of those who think that there is yet much progress to be made before the Parliament will be consolidated, seeing the general alienation of all the people and the jealousies which some of the deputies were not able to dissimulate today when it was proposed to withdraw the troops from the town to make way for those from Scotland, according to Monck's desire, which has been complied with. This request has re-awakened some hopes and doubts, and it may safely be stated that the least discontent of the army, or assistance from without, would destroy all the existing establishments unless the people were to change their humour.

In order to recover them from the great aversion which they appear to feel, the Parliament decreed and published, at the commencement of last week, a declaration in which it professes its desire to establish a free government, without King or Lords, under the direction of the Parliament; and to form an army in such a manner that, so long as it shall be necessary to the safety of the republic, it shall obey the civil authority; that all questions and proceedings concerning the lives, liberties, and conditions of the people shall be regulated according to the laws of the country, and that the Parliament shall not meddle either with the ordinary administration or with the execution of the laws; that provision shall be made for the maintenance of the ministers, that the tithes shall be continued to them as the most convenient method of supporting them, and that provision shall also be made for liberty of conscience in matters of religion, in conformity with the Word of God; that the universities shall be kept up, even with an augmentation of their privileges, if it is necessary; that the Parliament shall turn its attention to means for restoring and increasing commerce, and that, finally, it shall seek some method of relieving the people as quickly as possible from the heavy taxes with which they were burdened by the bad councils and conduct of preceding governments.

The other debates of this week are of less importance, and I may merely remark that two gentlemen who had presented a species of declaration in favour of a free Parliament from one of the counties of England were sent to the Tower of London, not so much because of the contents of this document as of the address made to the Speaker of the Parliament, and the gentlemen sitting at Westminster. This treatment has not prevented other gentlemen from undertaking similar commissions and presenting to the Speaker, on the day before yesterday, a request in the same style.

A debate again took place on the qualifications for the contemplated elections, but no decision was arrived at and Parliament has been employed in granting commissions, both to civil and military officers; and a committee of twenty-one persons has been appointed to administer the affairs of the navy, the commander of which has gone with a large number of his officers to meet Monck, who has, upon his march, obtained a very express declaration from the Governor of Hull,¹ after which there remain in England no troops or garrisons to be reduced to obedience to the Parliament, any more than in Scotland and Ireland....

François Guizot, *Monk, or, The Fall of the Republic*, Andrew R. Scoble, translator (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866):1:161–164.

¹ Robert Overton (c. 1609–1678), Fifth Monarchist and Governor of Hull, commanded the last English garrison to capitulate to Monck.