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Edmund Burke and his impact on the British political, social and moral response during the French Revolution (1790-1797)

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**EDMUND BURKE AND HIS IMPACT ON THE BRITISH POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND
MORAL RESPONSE DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1790-1797)**

A Thesis

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Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College [inverted pyramid
in partial fulfillment of the form]
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in
The Department of History

by
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Abstract

Edmund Burke's legacy has heretofore centered on his seminal work, *The Reflections on the Revolution in France*. However, Burke's other contributions have been largely ignored. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to focus on Burke's literary and political role in the British response to the French Revolution from 1790 until his death in 1797.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter contains a contextual background of Burke's moral and political philosophy. It explains why Burke responded in the manner he did to the French Revolution. The remaining three chapters, in a chronological manner, trace Burke's influence on the British government's response to the French Revolution. These roughly six years can be divided into three approximately two-year periods. Chapter 3 analyzes the first period which begins in November 1790 and extends until January 1793. It encompasses the reaction to the *Reflections*, and ends right before the outbreak of war between Britain and France. The second period, lasting from February 1793 until July 1795, is examined in Chapter 4. Included in this timeframe are Burke's dealings with the British government concerning war policy; this section ends with the invasion of Quiberon. Chapter 5 studies the third and final period which starts in August 1795 and continues to Burke's death in July 1797. It witnesses Burke's withdrawal from foreign affairs, and his investment in the Penn school for émigré children.

Source material includes four volumes of Burke's *Correspondence*, and uses several primary sources, including *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, *Thoughts on French Affairs*, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, among others. Secondary literature sources are supplementally used to interpret the events and political thinking during that period of time.

The findings show that Burke was responsible for a greater impact on the French Revolution than he is credited by most scholars. Regarded by most historians and political scientists as the father of modern Anglo-conservatism, Burke's legacy should be amended to include his accomplishments following the publication of the *Reflections*, and his impact on British foreign policy.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Edmund Burke had a greater impact on the British response to the French Revolution than previously thought. Historians agree that Burke detested the French Revolution and all it stood for. They also agree that Burke's primary goal was the defense of Britain from the invasion of Jacobinism. However, too much focus has been given to his landmark publication, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790. Historians have focused their attention on this work at the expense of his other significant achievements. As demonstrated by several of his other works published between 1791 and 1797, Burke was active in British politics throughout the 1790s until his death in 1797, and shaped the course of the British response to the French Revolution.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate Burke's influence on events in Britain as they related to the French Revolution from 1791-1797. Burke devoted these years to defending Britain from Jacobinism and in the process came to play a significant role in the French emigration to Britain. His outright opposition to the Revolution led to a split in the Whig Party, of which he was a part. This fracture played a major role in determining the war policy of the Tory government, led by William Pitt. The secondary objectives of this research include documentation and analysis of the events, and Burke's of reactionary responses, for which Burke's lesser known documents can profitably be used.

Seeking to shape and influence British policy regarding the French Revolution, Burke authored several first-rate works. *Reflections* has been thoroughly, if not overly, analyzed, over the past 200 years. In the context of the French Revolution, it is often accorded a chapter, such as in Jacques Leon Godechot's *The Counter-Revolution: Doctrine and Action, 1789-1804*.

Though the book is an analysis of counterrevolutionary theories and doctrines, Godechot's only reference to Burke is with regards to *Reflections*, and the book's immediate influence. However, Burke continued to produce new treatises and pamphlets about the ever-evolving nature of the Revolution until his death.

Burke's *Correspondence*, which forms the principal source base for this examination, indicates that Burke had immense influence with top British governmental officials throughout 1791-1797. In addition to Burke's *Correspondence*, this research uses several primary sources, including *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, *Thoughts on French Affairs*, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, among others. Secondary literature sources are supplementally used to interpret the events and political thinking during that period of time.

The study first examines the contextual background of Burke's political and moral philosophy. It defines Burke's key philosophical principles that are reflected in his reactionary response to the French Revolution. After analyzing the theoretical concepts, the following chapters illustrate Burke's ideology developing throughout the events of the Revolution and shows how Burke influenced British foreign policy. The facts supporting the argument are presented in a chronological manner. These roughly six years can be divided into three approximately two-year periods. Chapter 3 analyzes the first period which begins in November 1790 and extends until January 1793. It encompasses the reaction to the *Reflections*, and ends right before the outbreak of war between Britain and France. The second period, lasting from February 1793 until July 1795, is examined in Chapter 4. Included in this timeframe are Burke's dealings with the British government concerning war policy; this section ends with the invasion of Quiberon. Chapter 5 studies the third and final period which starts in August 1795 and

continues to Burke's death in July 1797. It witnesses Burke's withdrawal from foreign affairs, and his investment in the Penn school for émigré children.

The findings show that Burke was responsible for a greater impact on the French Revolution than he is credited by most scholars. Regarded by most historians and political scientists as the father of modern anglo-conservatism, Burke's legacy should be amended to include his accomplishments following the publication of the *Reflections*, and his impact on British foreign policy.

Chapter 2 Contextual Background of Burke's Political and Moral Philosophy

It is necessary to open this study by placing Edmund Burke in his proper context on the eve of the French Revolution. Burke was a conservative thinker who had been an active member in British politics. One might think that as a member of the British elite, Burke's opposition to the Revolution was based solely on his resolve to preserve for his own social group its political and social status. However, he saw the Revolution as a threat not only to the elite, but also to civilization itself. Long before the outbreak of the Revolution, Burke already had a firmly grounded political and moral philosophy. By the 1780s, he had already "strongly affirmed his belief that the state was a trust based upon heredity, property and law."¹ The French Revolution attacked these three principles, and was the converse of Burke's ideology, which emphasized the importance of history and tradition, suspicion of human rationality, and a total rejection of the Enlightenment. These principles created a foundation for his own theory of the Law of Nations which determined his reactionary response to the French Revolution. Additionally, he was concerned that these revolutionary ideas would spread into Britain.

Burke was adamantly opposed to the Enlightenment, and primarily its fundamental assertion of the natural rights of mankind. He was especially critical of the French *philosophes*, who believed that "principles based upon abstract reason could develop infallible conclusions and laws for human nature."² They were inspired by the breakthroughs of the Scientific Revolution, which had allowed man to understand the physical world to a greater degree than ever before. The *philosophes* were convinced that through the application of science, human nature could be understood in a quantitative fashion. Burke rejected the notion that abstract

¹ Frank O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1964), 116.
² Peter J. Stanlis, *Edmund Burke: The Enlightenment and Revolution* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 116.

reason could allow man to construct a definition of the natural rights of mankind. He distrusted metaphysics, and placed his faith in understanding the human condition based upon empirical knowledge and historical experience.

Burke's criticism of the Enlightenment is central to his defense of the Law of Nations. This concept originated in the early 17th century by Francisco Suarez and Hugo Grotius, in light of the increasing problems of international diplomacy combined with political nationalism. Burke agreed with the notion that "man's common nature is infinitely modified by climate, geography, history, religion, nationality, and race; by institutions, customs, manners, and habits; by all the civil circumstances of times, places, and occasions."³ He asserted that within each state, there was an agreed upon set of rules which governed that particular nation; in intercourse with other states, this principle was to be respected. Burke built upon this early conception of the Law of Nations. He acknowledged that there existed a "Commonwealth of Europe." This commonwealth encompassed European nations that had a common history rooted in "Christianity, the modified remnants of Roman civil law, and the customs of the Germanic tribes that overran the Roman Empire."⁴ Each European state was subsumed under this larger context. Burke posited that if one member violated the law of European nations (existing within the commonwealth), it was the responsibility of the other nations, in a combined effort, to rectify the situation.

The Law of Nations also required each government within Europe to grant equitable government to those whom it governed. This requirement was grounded in Natural Law, which Burke viewed as "the perpetual arbitrator between international and constitutional law."⁵

³ Stanlis, 64.

⁴ Stanlis, 65.

⁵ Stanlis, 62.

According to Burke, the state should be governed according to the principles of life, liberty and property. He believed that the British Constitution was the ideal form of government for the British nation to accomplish these goals. Further, he thought that the constitutional monarchy in Britain was “the product of the ages, as a fully developed and fully matured entity rather than as a continually changing political structure.”⁶ This entity included not only the political apparatus, but also the social and religious apparatus’. Burke believed that “civil society was organic, a creation of man’s corporate wisdom and power, working analogically through precedents and historical continuity to fulfill the changeable spirit of the Natural Law.”⁷ He agreed with Aristotle’s conviction that man was a social animal, and thereby dictated man’s predisposition to form a civil society grounded in social and governmental institutions. Burke vehemently disagreed with Rousseau’s notion that natural rights existed in an original state of nature which predated civil society. For Burke, the original state of nature began with civil society, and therefore “natural rights could only exist in society; they are not anterior to it.”⁸ Natural rights were not guaranteed by an abstract theory of mankind’s equality separate from civil society, but instead were “the residue of experience and time, enshrined in the institutional apparatus of society.”⁹ These natural rights, according to Burke, were grounded in the ownership of property. Natural Law predicated the formation of civil government, but one grounded by a strong moral basis. This moral basis was derived from religion. Religion gave substance to the social contract between the individual and government. Burke defined the social contract as “permanent, binding and unchangeable, grounded in moral sanction in relation to the divine law of God.”¹⁰

⁶ Edmund Burke. *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1953), 55.

⁷ Stanlis, 73.

⁸ O’Gorman, 116.

⁹ O’Gorman, 116.

¹⁰ O’Gorman, 115.

Therefore civil government, despite being a human creation, should nevertheless be governed by the laws of God.

Burke praised the British constitutional system as an organic entity which formed the political, social and religious pillars necessary to ensure the preservation of individual liberty in civil society. Nonetheless, he viewed it as specific to the British nation; he also believed that other European nations had to sustain their own governments based upon their own histories and experiences. This included France, which throughout hundreds of years had evolved into an absolute monarchy. This monarchy was grounded in tradition and based upon a constitution. Therefore, according to Burke's theories on the Law of Nations and civil government, he believed French liberty would best be preserved under absolute monarchy.

Burke believed that civil government required prudent leaders. The principle of prudence is critical to understanding Burke's views on the nature of society and civil government. He valued prudence as the highest of all virtues, and it underscores his political philosophy as it applied to his response to the French Revolution. Prudence was exercised by politicians who disregarded grand metaphysical speculation of a perfect equality among men. Natural Law dictated that man went from his primordial existence in nature into his natural state of society. This society is an organic creation maintained by traditions and institutions led by men, not by abstract theories. Perfect government could be *imagined*, but never *realized*, according to Burke. Thus, it was necessary to have *statesmen*, imbued with this prudence, as the leaders of governments. Statesmen, through political leadership, provide the means of change that bring society into harmony with the moral law. They rely upon the constitution of their nation to guide them in this change; however, they never apply innovation and abstract ideological doctrine.

Thus, Burke's political and moral philosophies were entrenched when he heard of the news that the Bastille had been stormed on 14 July 1789. His initial response was tentative. On 9 August 1789 he proclaimed that "to form a solid constitution requires wisdom as well as spirit, and whether the French have wise heads among them, or if they possess such whether they have authority equal to their wisdom, is to be seen."¹¹ A month later his misgivings were confirmed: "I have grave doubts whether any form of government which they can establish will procure obedience,"¹² and by November 1789 Burke believed France "a country undone; and irretrievable for a very long course of time."¹³ That same month a young Frenchman, Charles-Jean-Francois Depont, wrote to Burke asking if he would comment on the situation in France.

Published on 1 November 1790, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was a vehement assault on the French Revolution. It reiterated the importance of time-honored French traditions and institutions, and the divine and social functions of church and state. It redefined civil liberty and attacked notions of popular sovereignty. Burke built upon his political philosophy throughout *Reflections*. He continued to assault the Enlightenment and the *philosophes* who propagated its ideological doctrines. This treatise established the intellectual framework from which Burke would attack and argue the merits of the French Revolution.

In *Reflections*, Burke launched a fervent attack on the revolutionaries. Respect for one's forefathers, combined with honoring of tradition, figured prominently in Burke's argument; whereas, the revolutionaries cited the ethereal 'liberty, equality and fraternity,' Burke espoused the organic values of 'freedom, justice and fellowship.' He castigated the men in power in

¹¹ Edmund Burke to the Earl of Charlemont, 9 August 1789, in *Correspondence VI*, 10. P.J. Marshall and John A. Woods, e.d. *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke: Volumes VI-IX*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

¹² Burke to William Windham, 27 September 1789, in *Correspondence VI*, 25.

¹³ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 12 November 1789, in *Correspondence VI*, 36.

France for their idealism, saying “there will always exist a certain quantum of power in the community, in some hands, and under some appellation.”¹⁴ According to Burke, the foundation of justice required more than just one generation, and the National Assembly would not be able to solidify justice in their country without the benefits of past generations. He saw the revolutionaries as attempting to “wholly destroy conditions, dissolve relations, change the state of the nation, and to subvert property, in order to fit their country to their theory of a constitution.”¹⁵ Burke believed the revolutionaries had inverted the process of statecraft. They had “enacted policies not of great statesmen, or great military commanders, but the practices of incendiaries, assassins, housebreakers, robbers, spreaders of false news, forgers of false orders from authority, and other delinquencies, of which ordinary justice takes cognizance.”¹⁶ Burke rejected the revolutionaries’ notion that abstract political doctrines could be universally applied to every state of Europe with any degree of success.

Burke fervently defended the French monarchical order as the bulwark which cemented French society. He was convinced that a monarchy suited the French people because “it grew out of the circumstances of the country, and out of the state of property.”¹⁷ Burke feared a reduction of royal power, because he believed that it was this institution alone that “was capable of holding together the comparatively heterogeneous mass of the French people.”¹⁸ It was essential for France to be governed by a monarch.

After establishing a justification for the French monarchical system, Burke defended the French social order, comprising the Gallican Church and the nobility. He reiterated his belief

¹⁴ O’Gorman, 101.

¹⁵ Burke, *Reflections*, 66.

¹⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, 72.

¹⁷ Burke, *Reflections*, 43.

¹⁸ *Reflections*, 46.

that a strong church was the bedrock of civil society. Burke was wary of the concept of individuality and saw the Church as a cohesive force in society. Burke opposed the seizure of church lands and questioned the legality of this act of the National Assembly. This act demonstrated that this legislative body had no respect for property, the problem of which Burke believed to be a fundamental responsibility of civil government. It also confirmed to Burke that the aim of the French Revolution was to destroy the Catholic Church; this was one of the primary goals of the *philosophes*, who were currently making law in France. He also maintained that organized religion had to be destroyed before political revolution was possible.¹⁹ Thus, Burke identified religious opposition with political subversion. The National Assembly, led by *philosophes*, was paving the way for political revolution.

Furthermore, Burke defended the institution of the French nobility. He believed that an aristocracy was necessary in order to maintain the security of the state, claiming that “a true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state, or separable from it. It is an essential integrant part of any large body rightly constituted.”²⁰ Its ties to landholding gave that class the basis by which it executed its power and privilege. Burke defended this hereditary privilege by asserting that social inequality was part of the natural order. In defense of the nobles themselves, Burke said that they could not be faulted for being born noble. The National Assembly had no right to discriminate against this group because of “the offences of their natural ancestors.”²¹ Burke was appalled at the abolishment of seigneurial rights, and professed that noble property had to be restituted immediately:

¹⁹ Mark Philp, e.d., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29.

²⁰ O’Gorman, 121.

²¹ O’Gorman, 121.

If any government should be settled in France upon any other idea than that of the faithful restitution of all property of all descriptions and that of the rigorous and exemplary punishment of the principal authors and contrivers of its ruin, I am convinced to a certainty, that property, and along with property, government, must fall, (in the same manner in which they have both fallen in France) in every other state in Europe.²²

Property secured the protection of the monarchy, and a nobility without property ultimately denied the monarchy of its base of power and security. Hereditary monarchy had to be preserved in France, so too did the aristocracy.

Burke feared the spread of revolutionary principles into Britain, and one of his primary goals in writing *Reflections* was to quell British support for the French Revolution. He was worried that Britons would equate France's revolution to the Glorious Revolution; hence, he sought to prove the vast difference between the two. The main difference, Burke argued, was that the Glorious Revolution *restored* England to her natural, constitutional form of government. The French Revolution, however, sought to *replace* the natural French government with a brand-new, innovative government, in which "the very elements of society have been confounded and dissipated."²³ Burke was keenly aware that this revolutionary idealism would have mass appeal in Britain, and he was concerned that factions in Britain would dedicate themselves to the spread of French revolutionary principles. He noted that the British Revolutionary Society would serve as a rallying point for such sentiment.²⁴

Conversely, he was well aware that the mass of English citizens would not be able to comprehend his complex arguments; therefore, who was he trying to influence? It is clear that Burke's intended audience was an educated readership well versed in history and philosophy. The British government was his primary target. He also hoped to persuade the *constitutionnels* of their initial error in supporting the Revolution. For the most part, this group favored a

²² O'Gorman, 121.

²³ O'Gorman, 151.

²⁴ Stanlis, 62.

restored constitutional monarchy, though not necessarily the Bourbons. This monarchy they proposed would be backed with a constitution not unlike the one in Britain. Also, Burke was aware of the need to convince the general British public of the ills of the Revolution; therefore, he advised others of the need to carry out this task, realizing his energies would be better directed to a more sophisticated audience. Burke's inspiration was drawn upon on many occasions. While Burke was not the only source of inspiration, he was a major catalyst.

Burke's theory of the Law of Nations dictated his recommendations to the British government. Until his death he held firm to his conviction that foreign military intervention was necessary to bring France back to the "Commonwealth of Europe". His fear of Jacobinism's spread into Britain drove Burke to compose several treatises and documents dedicated to propagate a counterrevolutionary response to the French Revolution. The following chapters illustrate Burke's ideology maturing throughout the events of the Revolution, and his impact on the British governmental response until his death in 1797.

During the period between November 1790 and January 1793, Burke produced a series of writings which sought to justify the necessity of British military intervention into France. The British government had declared its neutrality, and throughout this period Burke argued against this policy. Therefore, he established a close relationship with the French émigrés, and in particular the Royalist nobility, to place political pressure on British ministers. Due to Burke's firm conviction in his principles, he was forced to break with his beloved Whig Party. The party leadership upheld the integrity of the French Revolution, and Burke attempted to isolate his main rival, Charles James Fox, and establish a separate wing of the Whig Party loyal to the Tory Government.

Burke's Reflections and A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly

The publication of the *Reflections* brought the debate to another level both domestically and internationally. While positively received by members of his party and praised by George III, the book kindled a pamphlet debate with prominent British writers, such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft.²⁵ General opinion was evenly divided; some praised Burke's defense of a fellow European monarchy while others viewed his defense of a traditional enemy as distasteful. Within two weeks of its publication, it had made its way into influential French circles and was read by members of the National Assembly. One member, François-Louis-Thibault de Menonville of Lorraine, wrote Burke a letter on 17 November which sought to justify the actions of the new French government.

²⁵ Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* both defended the French Revolution against Burke's attacks.

Burke's response, *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, continued his assault upon the French Revolution. It clarified certain points expressed in the *Reflections*. Burke reiterates that he is not opposed to the convocation of the Estates-General, only the lack of interpreting the Constitution of 1614 properly. It also offered remedies. Most notable of these remedies was Burke's suggestion of the necessity of foreign military intervention. In a sense, the letter was addressed to the British government as much to de Menonville. Burke viewed the revolutionaries as madmen who could not be persuaded by rational men that their position needed adjustment. The only way to usurp these madmen of their power was to "subdue" them via applied "power" that "must come from *without*."²⁶ Burke espoused his notion that all monarchical governments would remain in fear as long as the usurpation continued in France.

Further, Burke's *Letter* also solidified his concurrence with aristocratic principles, and the necessity of maintaining the authority and power of the French nobility. This did not mean Burke supported the entire French aristocracy. After thoroughly dismissing the radicals, Burke turned his attention to those aristocrats calling themselves moderate. He labeled this group as "men who would usurp the government of their country with decency and moderation. In fact, they are nothing more or better, than men engaged in desperate designs, with feeble minds."²⁷ Many of these men to whom Burke referred emigrated to Britain following the radical takeover in 1792. The last point Burke expounded upon was the fact that the Revolution had caused France to become internally weak.

Further entangled in the affairs of the Revolution, Burke began to correspond more frequently with émigrés. *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* reached Lord Grenville

²⁶ Edmund Burke. *A Letter From Mr. Burke to a Member of the National Assembly, in Answer to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs* (accessed 10 February 2010, available from <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/burke/tonatass/>), 4.

²⁷ *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, 12.

and George III, who both received it positively. The pamphlet solidified Burke's authority as the head of British counterrevolutionary thought.

Support for the Bourbons

The most specific group with which Burke sought association was the French Royal family, the Bourbons. In early 1791, Burke arranged for the French Royal family to receive copies of *Reflections*, which no doubt endeared the Bourbons to Burke. From January 1791, Burke was clamoring for some "French gentleman" to effectively present the Bourbon position to the British government. Earlier associations convinced Burke that the Chevalier de La Bintinaye was the right man for the job. Agathon-Marie-René de La Bintinaye (b.1758) was a naval officer, who, after losing his right arm in battle, was accorded a seat in the nobility in 1780. After the October Days he resigned his commission, and emigrated to Britain in April 1790.²⁸ Burke established contact with the Chevalier in November 1790 and immediately established a rapport. In a March 1791 letter to the Chevalier, Burke "lament[s] the remissness of the Gentlemen of France."²⁹ In a letter sent one month later, Burke cites the "emissaries of the usurpation" being "masters of the presses of Paris" as "a thing of course. But surely the oppressed party might...maintain a person here to whom they might transmit a true state of affairs."³⁰ Burke advocated that the Chevalier come to Britain to serve as an agent of the monarchical party. Burke was well aware that Jacobin agents were using propaganda to their advantage in Britain, and he realized that counterrevolutionary propaganda was necessary. Burke's association with the Chevalier paid dividends, and in August 1791, Burke was informed by his son that the Chevalier was going to England "to act as agent for the Princes; he carries

²⁸ *Correspondence*, VI, 185.

²⁹ Burke to the Chevalier de La Bintinaye, March 1791, in *Correspondence VI*, 242.

³⁰ Burke to the Chevalier de La Bintinaye, March 1791, in *Correspondence VI*, 242.

with him credentials to produce in case any unforeseen event should dispose our court to receive him in the character of a minister.”³¹

Upon hearing of the Chevalier’s entry into Britain, Burke was eager to get him some kind of recognition. He approached the Duke of Dorset, the former ambassador to Versailles (and friend of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette), because Burke thought he would be sympathetic to the Chevalier’s cause. In a letter dated 11 September 1791, Burke tried to arrange a meeting with the Duke and explained that “a gentleman (the Chevalier) is come hither with powers to act for Monsieur, and has a letter for the King. He wishes to be properly introduced to the Ministers.”³² Burke tried to make this as formal a diplomatic mission as possible, in order to give it sanctity in the eyes of the British government. Complications arose, however, and Burke was unable to gain an audience with the Duke. Therefore, he turned instead to official governmental channels, writing to Henry Dundas and Lord Grenville. It was at this point that Burke became heavily engaged with the three most important members of the British government.

Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville, was a Scottish lawyer who entered Pitt’s ministry on 8 June 1791 as the Home Secretary. He was also great friends with Pitt. William Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville, was a British statesman and also a cousin of Pitt and his close ally. In 1789 he served briefly as Speaker of the British House of Commons before he entered the cabinet as Home Secretary. Grenville vacated this position on 8 June 1791 to become the Foreign Minister. William Pitt the Younger had been Prime Minister since 1783. He had had a contentious tenure, often embroiled in opposition by his main political rival, Charles James Fox, who was a close

³¹ Richard Burke, Jr., to Edmund Burke, 25 August 1791, in *Correspondence VI*, 371.

³² Burke to the Duke of Dorset, 11 September 1791, *Correspondence VI*, 393.

friend of Burke's. Yet he was a powerful Prime Minister, and in the ensuing years would run Britain with an iron fist. Pitt's relationship with Burke would continue to mature during these years. All three men were members of the majority Tory Party, whereas Burke had been a devout Whig for over thirty years. Nevertheless, Burke knew that in order to have any sway on British policy with regards to the Revolution, he would need to influence these men first and foremost.

Thus, Burke wrote to both Dundas and Grenville in early fall 1791, hoping to convince them of the importance of the Chevalier's mission. Correspondence between the two British ministers revealed their initial unwillingness to comply with Burke's request. Yet in spite of their reluctance, Grenville wrote Burke on 17 September telling him that if the Chevalier "should be still in London when I return there it will afford me great pleasure to show him any little attention in my power."³³ Eventually the Chevalier was received *privately* by Grenville, and though no public recognition was made, inroads had been made on behalf of the Bourbons.

By the end of 1791, however, the Chevalier was beginning to feel alienated, leaving Burke in a precarious position. Therefore, the latter reached out to the former, and tried to convince him of his importance to the cause. Burke encouraged the Chevalier, and his brother, the Abbé de La Bintinaye, to become more involved in producing émigré propaganda. He encouraged the brothers to produce a written response to attacks made on Burke and the noble émigrés by the British newspaper *The Morning Post* on 26 January 1792. Burke thought that "the Chevalier may owe it to the *manes* of the fallen nobility, for whom, after having shed his blood, he has given up his inadequate reward, to put his name to his own defense and theirs."³⁴

³³ Lord Grenville to Edmund Burke, 17 September 1791, *Correspondence VI*, 398.

³⁴ Burke to the Chevalier and the Abbe de La Bintinaye, 27 January 1792, in *Correspondence VII*, 42.

According to Burke, “the newspapers, almost without exception, are not your friends.”³⁵ Evidently, Burke’s influence with the brothers was significant, for on 1 March 1792 they published a response to the *Morning Chronicle*. Their statement highlighted the division between the *purs*, who were the most ardent French Royalists allied with the Bourbon Monarchy, and the *constitutionnels*, and demonstrated Burke’s confidence in the abilities of the Chevalier to properly represent the French exiles. He saw strength in the Chevalier, and quickly identified him as a bulwark of the *purs*.

Purs vs. Constitutionnels

Burke sought early on to identify with the cause of the *purs*. This group wanted nothing less than the full restoration of the *ancien Régime*. Burke was frustrated, however, with the *purs*, and their lack of initiative. They had initially emigrated to England under the banner of the *émigration joyeuse*, a “light-hearted withdrawal, temporary in intention, while the king and his ministers dealt with the unpleasant but surely unimportant manifestations of popular discontent.”³⁶ These noble families decided that England would be the best spot for them to “vacation” while matters worked themselves out inside France. It was this group to which Burke would look to help turn the tide in France. However, most were unambitious and were uninterested in assisting their fellow émigrés, or the British government, in reclaiming “old” France. Burke continued to excoriate the émigrés, stating that “not one French refugee has intelligence or spirit to contradict [the revolutionaries].”³⁷ In spite of these misgivings, Burke sided with the *purs* because of their congruent ideology.

³⁵ Burke to the Chevalier and the Abbe de La Bintinaye, 27 January 1792, in *Correspondence VII*, 42.

³⁶ Margery Weiner, *The French Exiles, 1789-1815* (John Murray: London, 1960), 8.

³⁷ Burke to the Chevalier de La Bintinaye, March 1791, *Correspondence*, VI, 242.

Unfortunately for Burke, the émigré nobles who did possess the zeal necessary for the job were politically opposed to him. Known as the *constitutionnels*, many of this group had participated in the early stages of the Revolution. For the most part, this group favored a restored constitutional monarchy, though not necessarily the Bourbons. This monarchy they proposed would be backed with a constitution not unlike the one in Britain. The reason why Burke did not ally with this group was that he saw the British constitution (and the Glorious Revolution) as having returned Britain to its natural state, whereas a French constitution (and an accompanying constitutional monarchy) was totally devoid of tradition. Burke feared the ability of the *constitutionnels* to restore France, writing to the Abbé de La Bintinaye in August 1792 that “I have my fears from even the success of those who have been educated and hardened in the shallow, contemptible politics of this age, which make them indisposed and unqualified for any great work in the restoration of the Kingdom of France.”³⁸ Burke believed this group of men had been corrupted by the Enlightenment, and that the British government should not trust them as leaders of the Restoration.

Thus, for the majority of phase I, Burke dealt solely with the *purs*. This did not mean that *constitutionnels* did not seek out Burke. A very influential *constitutionnel*, the Comte de Lally-Tollendal, published a response to *Reflections* in mid-1792, and hoped that Burke would agree with his support of a British-style constitution in France. The Comte did not receive such approbation. Burke instead criticized Lally-Tollendal, claiming in a letter to the Abbé de La Bintinaye that “he knows nothing of our constitution, and as little of the process by which it has been made.”³⁹ Burke dismissed the writings of *constitutionnel* émigrés, preferring those of the

³⁸Burke to the Abbe de La Bintinaye, 3 August 1792, *Correspondence*, VII 166.

³⁹Burke to the Abbe de La Bintinaye, 3 August 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 167.

purs. Hence, a major detriment to the ability of the émigrés to accomplish anything with the British government was this lack of unity.

Increasing His Role on the Domestic Political Scene: Splitting the Whig Party

Burke also began to play a major role in the domestic political scene. A Whig since he began his political career, Burke found himself diametrically opposed to the Whig leader, Charles James Fox. Fox was an outspoken politician who had supported the French Revolution from its inception. Up to that point he and Burke had been close friends and political allies for over twenty years. Their political alliance was starting to splinter, however, over opposing views of the Revolution. Fox was an outspoken critic of *Reflections*, and in Parliament he had said that he “condemned that book both in public and private, and every one of the doctrines it contained.”⁴⁰ Fox also gave several speeches in Parliament praising the revolutionaries. Fox’s outspoken approval of the French Revolution placed Burke in a difficult position: remaining loyal to his party, or to his principles. Lord Grenville invited Burke to speak against Fox on 20 April 1791. A shrewd politician, Grenville no doubt courted Burke in order to drive a wedge between the Whig leadership. Yet it also gave Burke the unique opportunity of establishing closer ties to the British ministry. Grenville successfully convinced Burke to speak out against Fox during the opening session of Parliament in May 1791. The public break between Burke and Fox took place on 6 and 11 May, during debate in the halls of Parliament.

The result of this fracture was Burke’s resolution to produce a pamphlet demonstrating his orthodoxy to Whig principles. He was frustrated that many of his old Whig friends had accepted Fox’s position. Though many of them had approved of the *Reflections* (at least in

⁴⁰ Edmund and Jane Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 10 August 1791, *Correspondence*, VI, 335.

private), when Fox spoke out against it, no one came to Burke's defense.⁴¹ Thus, during the Parliamentary session of spring 1791, Burke's "relations with the Whig Party were awkward and anomalous."⁴² However, Burke was determined to show his loyalty to his principles, and if his break with Fox were to split the Whig Party, "he would have believed himself the sole true Whig."⁴³ He chose to go on the offensive, and in August 1791 Burke published *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. Burke's goal was to isolate Fox, for he knew that influential members of the party, particularly the Earl Fitzwilliam, were generally opposed to Fox's enthusiasm for the French Revolution. The significance of the publication of this pamphlet with regards to this study is that it warned the British public against the threat posed to British society by Jacobinism, and it "roused the Whigs from their torpid acquiescence in Fox's identification of the party with the principles of the French Revolution."⁴⁴ Though no other members of the Whig Party initially broke with Fox as a result of the *Appeal*, it started Burke on his trek to isolate Fox. Eventually, the ideas espoused in this pamphlet would persuade many Whigs that Burke was correct, and in 1794 his efforts to split the party were successful.

An important consequence of Burke's break with Fox is that the news reached noble émigré circles. Burke's dedication to their cause was apparent to them, demonstrated by his willingness to risk ostracism from his party. The Marquis de Bouille, a French general who had remained loyal to Louis XVI, sent Burke a letter of praise regarding his actions. Burke responded in a letter to de Bouille, in which Burke reiterated his support of the Royalist cause.⁴⁵

⁴¹ F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke, Volume II, 1784-1797* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 379.

⁴² Lock, 379.

⁴³ Lock, 379.

⁴⁴ Lock, 389.

⁴⁵ *Correspondence, VI*, 289-292. Burke: "I have lost some few friends by it. But I have not lost my Spirits nor my principles; and I have rather increased my inward peace...I fully enter into the sentiments of your manly and just affirmation."

Burke felt that his greatest contribution in support of this cause was to convince Pitt's government of the necessity of foreign military intervention in France.

Burke's Case for Military Intervention against Revolutionary France

Burke was well aware by 1791 that Continental European powers (especially Austria and Prussia) would unlikely unite in a military alliance against France unless Britain pledged her full support. However, although he did not "believe that the Ministers wish ill to the cause of the French Monarchy and Nobility," he thought "they are grown very timid."⁴⁶ Despite advocating for offensive military action as early as January 1791, George III and the British government declared neutrality in May 1790. Moreover, George III accepted the French Constitution of 1790, at Pitt's behest. Burke was furious that the British government would recognize the rebellious regime in France. The Flight to Varennes in late June 1791 only further convinced Burke of the necessity of foreign intervention. It also gave him hope. Following the King's return 293 members of the National Assembly protested the imprisonment of Louis XVI and his family. Burke believed this action "furnished new motives, and clear grounds of justification to quicken the preparations of the powers of Europe, for the liberty of their friend, their kinsman and their ally, as well as for their own safety, by the restoration of order, laws and true freedom to France."⁴⁷ His calls for an alliance with the Bourbon princes congregated in Coblenz resonated with an influential member of the emigration.

In July 1791, Burke was approached by the former finance minister of France, and now a leading *purs émigré*, Alexandre de Calonne. Calonne was an admirer of the *Reflections*, and Burke was an enthusiast of Calonne's work. Calonne at the time was the chief advisor to the

⁴⁶ Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 1 September 1791, *Correspondence*, VI, 377.

⁴⁷ Burke to the Marquis de Bouille, 13 July 1791, *Correspondence*, VI, 290-91.

Bourbon princes, and he had visited London with the goal of persuading Pitt to support the cause of the émigrés. However, he was rebuffed by Pitt; therefore, he turned to Burke. The result of their meeting was that Richard Burke Jr. left for the military emigration's headquarters at Coblenz on 1 August 1791. He warned Richard in August 1791, that

it is not that I altogether distrust the dispositions of this administration—but the consequences of acting under those whose designs are uncertain, or who in reality may not be masters of their own designs, to my eyes, and will to yours, appear so perilous, that too many precautions cannot be used in your communications in anything which relates to this Court, either with the Leaders of the French royalists, or with this Ministry.⁴⁸

The failure of Richard Jr.'s mission only furthered his deepening commitment to the émigré cause. His son's mission did serve the purpose of bringing Burke into closer contact with the ministers. He kept Dundas and Grenville informed of Richard's journey, and the two officials forwarded much of their correspondence with Burke to George III. Sensing another opportunity to exert his influence within the British government, Burke resolved to compose a memorial aimed directly at Pitt and his ministers.

Thoughts on French Affairs

Thoughts on French Affairs was written in December 1791. Its primary aim was to persuade the British government that the only logical way to contend with revolutionary France was to subjugate her through military force. The force would be applied by a European alliance with Britain at its head. He grounded his justification for military intervention by offering three conclusions. First, Burke affirmed that “as long as [the Revolution] exists in France, it will be the interests of the managers there to disturb and distract all other governments, and their endless succession of restless politicians will continually stimulate them to new attempts.”⁴⁹ Second, he

⁴⁸ Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 18 August 1791, *Correspondence VI*, 355.

⁴⁹ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on French Affairs* (accessed 10 February 2010 from <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/burkee/frnchaff/index.htm>), 10.

argued that “the longer the present system exists, the greater will be its strength; the greater its power to destroy discontents at home, and to resist all foreign attempts in favor of these discontents.” Third, he asserted that “no counter-revolution is to be expected in France, from internal causes solely.”⁵⁰ Further, Burke defended the principle that France has always been, and must remain, a monarchy.⁵¹

This treatise would form the basis for Burke’s foreign policy for the duration of his association with the British response to the French Revolution. He reaffirmed his desire for offensive military action against France, and at the same time guarded against domestic subversion by Britons sympathetic to the Revolution. Burke astutely surmises that newspapers would play a greater role than ever before in public opinion. He also warns that the French Revolution is unlike any revolution before in European history. Though not published until September 1797, after Burke’s death, his correspondence reveals that Grenville and Pitt read the pamphlet. Burke’s mistrust of Austria and Prussia convinced him that Britain had to assume a larger role in the conflict. This distrust was magnified by the disastrous defeat at Valmy on 20 September 1792. Writing to his son about the event on 17 October, Burke said “the Prussian and Austrian combined forces have fled before a troop of strolling players with a buffoon at their head.”⁵² Witnessing the tendency towards the defensive, Burke continued to stress the need for British military intervention.

⁵⁰ *Thoughts on French Affairs*, 3.

⁵¹ *Thoughts on French Affairs*, Prologue.

⁵² Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 17 October 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 271.

Burke's Growing Involvement with the Émigrés: the Dilemma of the Clerical Refugees

Burke's involvement with the émigrés accelerated in the second half of 1792. His initial concern primarily revolved around the clerical émigrés. London was the center of the clerical emigration, as some thirty bishops and over 4000 clergymen resided there during the emigration. The churchmen were financially destitute, and immediately looked to the British government for assistance. Religious differences were highly manifested among the clergy, given that they were a visible symbol of Catholicism. Burke played a large role in facilitating the transition of the émigré clergy into Britain. Following the publication of *Reflections*, he continued to produce writings attacking the Revolution and espousing the cause of the émigrés. Burke worked with influential Englishmen and French bishops to coordinate an Anglo-French effort geared at sustaining the basic needs of the French clergy. He had a close relationship with John Wilmot and the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon. The former established a relief committee that sustained the clergymen throughout the emigration; the latter became the de facto head of the exiled French clergy.

John Eardley Wilmot was a forty-two-year-old son of the Lord Chief Justice, a Master in Chancery, and a Member of Parliament for Tiverton from 1776 to 1784 and for Coventry from 1784 to 1796.⁵³ He also was experienced in dealing with distress: in 1783, Wilmot was appointed commissioner to enquire into the claims of the American loyalists to compensation for their losses incurred during the American Revolution.⁵⁴ Margery Weiner asserts that Wilmot was “induced [to act] alone, without previous communication with anyone.”⁵⁵ He was prompted

⁵³ Weiner, 56.

⁵⁴ Weiner, 56.

⁵⁵ Weiner, 57.

by the “continual scenes of distress which he daily witnessed in the streets of London, added to particular instances of misery which came under his own immediate observation.”⁵⁶

Jean-François de La Marche, Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, was a soldier turned bishop. Following the passage of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the Bishop “defied civil authority and continued to administer his diocese until the police came to arrest him.”⁵⁷ He managed to sneak out through a hidden passageway in his study, and evade authorities until he reached British shores. Arriving in England at the end of 1791, he took up residence at Bloomsbury, in Queen Street. His house became the Committee’s office, and it was here that the Bishop gave himself over task of providing for the exiled French clergy. According to Kirsty Carpenter, “he was the most important French ecclesiastic in the early years of the emigration in London. His organizational skills and his dedication to the task of helping the clergy in exile, allied to his impeccable social credentials, made him the ideal person to coordinate the relief operation.”⁵⁸ While he constantly reminded the Wilmot Committee that monies raised were insufficient for suitable assistance, he never wavered in his praise for the English people for what they did contribute, both in terms of money and effort. The most striking example of this praise is a 1793 epistle addressed to the émigré French clergy. Translated into English and sold at a modest price of sixpence, the Bishop “called upon [the clergy] to express their thanks to God and ever to be mindful of benefits bestowed upon them by the English people, so outstanding in tolerance and beneficence.”⁵⁹ St. Pol de Léon was such an efficient leader that Wilmot’s Committee decided to establish a separate French Committee, which was charged with the distribution of funds

⁵⁶ Weiner, 56-57.

⁵⁷ Weiner, 16.

⁵⁸ Kirsty Carpenter. *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789-1802* (MacMillan Press: London, 1999), 28.

⁵⁹ Weiner, 65.

(Burke's advice). While still under the overall supervision of Wilmot, this new committee freed up the former to decide on questions of policy.⁶⁰ St. Pol de Léon led the French Committee. Thus, as a result of Anglo-French cooperation, Wilmot's Committee was able to effectively administer to the needs of the clergy. As the minutes of the Committee attest, St. Pol de Léon was active in its proceedings.

Up until 1792, the clerical emigration was sparse and scattered. Following the September Massacres, what was a trickle became a deluge. These émigrés were truly destitute, the like of which had not been seen in Britain. They had brought nothing with them save for the clothes on their backs. As Carpenter notes, "those who escaped from the persecution in Paris and reached Britain were the first group of émigrés to whom the term 'refugee' truly applied."⁶¹ Once the clerical émigrés reached English shores, a number of problems had to be addressed immediately. All but homeless, the French priests needed lodging and food. Carpenter states that "many of the clergy arrived on the English coast with almost nothing. Often, any possessions they may have had, and sometimes even their clothes, had been lost in the storms at sea which were particularly bad in the autumn of 1792."⁶² On account of harsh anti-clerical legislation in France, hundreds of priests were fleeing France, and arriving in England, daily. Thus, the closing months of 1792 "marked the transition from a situation where Britain was host to a group of independent émigrés to a situation where Britain found herself offering political asylum to refugees of the French Revolution."⁶³ Of these refugees, the clergy were in worse shape financially. Initially, English Catholics gave what they could to alleviate these problems, but there existed too few of them to handle such a large number of exiles. It was obvious that their care would have to be entrusted

⁶⁰ Weiner, 67.

⁶¹ Carpenter, 29.

⁶² Carpenter, 29.

⁶³ Carpenter, 30.

to non-Catholic Englishmen. As the emigration developed, there would prove to be no shortage of people committed to the cause of the émigrés.

Burke played an integral role in facilitating the transition of the French clergy into Britain. As Nigel Aston points out, “even before the refractories’ arrival, the British public was familiar with their sufferings through the speeches and writings of Edmund Burke.”⁶⁴ These writings proved to be a powerful counterbalance to English fears of the émigrés, which had increased sharply in the fall of 1792. Anti-Gallicanism reached new heights at this time, and Burke sought to counteract this rise in fear. Burke was aware that by 1792 the influence garnered by *Reflections* had faded; he needed to reapply the tenets of that treatise to the evolving political situation, and also to assuage public fears. Burke’s *The Case of the Suffering French Clergy in the British Dominions*, published in the *London Times* on 18 September 1792, reaffirmed his emotive plea for the cause of the émigrés clergy. The timing of this publication could not have been better, as a meeting to discuss the plight of the exiled priests was set to take place two days later.

The relief committee which was to bear his name was founded by Wilmot and a handful of other prominent British politicians on 20 September 1792, at the Freemason’s Tavern in London. Initially, Wilmot’s Committee dealt solely with the clergy, and its official title was the ‘Fund for the Relief of the Suffering Clergy of France in the British Dominions.’ Burke was present at the seminal meeting, and quickly became an outspoken supporter of Wilmot. Wilmot respected Burke, and the two struck up a working relationship that lasted until Burke’s death in 1797.

⁶⁴ Nigel Aston. *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, c. 1750-1830* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), 202.

Burke influenced Wilmot's operation of the committee in two ways. First, he stressed the importance of advertising. Burke wrote to his friend Walker King, a member of the committee, stating that "surely our statement ought to be published at length in the papers, particularly, in the evening papers," and asserted that "in things of this kind proper advertising is everything."⁶⁵ Advertising played a prominent role in ensuring the success of Wilmot's Committee. Around this time there was a current of opinion circulating against the émigrés, prompting Wilmot to author newspaper appeals to the English public. 'No national prejudice, no difference of religious Persuasion, no political principles can suppress in the hearts of Englishmen the sense of Christian charity and beneficence,' ran the appeal which the Committee inserted in the newspapers.⁶⁶

Secondly, Burke thought the best course of action would be to leave logistics to the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon. He wrote to Wilmot that "two successive Committees" thought "that it should be left to the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, to make such liberal allowance for board, lodging clothing as he thinks best, without any restraint whatsoever."⁶⁷ In addition, Burke was convinced of the Bishop and his brethren's sincerity: "there is not one of them who would abuse the charity that is administered to them."⁶⁸ Burke's praise of the Bishop paid dividends. When the British government assumed control over relief payments in 1794, they simply adopted St. Pol de Léon's system.⁶⁹

Burke was aware that English public opinion was vital to the cause of the Wilmot Committee. It was especially difficult to convince the public to give to, of all social groups, the

⁶⁵ Burke to Walker King, 16 September 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 213.

⁶⁶ Weiner, 57.

⁶⁷ John Wilmot to Burke, 6 October 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 234.

⁶⁸ Wilmot to Burke, 6 October 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 234.

⁶⁹ Carpenter, 28.

nobility. Therefore, at Burke's urging, the "massaging of public opinion beforehand was meticulously prepared and executed by the members of the embryonic committee."⁷⁰ Burke stressed the notion that aiding the émigrés would increase England's international prestige. He claimed that "this charity...must redound infinitely to the honor of the national character,"⁷¹ and that "what is done by the public for these excellent persons is very honorable to the nation."⁷² Approving, Lord Sheffield commented that "the poor French people have had upon the whole a very good reception, such as does credit to this country."⁷³

In order to ensure the committee's greatest chance of success, Burke was adamant that the British government lead the relief effort. Writing to King in September 1792, Burke professed that "in my opinion, the ministers ought themselves to take the lead in this business."⁷⁴ He invoked James II's treatment of the Huguenots in 1685, compared the two situations, and implored the government to follow suit. In September 1792 Burke wrote impassioned letters to Lord Grenville and Dundas. He tried to convince Pitt's closest Cabinet allies to organize a relief committee, maintaining that "in my poor opinion never was anything that could be devised by the act of man more politic than this charity, that is to say if we wish the interest the feelings of

⁷⁰ Edmund Burke. *The Case of the Suffering Clergy of France, Refugees in the British Dominions* (Accessed 10 February 2010 from <http://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/search~S29?/Xedmund+burke+case+clergy&searchscope=29&SORT=DZ/Xedmund+burke+case+clergy&searchscope=29&SORT=DZ&extended=0&SUBKEY=edmund%20burke%20case%20clergy/1%2C2%2C2%2CB/frameset&FF=Xedmund+burke+case+clergy&searchscope=29&SORT=DZ&1%2C1%2C>). "It is confidently hoped, that a difference in religious persuasion will not shut the hearts of the English Public against their suffering Brethren, the Christians of France; but that all true sons of the Church of England, all true Subjects of our Savior Jesus Christ, who are not ashamed in this time of apostasy or prevarication, to confess their obedience to and imitation of their divine Master in their Charity to their suffering Brethren of all denominations-it is hoped that all persons who from the inbred sentiments of a generous nature, cultivate the virtues of humanity-it is hoped that all persons attached to the cause of religious and civil Liberty, as it is connected with Law and Order- it is hoped that all these will be gratified in having an opportunity of contributing to the support of these worthy Sufferers in the case of Honor, Virtue, Loyalty and Religion."

⁷¹ Burke to Wilmot, 2 October 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 225.

⁷² Burke to Dr. Charles Burney, 14, 15 September 1793, *Correspondence*, VII, 422.

⁷³ Weiner, 54.

⁷⁴ Burke to King, 18 September, 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 214.

our countrymen whether of pity of indignation, against the French system.”⁷⁵ Writing to Grenville, Burke reiterated that the French Revolution was “the most important crisis that ever existed in the World.”⁷⁶ Yet the responses of the two ministers revealed their reluctance to act in favor of the émigrés. In a terse letter to Lord Sheffield on 17 October 1792, Burke castigated Pitt’s administration, asking “what think you of a Ministry that give the walls of a house at Winchester for hospitality but suppose that to put beds into it would be a breach of neutrality and an act of hostile aggression upon the sovereign assassins of France?”⁷⁷ Burke himself was hostile towards the British government’s inactivity; he would continue to assist Wilmot’s Committee without governmental help. Burke was very impressed with Wilmot, writing him that the émigrés were fortunate to have “for a protector, a person of such zeal and humanity.”⁷⁸

On several occasions he advised Wilmot of the paramount importance of not separating the financial mission of providing support to the clergymen, and the moral imperative of opposing the Revolution. In his attempt to subsume the cause of the Catholic clergy under the unified banner of Christianity, Burke affirmed to Wilmot that there was no need to identify the French clergy as Catholic, claiming that “this persecution is on account of religion,” and “I do not ask about the mode of religion that is thus punished.”⁷⁹ This ploy was intended to establish the French clergy as symbols of Christianity as a whole, rather than as members of the Roman Catholic sect. Another of Burke’s concerns was the potential unruliness of the exiled clergy. Already wary of the English public’s perception, he sought to maintain a strict supervision, by the French bishops, over the lower priests. Writing to Wilmot in October 1792, Burke thought

⁷⁵ Burke to Henry Dundas, 19 September 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 216.

⁷⁶ Burke to Lord Grenville, 19 September 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 218.

⁷⁷ Burke to Lord Sheffield, 17 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 274.

⁷⁸ Burke to Wilmot, 6 February 1795, *Correspondence, VIII* 140.

⁷⁹ Burke to King, 20 September 1792, *Correspondence, VII* 220.

that the émigré clergy's "dispersion renders it difficult for them to be kept under the inspection of their superiors."⁸⁰ He thought this situation most dangerous, for "if but one person in so many hundreds should be betrayed into any irregularity...all the worthy, sober and religious part would be exposed to public odium, and the whole object of this laudable association would be defeated."⁸¹

Burke was also concerned that the French clergy's unkempt appearance would make the English public uneasy: "nothing can be more whimsical nor more fit to expose them to the contempt and derision of the populace."⁸² In order to ensure that the clergy maintained a proper appearance, Burke set about securing the necessary funding. He wrote an impassioned letter to Earl Fitzwilliam, a member of Wilmot's Committee, proposing that the committee raise the priests' allowance and clothing ration to "at least *sixteen Shillings*," as "the means of a very low living in London."⁸³ Burke further proposed that "every person may have two shirts, that they may be gravely and decently clad, and their present Harlequin rags may be disposed of."⁸⁴ He stressed the importance of clothing for the clerics, and claimed that if it were neglected, "otherwise the people never will believe them to be clergymen, nor have the smallest compassion on them."⁸⁵ Burke praised the work of Dr. Thomas Hussey, an English Catholic bishop, who arranged for the priests to get decent haircuts. Burke's goal was not only subsistence for the clergy, but also to make sure that its members *looked* like priests, which he thought would arouse compassion in the hearts of the English masses.

⁸⁰ Burke to Wilmot, 2 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 225.

⁸¹ Burke to Wilmot, 2 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 226-27.

⁸² Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 230.

⁸³ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 230-31.

⁸⁴ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 231.

⁸⁵ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 231.

Burke's interactions with the emigration convinced him of the necessity of using the émigrés in conjunction with the war. In a letter to Dundas on 19 September 1792, he emphasized the political aspect of British governmental support of the emigration: "never was anything that could be devised by man more politic than this charity, against the French system."⁸⁶ Burke continued that "it will be an answer to those who pretend that the massacring faction is popular in this kingdom." Burke's concentrated effort proved to be the most important contribution of an Englishman to the cause of the émigré clergy.

Burke Ventures to London as Britain Readies for War

Events on the Continent began to accelerate in the second half of 1792. A combined Austro-Prussian army, led by the Duke of Brunswick, was approaching the French eastern frontier at the beginning of September. Throughout August Burke had remained apprehensive. He reaffirmed to the Abbé de La Bintinaye on 3 August that "Arms, and I am sorry to say, foreign Arms, must decide your fate."⁸⁷ Yet it was becoming increasingly apparent to Burke that unless Britain was a part of these foreign arms success would be impossible. He was openly critical of Brunswick's inaction. He was also wary of the British government's overtures of recognition of the revolutionary government. Therefore, he wrote Grenville on 18 August 1792, informing him that "in such a state of things to address the present heads of the insurrection is to give a direct sanction to their authority on the part of the court of Great Britain."⁸⁸ Burke begged the foreign minister not to act "prematurely," and recognize the leaders of the rebellion; therefore, Burke advocated remaining *silent* for the time being, or to remove the ambassador to London if necessary. Towards the end of the letter, Burke reveals perhaps his greatest fear, that

⁸⁶ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 216.

⁸⁷ Burke to the Abbe de La Bintinaye, 3 August 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 167.

⁸⁸ Burke to Lord Grenville, 18 August 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 174.

of the English Jacobins, who, according to Burke, “though a little under a cloud for the present, are neither destroyed nor disheartened.”⁸⁹ He referred to the English Jacobins again in a letter to William Burke on 3 September, stating that “as long as the desperate system which prevails in France can maintain itself, we shall always find some eruption or other here.”⁹⁰ Coincidentally, on 17 August Gower had been instructed to return to England, and upon leaving reiterated British neutrality.

The September Massacres of 1792⁹¹ spun Burke into a renewed frenzy. Having firmly established his sentiments, towards the end of 1792 witnessed Burke finally resolved to aggressively engage Pitt and his ministers, Grenville and Dundas, in an effort to effect change in the British policy with regards to the émigrés, especially the French princes. He offered a series of policy initiatives to the Administration. Burke was adamant that the Comte d’Provence be recognized Regent, though this never came to fruition.

Burke became mobile and active at the end of 1792, meeting with influential politicians frequently. Events accelerated at the end of 1792. The Whig Party continued to splinter, as a meeting between the Duke of Portland and Fox on 24-25 November confirmed. The Duke of Portland was a prominent Whig, and a lifelong friend of Burke’s. Burke met with Pitt on 9 November, where he presented the prime minister with a copy of *Heads*. In a meeting with Loughborough and Windham on 10 November, Burke reported that the tendency toward coalition continued to coalesce.⁹² In a letter to Earl Fitzwilliam of 29 November 1792, Burke asserted that “I think Europe recoverable yet. But it must be by a great and speedy Effort of *this*

⁸⁹ Burke to Lord Grenville, 18 August 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 177.

⁹⁰ Edmund and Jane Burke to William Burke, 3 September 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 191.

⁹¹ The September Massacres were a wave of mob violence which overtook Paris in late summer 1792. By the time it had subsided, half the prison population of Paris had been executed: some 1,200 trapped prisoners, including many women and young boys.

⁹² Loughborough was a prominent Whig and the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

Country.”⁹³ Burke continued in the same letter to castigate the official British policy of neutrality, claiming that “the result of that neutrality, which by taking away the connection with Great Britain, took away the cement which held together all other states.”⁹⁴ The outbreak of war on the Continent came as a relief to Burke.

Burke was eager to use his political connections to his advantage, and ventured to London in November 1792 to see if he could stimulate his friends to political activity. The most important of these was William Windham. Windham was a Whig statesman who initially supported the revolution. However, largely through the influence of Burke, by 1791 he vehemently opposed the revolutionaries. Throughout November, Windham and Burke had meetings with Pitt, Grenville and Lord Hawkesbury to discuss foreign affairs and the relations of government and opposition.⁹⁵ Burke ascertained from these meetings that Pitt was readying Great Britain for war with revolutionary France. He was pleased in the knowledge, for he had been clamoring for offensive military action against the republican regime for quite some time. However, he was concerned about governmental motives for such action. Burke gathered that Pitt desired war in order to capitalize on what he perceived as the French position of military weakness, especially France’s inability to defend her colonies; Pitt’s priority was France’s West Indian possessions. Burke was afraid that such a campaign would divert resources from the Continent, where he thought lay the greatest chance of success. Overall, he was also opposed to a war of British aggrandizement.

Shortly after the outbreak of war on the Continent, negotiations began in Britain to unite some members of the Whig Party and the Pitt Administration. Burke heard of the proposal, and

⁹³ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 307.

⁹⁴ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Correspondence*, VII, 309.

⁹⁵ *Correspondence* VII, 288.

immediately began offering advice to Whig allies who shared his reactionary attitude towards the French Revolution. Though Burke was set in his principles, nonetheless he was politic about effecting the change he desired. He wanted the coalition between his Whig allies and the Pitt administration; this event would bring his influence closer to the instruments of government. Burke wrote Lord Loughborough on 27 May 1792, praising the Duke of Portland, and also urging him to accept the Great Seal from Pitt.⁹⁶

In late November 1792, negotiations resumed between Pitt and the conservative wing of the Portland Whigs. The former reached out to Lord Loughborough who had wanted to break with Fox for some time, and he consulted with the Duke of Portland for permission to accept the Great Seal from Pitt.⁹⁷ Portland was still unwilling to publicly break with Fox, and thus advised Loughborough to reject Pitt's offer. Burke was no doubt disappointed, as his letter to Loughborough on 28 November indicates.⁹⁸ He wrote to the Lord that "since all official coalition on the part of our friends was impossible, whilst their support to ministry was necessary, the best thing they could do was to send your Lordship in to hold the great seal, in order to form a link of confidence between them."⁹⁹ However, Burke was confident that the Whig leadership was leaning towards cooperation with the Pitt administration. He confided to his son that "Lord Loughborough and Windham are alarmed about the present state of Europe, and they have a real desire of doing something."¹⁰⁰ Yet in the same letter, Burke acknowledged that the time was not right to form an official coalition, and that "at this moment the support given to government must be freed from the suspicion of self-interest in any of those who give

⁹⁶ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 27 May 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 143-44.

⁹⁷ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 27 May 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 144.

⁹⁸ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 28 November 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 304.

⁹⁹ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 28 November 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 305.

¹⁰⁰ Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 18 November 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 291.

it.”¹⁰¹ In order to more fully expound on his position concerning foreign affairs, Burke delivered another pamphlet to Grenville.

Entitled *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, it emphasized the impracticality of British neutrality. Burke knew that war with the French Republic was inevitable; his only question was whether the British government wanted to wait and be attacked by an unbearably powerful France, or to take the offensive to prevent inevitable defeat. It demonstrates that Burke was in sync with British foreign policy. Pitt was as worried as Burke about the ferocity and aggressiveness the Revolution was taking, and was secretly preparing to begin a war with the French Republic. Burke astutely surmised that the best way to convince the British government to declare war was to show that the Republic was in fact taking steps to spread the Revolution beyond the borders of France. The Republic’s fraternity declaration of 19 November confirmed to Pitt and Burke that France was preparing to install similar governments wherever French troops went. Burke’s genius lay in his ability to use irresistibly apocalyptic language to deliver his message.

Until the fall of 1792, Pitt had been willing to let Austria and Prussia fight the land battles on the Continent, while Britain merely subsidized the campaigns. Burke demonstrated that this was no longer feasible, as Britain’s Continental allies had for most of 1792 been unable to stem the French tide of victory. British power rested on the dominance of her navy. The memory of Yorktown was still fresh in British memory, and as a result, since 1781 great strides had been taken to ensure that French sea power would be restrained. As long as France was restricted to an inconsequential navy during the course of the Revolution, Pitt would have no cause for alarm in regards to the British Empire. This empire relied on British naval dominance, and its only

¹⁰¹ Burke to Richard Burke, Jr., 18 November 1792, *Correspondence VII*, 291.

threat would come from a reinvigorated French naval power. Britain could tolerate an aggrandized French army on the Continent, but never a competing French navy.

Burke made the British ministry all too aware of the resurgence of French sea power: “she has fitted out a naval force, now actually at sea, by which she has enabled to give law to the whole Mediterranean.”¹⁰² The thought of the Mediterranean as a French lake was no doubt unsettling to Pitt. Burke warned that France might try to gain access to Spain, and her naval resources as well. He connected this pattern to the eventual designs of France to dominate the West and East Indies, with a force of “one hundred and fifty ships of the line, and frigates, being ready built, most of them in a manner new, and all applicable in different ways.”¹⁰³ These different ways would include pirates and privateers, ready to disrupt British colonial operations spanning the globe. Burke acknowledged that Spain in its current state was no naval threat to British interests, but he laid out the possibility that if France and Spain united, “we have much to dread from the connections into which the latter may be forced.”¹⁰⁴ If this connection occurred, Burke argued, then “the neutrality of England will be a thing absolutely impossible.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Burke ingeniously destroyed the notion that Britain can remain isolated from the concert of European nations.

In his pamphlet Burke outlined his idea for how the upcoming war should be prosecuted. In order to correct the failures of the Austro-Prussian policy, he urged Pitt to examine the methods employed by Britain’s Continental allies throughout 1792. Their failure stemmed from

¹⁰² Edmund Burke. *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs* (Accessed 10 February 2010 from http://books.google.com/books?id=O5AnMWMJF-EC&pg=PA386&lpg=PA386&dq=heads+for+consideration+on+the+present+state+of+affairs+burke&source=bl&ots=rbGb6BOJAa&sig=S5fXOOJBxVG8bBYc78BmpOyVloc&hl=en&ei=29WwS-GODIKKlwTto5S8Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CAsQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=head%20for%20consideration%20on%20the%20present%20state%20of%20affairs%20burke&f=false), 56.

¹⁰³ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 57.

¹⁰⁴ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 59.

their tendency to treat the conflict as a traditional war. To Burke, the Jacobins were anything but a traditional enemy. Furthermore, he was worried that “that country has but too much life in it, when everything around is so disposed to tameness and languor.”¹⁰⁶ Britain had to match the ferocity of the Jacobins, and confront that menace with the same ferociousness the latter had so far exhibited. If the British government tried to execute a war based upon conventional methods, it was doomed to failure.

Burke chastised both the Austrians and the Prussians for their lack of understanding of European history. He referenced the numerous occasions when foreign powers interfered in the concerns of a fellow European nation, but that these powers “have hitherto chosen to give to wars such as this the appearance of a civil contest, and not that of a hostile invasion.”¹⁰⁷ Burke reminded the British government that the Austrians gave the appearance of exactly the latter course. Austria had the right idea when it resolved to liberate Louis XVI. However, in its execution of this plan, it failed miserably. Austria should have utilized the military emigration at Coblenz in the same vein as earlier attempts in European history to reestablish a rightful government, in this case the French monarchy. However, this ancient policy was ignored, and as a result the two Germanic states were viewed as conquerors. As Burke reiterated, “the army of the French princes was thrown into the rear,” which “naturally made an ill impression on the people, and furnished an occasion for the rebels at Paris to give out that the faithful subjects of the king were destructed, despised, and abhorred by his allies.”¹⁰⁸ Once all hope was lost for a restoration of Louis XVI, Austria and Prussia seemed to lose their impetus to carry on the war, even though they commanded armies far superior to that of the French. Such allies could not be

¹⁰⁶ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 60.

¹⁰⁷ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 62.

¹⁰⁸ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 64.

trusted in the upcoming conflict. Burke clearly summarized the mistakes made; Britain therefore must not follow this course.

Burke argued that it was a mistake to place all hope upon the personage of Louis XVI, and not recognize the permanence of the idea of the *French Monarchy*, and the “intermediate orders of the state, by which the monarchy was upheld.”¹⁰⁹ This section of the pamphlet is directly aimed at Pitt and his ministers. Recognizing that Pitt was unwilling to enter into an alliance with the Bourbon princes at this juncture, Burke attempted to link British policy to the perpetuation of the French monarchy, and its supporting structures, the clergy and nobility. He repeated that “according to all the old principles of law and policy, a regency ought to have been appointed by the French princes of the blood, nobles, and parliaments, and then recognized by the combined powers.”¹¹⁰ In support of the emigration, Burke continued that “a monarchy ought not to be left a moment without a representative,” and that “the orders of the state ought also to have been recognized, that is, in the emigrants.”¹¹¹ Burke consistently referred to the law of nations as the basis for his prescription, and “not according to the novel and inconsiderable principles of the usurpation which the united powers have come to extirpate.”¹¹² Burke’s advice is rooted deep in European tradition, and the laws which have come to govern international crises. While it may be too late to save Louis XVI, he reasoned, the French monarchy *must* survive.

Heads for the Consideration on the Present State of Affairs is a concentrated statement of Burke’s political ideology intertwined with the political reality facing him in November 1792. It illustrates his complete lack of faith in Austria and Prussia as competent British allies, and

¹⁰⁹ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 62.

¹¹⁰ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 63.

¹¹¹ *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 63.

¹¹² *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, 63.

reaffirms his conviction in the necessity of immediate British intervention. Burke knew that war was inevitable, and was firmly convinced that the longer Pitt waited to declare it, the less likely Britain would have a chance at winning it. His advice to Pitt was both a prescription and a plea; but his determined support of the Prime Minister as a member of the opposition convinced many that it was sincere, and most likely accurate.

During December and early January, relations between Britain and France deteriorated to the point where Pitt believed that war was “inevitable, and that the sooner it was begun the better.”¹¹³ With the prospect of imminent war, those Portland Whigs who shared Burke’s view of the perils facing Britain redoubled their efforts to persuade the party’s leaders to declare open support for Pitt’s government and to disavow Fox, who still supported the Revolution. Burke met with the party leadership, including Portland, Loughborough and Windham, on 29 November 1792, and found that “there was not an iota of difference between any of them and myself on the aspect of foreign affairs.”¹¹⁴ The major difference was on how best to proceed in the realm of British domestic politics. Burke’s role in persuading the Whig leaders to break publicly with Fox and declare support for Pitt’s government has been downplayed. Both his published works and his correspondence created an environment in which it was prudent for leading Whigs to make such a public break and support Pitt. Loughborough was under the direct influence of Burke with regards to his decision-making.¹¹⁵ Thus, the Whig leadership, through the coercing of Burke, had taken a big step towards a coalition with Pitt. The issue was not dead; it would be revisited again.

¹¹³ Lord Loughborough to Edmund Burke, 19 January 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 338.

¹¹⁴ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Correspondence, VII*, 307.

¹¹⁵ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Correspondence, VII*, 312-13.

Burke had accomplished a great deal in terms of inserting himself in the debate as to what should be done about revolutionary France. Following the publication of the *Reflections*, he continued to involve himself in both international and domestic political matters relating to the French Revolution. His publications established him as the leader of the war movement in Britain and across Europe, and also endeared him to the émigrés who were clamoring for a restoration of the *ancien Régime*. Burke's disavowal of Fox and his subsequent break from the Whigs verified his dedication to his principles, and paved the way for a coalition government that would bring his Whig allies into the British ministry. The tireless efforts of Burke on behalf of the exiled French clergy exhibited his philanthropic duty to those in need, and laid the groundwork for future enterprises with that group. More importantly, he had gained a voice within the halls of the British ministry, and his influence was peaking at precisely the right time. During the next phase of Burke's involvement he would exert this influence to a greater degree than before, as Britain prepared to defeat the French Revolution through warfare.

Burke engaged in three areas of the British response to the French Revolution following the outbreak of war between Britain and the French Republic on 1 February 1793. First, he solicited the British ministers, hoping to persuade them against a war of aggrandizement at the expense of France. Secondly, he continued negotiations with his former Whig allies in the attempt to isolate Fox. Burke advocated that these Whigs enter into a coalition with Pitt, in order to increase his own influence within the British government. Finally, Burke assisted the French emigration, which he felt was vital to a successful implementation of British counterrevolutionary policy.

Burke vs. Pitt

The French Republic declared war on Britain on 1 February 1793. Pitt immediately forwarded a copy of the declaration war to Burke on 10 February.¹¹⁶ Burke had been in close contact with Pitt and his ministers during the weeks preceding the outbreak of the conflict, and the prime minister clearly was interested in hearing Burke's opinion on the formation of British war policy. In the letter accompanying the declaration, Pitt wrote Burke that "I should be glad if you can have the goodness to call in Downing Street at twelve tomorrow, then we may converse on the subject."¹¹⁷ Pitt was already aware of Burke's position regarding the Revolution, and though their opinions had diverged up to this point, Pitt no doubt respected Burke's stance. Burke met with Pitt on 6 March 1793, and according to Sir Gilbert Elliot, who, along with Burke and William Windham, met with Pitt and Dundas on 6 March 1793, Burke gave Pitt "a little

¹¹⁶ *Correspondence*, VII, 348. The Convention declared war on Britain and Holland on 1 February, but news of this did not reach London until the 8th.

¹¹⁷ William Pitt to Burke, 10 February 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 348.

political instruction, with the authority of an old and most informed statesman, and, although nobody ever takes the whole of Burke's advice, yet he always furnishes very important and useful matter, *some part* of which sticks and does good."¹¹⁸ Yet the gulf between Burke and Pitt soon would manifest itself. To understand the political differences between these two men it is pertinent to analyze Pitt's aims in the upcoming war.

Colin Jones identified four primary policy themes of Pitt in the war against France. First was maritime security. Pitt reasoned that the best way to ensure British naval superiority over the French was to destroy the base of French sea-power, namely its overseas empire in the Caribbean. Second was Continental security. In 1787, Britain forged an alliance with Holland, providing Britain with a powerful naval ally and port access into Europe. Third was a prevailing British public isolationist sentiment. Britons were "suspicious of expensive continental wars and entangling alliances with untrustworthy and despotic European monarchs."¹¹⁹ This isolationism explains why Pitt initially declared British neutrality. Fourth was the policy of counterrevolution. The British government was uninterested in interfering with internal French affairs, as long as the Revolution confined itself within the borders of France. However, when the Revolutionaries threatened to expand the Revolution internationally, Britain could not stand by idly. Late 1792 marked the point where the British government invested itself in a policy of counterrevolution as a means to an end.

Therefore, Burke's major themes of what he thought British war policy should be differed greatly from the official British stance. He firmly believed in the moral crusade against Jacobinism, and that the British government should make this crusade their priority. For Burke,

¹¹⁸ *Correspondence*, VII, 349.

¹¹⁹ Colin Jones. *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion, Propaganda* (University of Exeter Press: London, 1983), 14.

once Jacobinism was eradicated, the only acceptable settlement for France's government was the reestablishment of the Bourbon Monarchy. Burke also was fervently against Pitt's policy of commercial aggrandizement, as well as indemnifications. This was not a traditional Franco-British struggle like those of the 17th and 18th centuries. Its sole purpose was the extirpation of Jacobinism in France. Burke detailed his reasoning in regards to avoiding a traditional war. Hence, Burke's success would be predicated upon his ability to convince Ministers that his goals were commensurate with British policy objectives. Burke had to keep applying pressure to the British ministry, so that they would not forget counterrevolution as the best means to defeat the revolutionaries. It would prove increasingly difficult, as Dundas and Grenville advised Pitt to keep traditional British interests at the forefront.

The Early Stages of the War

Initially, the tides of war swung in Britain's favor. By June 1793 the Austrians had reconquered virtually all of the Austrian Netherlands. They attempted to capitalize on this success by laying siege to Valenciennes, a strategic fortress town located on the River Scheldt. On 31 July Burke was informed by the Duke of Portland that Valenciennes had surrendered to the Allies. While Burke acknowledged this "very important event in a military light," he stressed its importance "as a beginning of a political system with regard to France."¹²⁰ This was in reference to the refusal of the allied commanders to accept *assignats* as one of the articles of the capitulation. Burke wanted the war to be against the Jacobin system, and he viewed this refusal as a potentially "mortal blow to *assignats*, the instrument of all the interior miseries of

¹²⁰ Burke to the Duke of Portland, 1 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 380.

France, and of her aggression upon the independency and happiness of every other community.”¹²¹

Having temporarily regained faith in the Allied cause, Burke was disappointed when he learned that after the capture of Valenciennes, the allied commanders did not intend to penetrate more deeply into France or to attempt to advance on Paris, but had decided to reduce more fortified towns on the French frontier. This strategy returned Burke to a state of despair, and convinced him that “after fluctuating for a long time without any system, we have adopted one that is completely ruinous.”¹²² Burke’s theory on the direction of the war crystallized more clearly at this juncture. He was convinced that “France is strong at arm’s length,” but that “she is weakness itself, if you can get to grapple with her internally. If you keep on the frontier, she may make another frontier.”¹²³ British troops had been dispatched to siege the French privateering base at Dunkirk, but Burke regarded that move as “a retrograde proceeding.”¹²⁴ He predicted that if the current strategy was maintained, that the British people would grow weary of war and that the European alliance would fragment. Burke was no doubt frenzied over British actions on the Continent, for he wrote three letters in six days to Windham regarding the subject.¹²⁵

However, opportunities began to present themselves in other regions. Toulon was captured by a joint Anglo-Spanish force under the command of British Admiral Lord Hood. Burke’s prediction about France’s internal weakness proved true: Royalists had seized control of

¹²¹ Burke to the Duke of Portland, 1 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 381.

¹²² Burke to William Windham, 18 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 413.

¹²³ Burke to William Windham, 18 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 413.

¹²⁴ Burke to William Windham, 18 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 413.

¹²⁵ Burke to William Windham, 18 August 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 413-415.

the city in response to the arrest of the Girondists.¹²⁶ The British fleet under Admiral Hood anchored in Toulon's harbor, and a force of 13,000 Allied troops was committed to the Royalist cause. Further, Hood issued a proclamation on 23 August 1793, promising aid to the Royalists and stating that Toulon would be returned to the French Monarchy when the war was over. Burke expressed his praise of Hood as "indeed the only thing rightly done [so far in the war] in my opinion,"¹²⁷ and the capture of Toulon as "glorious to the national character."¹²⁸ This was the type of action which Burke had been advocating since the start of the war. Sensing an opening, Burke sought to secure an advantage for the Royalists of Toulon. On 17 September, Sir Gilbert Elliot had been appointed as one of the three British commissioners who were to administer Toulon and other areas in southern France which broke away from the Republic. Elliot accepted the post after consulting with Burke, and the latter ensured the position might prove fruitful to the Royalist cause by joining Cazales to Elliot's mission. Though Burke was pleased at the seizure of Toulon, he would soon hear of news of rumblings coming out of western France.

The Vendée

The Vendée province became the center of counterrevolutionary movement. The Vendée was a region in western France that covered roughly four thousand square miles. It was bordered on the north by the River Loire, from Saint-Nazaire to Ponts-de-Ce; on the east in a relatively straight line from Ponts-de-Ce to Parthenay; and on the south by a wavy line connecting Parthenay to Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie on the Atlantic coast.¹²⁹ The Vendée did not exist as a

¹²⁶ *Correspondence*, VII, 425.

¹²⁷ Burke to William Burke, 15 September 1793, *Correspondence* VII, 427.

¹²⁸ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 18 September 1793, *Correspondence*, VII, 430.

¹²⁹ Reynald Secher, *A French Genocide : The Vendée*, trans. George Holoch. (University of Notre Dame Press : Notre Dame, Indiana, 2003) , 1.

province before the French Revolution, but was instead an amalgamation of seven hundred parishes from three different provinces (Anjou, Brittany and Poitou). In fact the label was given to the region by the authorities in Paris in February 1793. Reynald Secher asserts that this was done because “the politicians hoped to impose a rather reductive form on the movement.”¹³⁰ The people of the region were mainly peasants, devoted to their Catholic religion. But the centralization effort begun under Louis XIV had caused the inhabitants to resent the French monarchy. This endeavor included heavier taxation and increased militia service throughout the 18th century. Further, many in the region felt like their problems and concerns fell on deaf ears at Versailles. Therefore, the people who comprised the Vendée initially supported the Revolution. However, the ensuing radical reforms of the National Assembly alienated the inhabitants, and ultimately led to open rebellion.

The first act of the National Assembly that angered the Vendéans was the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, passed on 12 July 1790. State intervention into the domain of the Church proved to be very unpopular in a highly religious region. This discontent led to open conflict, with the first documented case of armed rebellion as early as August 1790.¹³¹ The National Assembly initially turned a deaf ear to the trouble brewing in the region, as it focused on foreign military issues. However, in the beginning of 1791 Paris began to take serious notice of what was transpiring. Unrest began to rise steadily as the authorities in Paris became more extreme in their legislative measures. The movement gathered steam throughout 1791, as the Vendéans became more reactionary. This resulted in the National Assembly seeking more repressive measures designed to suppress the insurgents. Thus, the Vendée had established itself

¹³⁰ Secher, 2.

¹³¹ Secher, 61.

as a bastion for the Counterrevolution. Yet at this time there was no organization to the counterrevolutionary, or more properly, *anti*-revolutionary movement.

The breaking point came in the spring of 1793, caused by two acts passed by the National Assembly. On 6 March, an order was issued declaring the closing of all churches in the Vendée not served by constitutional priests. Not only were the inhabitants denied the use of their churches, but the decree caused the exodus of most of the remaining Catholic priests in the region. The priests who remained, however, “constantly drew attention to the cleavages between Christian tradition and revolutionary principles and decisions.”¹³² This situation was vital to the inflammation of local discontent, and as Reynald Secher claims “explains the unshakable attachment to the refractory priests and the birth of an opposition.”¹³³ On 7 March, a law of recruitment was passed, ordering the levee of 300,000 men to fight for the Revolution. Added on top of the church closings and mass conscription was an economic downturn in the region caused by excessive taxation.

Riots erupted almost immediately, on 10-11 March 1793. In several towns the inhabitants attacked the national guard, and during the following days they seized by force the various surrounding municipalities loyal to the Republic. The rebels organized their insurrection over the next seven months. The strength of this movement laid in its effective organizational management and leadership. The people divided themselves into three groups. The first group comprised men old enough to bear arms. This group elected their officers, who formed the second group. The third group was composed of the noncombatants, who were charged with working the land and maintaining the cattle.¹³⁴ The popularity of the movement grew in relation

¹³² Secher, 62.

¹³³ Secher, 62.

¹³⁴ Secher, 85.

to this successful organization. Secher argues that the strength of the resistance lay in the conjunction of “new religious faith; love of freedom; rational organization, making it possible, among other things, to continue farming during fighting; perfect knowledge of the terrain; and popular solidarity.”¹³⁵ Thus, by the fall of 1793 the Vendée was a powerful, organized insurrection.

Burke first advocated British governmental assistance to the rebellion in the Vendée in late September 1793. While he had alluded to counterrevolution in his earlier writings of 1791 and 1792, Burke became much more active in solidifying a concrete policy following the outbreak of war on 1 February 1793. Burke’s counterrevolutionary policy coalesced around the exploitation of Royalist sympathies and uprisings in the Vendée. His plan was predicated on the notion that the majority of Frenchmen were opposed to the Revolution. The uprising in the Vendée was the prime example of this sentiment. In a letter to Elliot written on 22 September, he admitted that the Vendée was “an opening, which if neglected by our Government, whether as statesmen or as lovers of mankind they will one day sorely repent.”¹³⁶ Burke professed that “it cannot be...that we mean to consider all those as enemies who were not concerned in that mother rebellion [the Revolution] and all its evil principles.”¹³⁷ He acknowledged the importance of British operations in Toulon, but claimed “we must give preference to those of Poitou. Very wisely and very temperately they have held out nothing but the general principles of religion, loyalty, and civil order.”¹³⁸ Therefore, Burke proposed the abandonment of British war operations in other regions, and advocated for immediate assistance to the Vendéan rebellion.

¹³⁵ Secher, 97.

¹³⁶ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 22 September 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 433.

¹³⁷ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 22 September 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 434.

¹³⁸ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 22 September 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 435.

He proposed the launching of an amphibious Anglo-French expeditionary force into the Vendée. Burke encouraged the British government to place Artois, recently appointed the Lieutenant-General of France,¹³⁹ at the head of this force. He also advocated the recruitment of émigrés who had been clamoring for such an opportunity. These noble émigrés would supply troops for the French part of the equation; Artois would command them. Also, exiled priests would assist the campaign, in order to unify the French citizens once military victory had been achieved. Burke thought the reduction of fortresses on France's eastern frontier was a waste of time; therefore, he argued that Britain and the Allies' best chance for success laid in abetting the rebellion in the Vendée, and supporting this rebellion with a landing of a joint Anglo-French expeditionary force.

The primary adjustment in strategy hinged on British governmental support of the Bourbon Princes. In order to effect this change in strategy, Burke first had to convince Pitt that Artois and Provence were viable candidates to lead the Anglo-French force which would assist the rebellion in the Vendée. Pitt viewed the émigrés as potential political allies; however, the Bourbon Princes were never assured of Pitt's ultimate support because he was unsure whether the Bourbons could still command allegiance in France. Pitt had a low opinion of the émigrés in general, and doubted their abilities as troops fighting alongside British regulars. Besides, as stated earlier, Pitt had more faith in the *constitutionnels*, and he began formulating a plan to put a constitutional monarch on the throne of France, backed by the Constitution of 1790 which had been approved by George III. This displeased Burke, because he believed in reestablishment of the Bourbon Monarchy and that this was the ideal opportunity to support the Princes in their

¹³⁹ Provence, now acting as Regent to the young King Louis XVII, appointed Artois Lieutenant-General of France on 21 January 1793, following the execution of Louis XVI.

effort to reclaim France, restore the *ancien Régime*, and, most importantly, to destroy Jacobinism.

Burke's top priority at this point was to dissuade the British government from a war of aggrandizement. However, at this time Pitt was concerned precisely with such a policy. Pitt's objective was to increase British power at the expense of France, and also to protect British interests in the Low Countries and preserve the balance of power on the Continent. Burke feared this tactic, and also argued that Pitt's strategy was contributing to Jacobin successes across Europe. France's mass conscription laws enabled it to field enormous armies the like of which the Continent had never seen, and though British armies had made temporary gains in the Austrian Netherlands and Holland, French forces were successful in reestablishing their dominance. He cited the failures along the eastern frontier at Dunkirk and Maubeuge as proof that British strategy needed adjustment.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, Burke was discouraged to learn of Pitt's designs to seize French colonies in the Caribbean. British expeditions were launched into the West Indies at the same time as Burke was pressing for greater assistance to the Vendéan insurrection.

Thus, by the end of September 1793, Burke was firmly convinced that the best prospect of success in the destruction of Jacobinism involved British governmental commitment to the Royalist insurrection in the Vendée. He outlined his plan for a joint Anglo-French expedition into the region, and he pressed the British government to enlist the *purs* to compose the French forces, led by the Comte d'Artois. However, Pitt was unresponsive to such a proposal at this time, and preferred to stick to the strategy he outlined at the beginning of hostilities with the

¹⁴⁰ *Correspondence*, VII, 436.

French Republic. Burke believed that Pitt's current strategy would not only compromise the war effort from a moral standpoint, but would also divert future resources. This policy angered Burke and caused him to write prolifically to the British ministry on the matter.

Burke's Push for a Whig Alliance with Pitt

The declaration of war was the catalyst for another round of internal squabbling within the Whig Party. The Duke of Portland still had not publicly disavowed Fox. Burke was becoming increasingly frustrated concerning this point. He, along with Windham and other Whigs publicly opposed to Fox, met privately on 10 February 1793, and declared their resolve to support Pitt's government. Burke was no doubt hopeful that this would prompt Portland, who shared many of Burke's views concerning the war, to change his position and break from Fox. However, on 20 February 1793, the Whig Club passed a resolution assuring Fox "that all the arts of misrepresentation which have been so industriously used of late for the purpose of calumniating him, have had no other effect upon them, than that of confirming, strengthening, and increasing their attachment to him."¹⁴¹ Upon hearing of this, Burke sent his resignation letter to the Whig Club on 28 February 1793, along with his son and other opposition members. Burke's name headed the letter, an obvious indication of his influence within the Whig opposition. It stated

The points on which we have the misfortune to dissent with Mr. Fox, are of too high importance, and touch too closely to the present interests and safety of this Country, to admit of our acquiescence in any doubtful or equivocal Declaration concerning them...We have certainly thought the tendency of the principal measures which Mr. Fox has proposed or supported at the present period, detrimental to the interests of Great Britain...and that they increase in an eminent degree, the danger with which the independence of Europe, and the happiness of the whole Civilized World are threatened.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Edmund Burke, Richard Burke, Jr., and Others to the Whig Club, 28 February 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 353.

¹⁴² Edmund Burke, Richard Burke, Jr., and Others to the Whig Club, 28 February 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 354.

Having thus made a decisive break from the Whig party, Burke argued for the importance of Parliamentary support for Pitt's government in relation to a successful prosecution of the war against France.

He thought that a vital aspect of British war policy was the unified support of the House of Commons. Jacobin societies in Britain had been growing in number since the declaration of the French Republic, and their membership rolls were increasing daily, as Jacobin military successes continued. Burke was bent on persuading two of the most important members of the Whig leadership, the Duke of Portland and Earl Fitzwilliam, to break from Fox and pledge their support to Pitt's administration. However, Burke's resignation had a negative effect on his designs to turn these two men to his side. At the close of the Parliamentary session in late February 1793, Portland and Fitzwilliam confirmed their support of the Whig leader. Burke needed the support of these two influential Whigs in order to isolate Fox. Burke turned once again to his pen to change the change the outcome of the Parliamentary session. In late September 1793, Burke wrote a letter to Portland, in which he announced the completion of a pamphlet detailing the errors of continued Whig support of Fox.

Observations on the Conduct of the Minority

Observations on the Conduct of the Minority was aimed squarely at Portland and Fitzwilliam. His strategy was to show to Portland and Fitzwilliam not only the utter impracticality of Fox's actions and speeches, but warn them of the dangers if Fox was successful in converting Parliament of his views of the French Revolution, and the Jacobins in particular. Burke attempted to persuade Portland and Fitzwilliam against the "delusion, by which some look upon this jacobin contest at home, as an ordinary party squabble about place or patronage; and to regard this jacobin war abroad as a common war about trade or territorial boundaries, or about a

political balance of power among rival or jealous states.”¹⁴³ The pamphlet was sent to Portland, Fitzwilliam, and a number of prominent Whigs at the end of September and early October 1793.

The overarching theme of *Observations* was that if Fox succeeded in his opposition to Pitt, the British cause was lost. However, if the Whig Party rid itself of Fox and his cadre it would benefit the nation *and* the party. Burke knew that Fox’s ostracism would be impossible without the support of Portland and Fitzwilliam. If he could not convince these two men of the necessity of this split, Burke forecast the defeat of Pitt’s ministry, a subsequent takeover by Fox, and the triumph of Jacobinism in Britain. His argument hinged upon a prediction of what Britain would look like if Fox took control of the British government and assumed the Premiership. The address was divided into fifty-five succinct points, upon which Burke built his case to the Duke and the Earl. The main charges against Fox were his inflammatory speeches in the House of Commons, his patronage of the revolutionary societies, his opposition to the war, and his perversion of the Whig party to accomplish these ambitions. Burke summarized the parliamentary activity that Fox had engaged in since the outbreak of war on 1 February 1793. He accused Fox of usurping the “laws and constitution of the kingdom” by directly engaging with Jacobin representatives, which was “a sole and exclusive right of the king.”¹⁴⁴

While Burke stops short in this pamphlet of accusing Fox of treason, he does include the phrase “absolute high treason”¹⁴⁵ in the same breath as Fox. A prevalent theme of the paper is Burke’s paranoia about internal subversion in Britain. Early on in the address, Burke

¹⁴³ Edmund Burke. *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority* (Accessed 10 February 2010 from http://books.google.com/books?id=wiEPAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=observations+conduct+minority&source=bl&ots=NG1R4EE7IN&sig=b8AAC7Ml1ra93GtyBkRdmXVEuhY&hl=en&ei=eNmws6PpNMP_lgf6jNWR AQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=&f=false), 134.

¹⁴⁴ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 138. “This proceeding of Mr. Fox does not amount to absolute high treason; but such a proceeding is, in law, not very remote from that offence.”

complained that “at *home*, I see no abatement whatsoever in the zeal of the partisans of Jacobinism towards their cause, nor any cessation in their efforts to do mischief.”¹⁴⁶ Burke was incredulous that there was even a domestic debate concerning the place of Jacobinism in the British constitutional system. He emphasized the role that Fox was playing in promulgating this debate. Burke revealed Fox’s close associations with “the ‘Friends of the People,’ and members of those mischievous associations called the Revolution Society, and the Constitutional Society.”¹⁴⁷ He claimed that Fox’s “influence over the persons who composed the leading part of that association, was, and is, unbounded,” and further that he “encouraged it in every part of its progress.”¹⁴⁸ Hence, Fox was aiding and abetting persons whose grand design was to establish a political alliance with the French Jacobins.

Burke illustrated to Portland and Fitzwilliam that Fox had treated the two Whig leaders “with the greatest asperity and ridicule” when the Duke and Earl had raised alarm in Parliament at what was transpiring in France.¹⁴⁹ He cited Fox’s exclusion of Portland and Fitzwilliam at the beginning of the session, and the former’s tendency towards unilateral action on behalf of only his cohorts. Fox had shown no concern thus far with regards to the French menace; he actually “contented himself with defending the ruling factions in France.”¹⁵⁰ Not only had Fox defended the revolutionaries, but he also “accused the public councils of this kingdom of every sort of evil design on the liberties of the people.”¹⁵¹ Burke affirmed that opposition in a time of war was bad for Britain, and would aid the Jacobin cause. Sardonicly, he stated that “a sure way indeed to encourage France, is to let her see *that the people of England raise a clamor against the war*

¹⁴⁶ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 139.

¹⁴⁸ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 139-40.

¹⁴⁹ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 140. The parliamentary session had ended on 21 February 1793.

¹⁵⁰ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 141.

¹⁵¹ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 141.

before the terms are so much as proposed on any side."¹⁵² Indeed, Burke's vision of Foxite success included a British union with Jacobin France, allied against all the other great powers of Europe. He connected Fox with the revolutionary societies of Britain, and declared that this fact alone should convince Whigs of their leader's inability to remain at the head of the party. Burke's utilization of heightened language in his indictment served its function well; his portrayal of impending catastrophe was positively received by many members of his party. Fox was molding himself as the British arm of the Jacobin head in Paris, and his success meant that this catastrophe was certain to occur.

Therefore, Burke begged Portland and Fitzwilliam to reconcile their internal beliefs to the outward expression of those beliefs. He begged the two men to forgive their misgivings about Pitt, and the wrongs that they had suffered as a result of the Prime Minister's earlier political wrangling in the 1780s.¹⁵³ Burke argued that what Pitt was doing in 1793 was more important than what he had done in the previous decade, and that it was no longer realistic to refuse to cooperate with him. In previous correspondence with Burke, the Duke and the Earl had stated that they agreed with Burke on the principles of his opposition to Jacobinism. Yet they still supported a man who clearly desired the success of Jacobinism. Burke's powerful writing, filled with references to Britain's impending doom if Fox succeeded, called into question the validity of the Portland's and Fitzwilliam's political standing. Burke fretted about the two men's incapacity to reconcile their principles with their politics. He ended the pamphlet with a dose

¹⁵² *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 158.

¹⁵³ In 1784, Pitt had come to power through irregular means, and cost Fox the premiership, and Portland and Fitzwilliam positions in the ministry.

both of pessimism and gloom, uttering the line “I write this with pain, and with a heart full of grief.”¹⁵⁴ Burke was clearly in a state of despair.

However, his words resonated with his intended audience. Portland responded to the letter immediately. He informed Burke that “I most perfectly agree with you in your opinion of the proceedings and doctrines which have produced this mischief abroad, and in your opinion of the war.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the Duke confirmed what Burke had been attesting to, that he was in fact opposed to Fox on matters of principle. Portland affirmed, however, that he could not forgive what Pitt had done to him earlier in his career, and stated that “I am not Christian enough to turn the other cheek to the man who has given me a blow, nor can I lick the hand which has endeavored to destroy me.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, politics trumped principle for the Duke, and he rejected Burke’s proposal to set aside his differences with Pitt and break with Fox. While there is no reply from Fitzwilliam contained in Burke’s *Correspondence*, he no doubt concurred with Portland.

Burke Reengages the British Government with respect to the Vendée

Despite Portland’s rejection, Burke pressed on with matters relating to British war policy. He returned to his preoccupation with the Royalist cause in western France and sought to reengage the British government. As mentioned earlier, Burke was despondent over Pitt’s refusal to entertain his proposal to assist the insurrection in the Vendée. British war policy continued to focus on advancing on France’s eastern frontier and capturing French colonial possessions in the Caribbean. In response to this policy, Burke wrote to Dundas on 8 October 1793, asserting that “there is one part of the war, which instead of being postponed and

¹⁵⁴ *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, 178.

¹⁵⁵ The Duke of Portland to Edmund Burke, 10 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 447.

¹⁵⁶ The Duke of Portland to Edmund Burke, 10 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 448.

considered in a secondary light, ought to have priority over every other, and requires our most early and our most careful attention; I mean La Vendée.”¹⁵⁷ He reemphasized the notion that Britain’s energy should be focused on quashing Jacobinism in France proper, instead of pursuing a war of aggrandizement. Burke reiterated his claim that “at La Vendée with infinitely less charge, we may make an impression likely to be decisive.”¹⁵⁸ He restated the necessity for the immediate deployment of noble French émigré stationed in Britain, to be led by Artois, in conjunction with British army and naval forces. Burke ended the letter by reiterating the importance of the émigrés “to their own cause” in order “to get others engaged, as well as for our own honor and consistency that we may not seem to have one set of politics and principles on one side of the Mediterranean and another on the Ocean.”¹⁵⁹ He ended the letter by boldly asserting that the British government was purposely delaying operations in western France.

Dundas responded in a letter of 13 October 1793, and agreed with Burke that “the resistance made by the royalists in La Vendée was one of the fairest prospects that had cast up for the purpose of eradicating the nefarious principles which have rendered the present combination of the powers of Europe.”¹⁶⁰ However, he countered Burke’s assertion that the British government was deliberately holding off an invasion, citing difficulty in communicating with Vendéan leaders: “I have felt very sincerely the bad success I have had in the repeated attempts I have made during this whole summer to open communication with them, and I am afraid from never hearing of them the different people who made the attempt have been destroyed.”¹⁶¹ Dundas stopped short of agreeing with Burke’s plan to furnish British troops for

¹⁵⁷ Burke to Henry Dundas, 8 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 445.

¹⁵⁸ Burke to Henry Dundas, 8 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 445.

¹⁵⁹ Burke to Henry Dundas, 8 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 446.

¹⁶⁰ Henry Dundas to Edmund Burke, *Correspondence VII*, 449.

¹⁶¹ Dundas to Burke, *Correspondence VII*, 449.

an amphibious assault on the western French coast. The most Dundas promised was aid “in the shape of stores, provisions, and clothes.”¹⁶² Nevertheless, Dundas offered to meet with Burke in person to discuss matters further; in a letter of the following day, Burke accepted Dundas’ invitation to meet him in London.¹⁶³

Burke was unwilling to place his complete faith in the British government, and he continued to pursue the prosecution of his foreign policy initiatives through other channels at the end of October 1793. He reached out to the Comte d’Artois, hoping to persuade the prince to become more active in soliciting the aid of the British ministers. The correspondence between Burke and Artois revealed that the latter had become more aggressive. Burke received a letter from the Bourbon prince on 23 October 1793 in which the French prince informed him that he had been invited by the Royal and Catholic Army in the Vendée to come to the Vendée and place himself at the head of the rebellion. This was welcoming news to Burke; however, there was no response from the British government concerning the invitation from the Vendéans to Artois. Again, Burke became aggravated and agitated. In a letter to Windham on 24 October 1793, Burke urged a “calm and unprejudiced review of the whole plan of the war, which in my opinion has been totally wrong.”¹⁶⁴ He continued to blame “the bad military plan” on “the false political principles on which it is formed.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, Burke set about composing another treatise specifically directed to the British ministry concerning the war policy of the allies.

Remarks on the Policy of the Allies

Finished in November 1793, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* was written directly to Pitt, Grenville and Dundas. It was a response to the impending British declaration drafted by

¹⁶² Dundas to Burke, *Correspondence VII*, 449-50.

¹⁶³ Burke to Dundas, 14 October 1793, *Correspondence, VII*, 451.

¹⁶⁴ Burke to Windham, 24 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 460.

¹⁶⁵ Burke to Windham, 24 October 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 460-61.

Grenville in late September 1793.¹⁶⁶ The declaration stated the British government's objectives in the war against France and offered it support to all Frenchmen opposed to the Republic. Burke proclaimed that the issuance of such a declaration was ill-timed, because "manifestos of this nature are commonly made when the army of some sovereign enters into the enemy's country in great force, and under the imposing authority of that force employs menaces towards those whom he desires to awe."¹⁶⁷ He also affirmed the fact that in October 1793 the revolutionary government was fresh off military victories in virtually every quarter of the war, and was under no imposing British authority. Hence, Burke argued that the opportunity of presenting the type of manifesto Grenville issued could only be accompanied by military success. Therefore, he rushed the completion of this pamphlet so that it would compete with this new declaration from the British government.

The premise of the *Remarks* was that Europe would not be safe as long as the Jacobin Republic survived in France. Burke, therefore, demanded that the British government, along with its Continental allies, engage in a crusade against Jacobinism. He reaffirmed his support for the Royalists and urged the British government to do the same. He questioned the sincerity of the British government's offer to aid "all Frenchmen opposed to the French Republic,"¹⁶⁸ and countered with the fact that "those who are the natural, legal, constitutional representatives of that monarchy have not had their names so much as mentioned in any public act."¹⁶⁹ Moreover,

¹⁶⁶ At the end of September 1793, Lord Grenville had drafted a declaration in which the British government stated its objectives in the war against France, and offered its support to all Frenchmen opposed to the Republic.

¹⁶⁷ Edmund Burke, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (accessed 10 February 2010 from http://books.google.com/books?id=O5AnMWMJF-EC&pg=PA452&lpg=PA452&dq=remarks+on+the+policy+of+the+allies&source=bl&ots=rbGb6BPNs8&sig=k8NEaYrGfIdJu439eyY84y9DV9Q&hl=en&ei=Aduws9G8MIKKIwe7o5S8Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=remarks%20on%20the%20policy%20of%20the%20allies&f=false), 72.

¹⁶⁸ Grenville's Declaration (see n. 166).

¹⁶⁹ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 74.

Burke asserted that “the two leading orders of France, the true and sole supporters of monarchy in that country, are, at best, considered only as objects of charity.”¹⁷⁰ He argued that in order for Grenville’s declaration to be taken seriously by at whom it is targeted, its intention had to be put into practice. That meant a suspension of diplomatic relations with the revolutionaries, and the establishment of closer relations with the émigré nobility and clergy. Burke had harsh words for the British government: “It is plain that we take the Royalists of France only as an instrument of some convenience in a temporary hostility with the Jacobins, but that we regard those atheistic and murderous barbarians as the bona fide possessors of the soil of France.”¹⁷¹ Burke added to this notion by stating “for my part, I would sooner put my hand into the fire than sign an invitation to oppressed men to fight under my standard, and then on every sinister event of war, cruelly give them up to be punished as the basest of traitors.”¹⁷² He continued, claiming

I am much afraid, too, that we shall scarcely be believed fair supporters of lawful monarchy against Jacobinism, so long as we continue to make and to observe cartels with the Jacobins, and on fair terms exchange prisoners with them, whilst the royalists, invited to our standard, and employed under our public faith, against the Jacobins, if taken by that savage faction, are given up to the executioner without the least attempt whatsoever at reprisal.¹⁷³

Though melodramatic, Burke used vivid and extreme language to highlight the point that the British government had thus far abandoned the émigrés, and reiterated that it had been a costly mistake.

Burke was also wary of the perception that some would view the British government’s actions as those of a conquering foreign power, rather than as an ally seeking to liberate the “oppressed” people of France, and return the French monarchy to its proper position. He counseled that the “affair of the establishment of a government is a very difficult undertaking for

¹⁷⁰ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 74.

¹⁷¹ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 75.

¹⁷² *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 75-76.

¹⁷³ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 75.

foreign powers to act in as *principal*; though as *auxiliaries and mediators*, it has not been at all unusual.”¹⁷⁴ Burke hoped that the British government, and the allies, would serve as the mediators, and that they would place the exiled nobility in the position to act as the principals. He counseled that the first thing to do was to select “those whom we consider as the people of France, those who actually ought to exercise power in that state.”¹⁷⁵ For Burke, the answer was simple: the exiled nobility and clergy.

Therefore, Burke repeated the theme that Frenchmen should be consulted with for the reestablishment of the monarchy in France. This meant only exiled Frenchmen, because Burke believed that “we shall be in a great error if we act upon an idea that there exists in that country any organized body of men who might be willing to treat on equitable terms, for the restoration of their monarchy.”¹⁷⁶ Yet again, however, Burke guarded against certain émigrés, namely the *constitutionnels*. He warned that “they have never had the smallest degree of power, consideration or authority,”¹⁷⁷ and hence could not command any of the aforementioned traits once the monarchy was restored. Burke believed that dealing with the *constitutionnels* was politically unfeasible.

However, because the revolutionaries had been so oppressive, they had left the window open for the possibility of internal subversion. According to Burke, the most likely chance for this subversion to transform into internal rebellion was in the Vendée. He acknowledged, however, that “the principled royalists are certainly not of force to effect the reestablishment of royalty [monarchy], and the reestablishment of property.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, they would require

¹⁷⁴ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 76.

¹⁷⁵ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 76.

¹⁷⁶ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 80.

¹⁷⁷ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 80.

¹⁷⁸ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 85.

assistance from the Allies, and more specifically, from the British government. Burke desired that the émigrés “be consulted with, treated with, and employed; and that no foreigners are either in interest so engaged, or in judgment and local knowledge so competent, to answer all these purposes as the natural proprietors of the country.”¹⁷⁹ If there was to be a serious attempt at counterrevolution in conjunction with internal rebellion, Burke argued, then the British government must put émigrés in charge of it, because they speak the same language, are acquainted with their manners, and have a local knowledge of the country. He warned that if only foreign troops attempted to defeat the Revolution, “it is impossible that any declarations can convince those that are within, or those that are without, that anything else than some sort of hostility in the style of a conqueror is meant.”¹⁸⁰ In regards to the Vendée, Burke specified that “the royalists of Poitou do not call for English, Austrian, or Prussian officers. They call for emigrant French officers. They call for the exiled priests. They have demanded the Comte d’Artois to appear at their head.”¹⁸¹ Burke wanted the British government to dedicate its resources to accomplishing this goal.

Burke warned the British government that if the émigrés were not repatriated quickly, the influence of the Jacobins would infect Frenchmen whom he deemed as lesser. This desire fit in with Burke’s policy of the permanent eradication of Jacobinism. He thought that once the Allies gained a foothold in France, the émigrés currently in Britain would act as “missioners of peace and order in every parish.”¹⁸² The clergy would resume its place in society as the arbiter of morality, and the landed gentry would be restored to its estates, and then “may join the clergy in

¹⁷⁹ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 85.

¹⁸⁰ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 86.

¹⁸¹ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 87.

¹⁸² *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 89.

reanimating the loyalty, fidelity and religion of the people.”¹⁸³ Burke firmly believed that the hands of time could be turned back.

The last request Burke made of the British government was to recognize the Comte d’Provence as the rightful regent of the French monarchy. He pressed the notion that “it is one of the advantages of monarchy, to have no local seat. It may maintain its rights out of the sphere of its territorial jurisdiction, if other powers will suffer it.”¹⁸⁴ Since neither Austria nor Prussia could suffer it, it was now up to Britain to maintain the French monarchy inside its borders. Burke praised Provence as superior to Louis XVI, because he “excels him in general knowledge, with something of a better address, and a happier mode of speaking and writing.”¹⁸⁵ He had even higher praise for Artois, who Burke described as “eloquent, lively, engaging in the highest degree, of a decided character, full of energy and activity.”¹⁸⁶ These princes were the rightful claimants of the government of France, and Burke thought it in the British government’s best interest to recognize them as such.

Remarks on the Policy of the Allies was a concerted effort by Burke to persuade the British government on a number of policy objectives. He advised it to take a greater stake in the counterrevolutionary effort in the Vendée, recognize the French princes, and avoid issuing declarations and manifestos unless it was ready to take back France with a large force. This force would, of course, be led by noble émigré officers. Burke sent copies of the *Remarks* to the British ministers and other influential British politicians.

¹⁸³ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 90.

¹⁸⁴ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 92.

¹⁸⁵ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 91.

¹⁸⁶ *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, 91.

The Defeat of the Vendée Rebellion

The British ministers responded favorably to Burke's suggestions. Preparations were begun to coordinate a junction with the rebels in the Vendée. Also, because of the aforementioned setbacks on the Continent, troops had been recalled from the West Indies. On another positive note, Sir Gilbert Elliot had been sent as an official envoy to Toulon, where royalists had handed over power to the British squadron anchored in the harbor. However, at the beginning of November, Burke began to receive reports of the bad news coming out of the Vendée. The organized rebel force had been defeated, and the remnants scattered into the countryside into smaller bands known as *chouans*. Though the rebellion was not completely at an end, the British government decided that the time was not right to pursue operations in that region. Burke continued to let his private thoughts be known, on this matter and on the overall British war policy, this time in a letter to Sylvester Douglas, dated 14 November 1793. He continued to insist that the French people were "sheep without a shepherd," and that the British government was making a mistake by not incorporating émigrés in its military plans.¹⁸⁷ Burke continued to lament the neglect of the Vendée, was suspect of the opponents of a full Royalist restoration, and labeled the conduct of his country as "full of perfidy and full of cruelty and in my opinion is as opposite to every principle of policy, as it is to those of honor, humanity and justice."¹⁸⁸

Another one of Burke's major disagreements with Pitt was the latter's policy of indemnification. This policy was spelled out in a declaration drafted by Grenville at the end of September 1793; Burke disagreed with its premise. Burke, along with Windham, began to

¹⁸⁷ Burke to Sylvester Douglas, 14 November 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 485.

¹⁸⁸ Burke to Douglas, 14 November 1793, *Correspondence VII*, 486.

suspect Pitt of prolonging the war, in order to gain more commercial and territorial benefit. Windham wrote to Burke on 14 November 1793, stating that “one cannot help suspecting that selfishness may have had something to do [with British inactivity in the Vendée]; and that [the Ministers] have not been equally active, where success was to produce no immediate credit.”¹⁸⁹

Challenges Faced by the Emigration

Towards the end of 1793, Burke preoccupied himself with émigré affairs. Since the war started in February 1793, the clerical émigrés especially faced new challenges. The English public had spun into a new anti-Gallican frenzy. Against this backdrop were the increasing demands of English Catholics clamoring for citizenship. One example was the Reverend William Argutter, who was “asked to stiffen the sinews of national resistance and fuel popular anti-Gallicanism, though not at the expense of the émigré priests.”¹⁹⁰ Burke wanted to keep the French priests in the good graces of the English public.

Housing problems also arose at this time. The French clergy had been housed at the King’s House at Winchester since November 1792. By the summer of 1793 there were about six hundred priests in residence. However, in November 1793, it was proposed to move these priests to make room for three thousand troops, and convert the house into a barracks. The Marquess of Buckingham, who was Catholic and had taken a great interest in the welfare of the refugee clergy, protested against the scheme to Dundas on 21 November and wrote to Burke to enlist his sympathy. Burke used his influence with the Wilmot Committee, and the latter sent a letter to Dundas on 28 November, requesting that the émigré priests should remain at Winchester. The request was honored, and in a letter of 30 November, Dundas assured Wilmot’s

¹⁸⁹ Windham to Burke, 14 November 1793, in *Correspondence VII*, 488.

¹⁹⁰ Aston, 205-06.

Committee that there was no immediate plan for removing the clergy from Winchester. Further, Burke responded to the Marquess' letter on 1 December, reiterating the former's notion that "nothing has done the Nation more honor than the reception of the Exiles of Religion, honor, and Virtue."¹⁹¹ The British government had finally put the war on the right footing, proclaimed Burke, and the French clergy had to be preserved, because they "are the great instrument, in order to civilize France and prevent the rest of Europe from being barbarized. If we can make any serious impression upon France by arms in the beginning, the Clergy will be of more effect in the progress of the business, than a hundred thousand soldiers."¹⁹² Burke became involved with another French aristocrat during Phase II, the Abbé d'Heral, who was a prominent clergyman.

The housing situation resurfaced again in June 1795. The British government decided that the Winchester house should be converted into a barracks, and that the French priests should be found accommodation elsewhere. Burke wrote a letter to William Windham on 9 June 1795, expressing his concern at the possibility of such a move. He thought that "a vast migration, through the heart of the Kingdom, of strangers, that will be considered as no better than vagrants, enemies, and rivals of the poor in the bounty of the rich, will produce an ill effect."¹⁹³ Eventually the priests were moved in September 1796; they were placed in houses in Reading, Thame and Paddington.

Burke used his political connections to help desperate nobles seeking favors. In July 1793 he wrote to Dundas, asking if the latter could secure passage for the destitute Duchess de La Tremoille. A feisty woman who had already been imprisoned in Paris during the September

¹⁹¹ Burke to the Marquess of Buckingham, 1 December 1793, in *Correspondence VII*, 497-98.

¹⁹² Burke to Buckingham, 1 December 1793, in *Correspondence VII*, 498.

¹⁹³ Burke to William Windham, 9 June 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 265.

Massacres, the Duchess wished to return to France, and possibly link up with her husband, who was fighting in Conde's Royalist army.¹⁹⁴ When Dundas replied that no official action could be taken and that it would have to be done covertly, Burke wrote to the former's under-secretary, Evan Nepean, and secured passage for the Duchess. This exemplifies Burke's willingness to help the émigrés.

Resumption of Counterrevolutionary Activity

In December 1793 the British government decided again to pursue Burke's suggestion that an Anglo-French force be recruited to effect a landing in the Vendée. The British expeditionary force accumulated throughout the month, and an excited Burke solicited the British government on behalf of the émigrés. French émigrés had been applying to the Home Office to join the force. Burke wrote Evan Nepean, under-secretary for Home Affairs, on behalf of the Comte Alexander de Vassy. Evidently the Comte and other émigrés sought out Burke to make such requests on their behalf.¹⁹⁵ Unbeknown to Burke, the commander, Lord Moira, proved irresolute, and had withdrawn his forces to the Channel island of Guernsey. Thus, 1793 ended on a down note for Burke.

1794 did not begin any better than the prior year ended. Toulon was recaptured by the revolutionaries in early January, and news finally reached Britain of the decisive defeat of the Vendéan rebels. Burke had lost all faith in the ability of the British government to conduct the war. It had failed to adopt permanently any of his policy directives, and it looked increasingly possible that the Revolution would triumph. He reiterated to Windham on 8 January 1794 that "I have a strong opinion that Frenchmen are best for French affairs," and that "I have an opinion

¹⁹⁴ Burke to Dundas, 10 July 1793, in *Correspondence VII*, 377-78.

¹⁹⁵ Burke to Evan Nepean, 15 December 1793, in *Correspondence VII*, 503.

too, that the emigrants have better parts than the people among whom they have taken refuge. I am almost convinced that we have suffered in these two campaigns by repelling [the émigrés], and refusing to consult, and in any way use them, in their own affairs.”¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Burke, the British government continued to ignore the émigrés. However, a new opportunity arose that gave Burke renewed hope.

Coalition Government Formed

The beginning of 1794 saw a greater movement towards coalition between the New Whigs, and Pitt’s administration. In December 1793 and into January 1794, the Duke of Portland, along with Earl Fitzwilliam and other leading Whigs finally broke with Fox publicly, and gave their open support to Pitt’s government. Even though these leaders declared they would not accept office under Pitt, their feelings on the subject would soon change. In January 1794 Pitt invited Burke to take part in a meeting concerning the possibility of a coalition which would bring Whig politicians into the Tory government. Though this union was not actuated at the meeting, the Duke of Portland reaffirmed his outspoken support of the Pitt administration.

Finally talks of a coalition resumed in May 1794. On 11 July 1794 the followers of the Duke of Portland at last entered the Pitt Administration. Portland became Secretary of State, and Windham assumed the office of Secretary of War. This reconstruction of Pitt’s ministry “gave greater weight to those who saw the war in moral terms and who wanted to recognize the regency of Provence and assist internal subversion.”¹⁹⁷ These were the three tenets Burke had advocated for some time, and he became resurgently confident. Action was undertaken immediately to ensure the success of these three policy objectives. A bill was passed in

¹⁹⁶ Burke to William Windham, 8 January 1794, in *Correspondence VII*, 514.

¹⁹⁷ James Roberts. *The Counterrevolution in France, 1787-1830* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1990), 46.

Parliament authorizing the formation of a French Corps, composed entirely of émigrés, and led by exiled French officers. Artois was invited to come to Britain to assist in its organization. Thus, it seemed for the time being that Pitt had changed his mind as to the inclusion of the Bourbons in his idea for post-revolutionary France. However, it was keeping in line with his ultimate goal of a *peaceful* restoration, leading to *stable* Europe. Pitt now agreed with Burke that counterrevolution and internal subversion would best accomplish that end.

Burke's victory was offset by the tragic death of his son. Richard Burke, Jr., thirty-six years old, died on 2 August 1794. Burke had readied himself for his retirement from Parliament,¹⁹⁸ and Pitt and George III sought to bestow a Lordship upon Burke. Once Richard died, however, this promotion became an afterthought. Sympathy poured into Burke from all parts of Britain and Europe. Though greatly saddened, Burke resumed his work with the same vigor as before. His influence was peaking, and the coalition he had been praying for had finally come to fruition.

Windham pursued an aggressive policy as Secretary of War. In October 1794 the Comte d'Hector was commissioned to raise a regiment of two battalions for the British service. Officers were recruited from the French Royal Navy, and the troops from French sailors who were prisoners of war and from the crews of French ships from Toulon.¹⁹⁹ Burke again exerted his influence in the selection of its members, and recommended to Windham the services of the Comte de Rions, a French admiral who had distinguished himself in the American Revolution.

¹⁹⁸ *Correspondence*, VII, 554. Pitt had approved Burke's appointment to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, dated 24 June 1794. Appointment to the office of Crown Steward and Bailiff of the three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burnham is a sinecure appointment which is used as a device allowing a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament (MP) to resign his or her seat.

¹⁹⁹ *Correspondence*, VIII, 31.

Burke continued to correspond frequently with Windham. He sent him a letter on 30 December 1794, on the eve of the new Parliamentary session, reinforcing the idea that the war effort must be vigorously pursued. Burke reminded Windham that “there is no medium—there is no temperament—there is no compromise with Jacobinism.”²⁰⁰ He emphasized to the Secretary of War to “hold through the whole session not only a firm and resolved language, but a high crminating tone.”²⁰¹

However, as late as 1794 the British government was still trying to achieve a constitutional monarchy in France. In autumn 1794, Grenville sent William Wickham to Switzerland to investigate the possibility for a restoration of the monarchy through the union of *constitutionnels* and moderates in the Convention.²⁰² The scheme amounted to nothing, because there was no basis in the Convention for it, or any monarchical unity whatsoever. This failure must have pleased Burke, who was still highly suspicious of the *constitutionnels*. However, as a result of this failure, the British government began to feel that it was running out of options. Still, with 1794 at an end, Burke remained cautiously optimistic.

Burke’s optimism soon turned to gloom, as 1795 opened on a sour note for Burke. On 28 January the Mayor of Norwich presented a petition to the House of Commons that expressed a desire to see the war brought to a speedy conclusion. Peace overtures were the last outcome Burke wanted to hear at this point. He wrote to Windham on 2 February 1795 stating that “the House ought to come to a strong and decisive resolution on the subject; not to impeach the right of petition, but effectually to put a bar to the hope of success to all petitions of that kind.”²⁰³ Moreover, military fortunes turned against Britain; at the end of January Holland was overrun by

²⁰⁰ Burke to Windham, 30 December 1794, in *Correspondence*, VIII, 104.

²⁰¹ Burke to Windham, 30 December 1794, in *Correspondence*, VIII, 105.

²⁰² Roberts, 48.

²⁰³ Burke to Windham, 2 February 1795, in *Correspondence* VIII, 134.

French forces. Burke was pleased, however, that George III upheld the conviction of Britain's war effort at the opening of Parliament, and proclaimed "the necessity of persisting in a vigorous prosecution of the just and necessary war."²⁰⁴ Burke reaffirmed his confidence in the Prime Minister, writing that "Pitt's power is necessary to the existence of the ancient order in Europe."²⁰⁵ However, he lost all remaining confidence in the allies, as Prussia, Holland and Spain all made peace with France in March and April 1795. In a letter to Earl Fitzwilliam on 14 April 1795, Burke stated his belief that the British government would soon follow in suing for peace. It showed Burke was aware of Pitt's policy objectives:

As to this Court, I have no sort of intelligence of their designs but drawing indications from what I see and hear, I am satisfied that their plan is to make themselves so strong by sea as not to fear an invasion at home; or any support from France to the West India Isles once belonging to that Crown. That by the same means they may considerably distress France in regard to her subsistences at home and thereby necessity them to form a republic with which they may decently treat; and that if this can be done, the desire of ease and tranquility will induce France to give up her colonies—which will answer two purposes, one of indemnity, by an augmentation of our trade; and the other, that of security by cutting off the resources of a future naval power in France.²⁰⁶

Burke was obviously worried of this new peace movement which had already infected the Allies; he was afraid that this "disease" would spread into Britain.

The last endeavor with which Burke involved himself during Phase II was an expedition planned to land at Quiberon, off the coast of Brittany. Talks of implementing the two-year-old plan to land émigrés on the western coast of France, in conjunction with internal uprisings in the Vendée, resumed in June 1795. Burke professed that "the success of this enterprise must in a great degree depend on the French who are employed in it however small their number may be."²⁰⁷ The expedition was placed under the command of the Comte de Puisaye, a man of whom Burke had little regard. With a French royalist force of 3800 strong, Puisaye arrived off the

²⁰⁴ Burke to Wilmot, 6 February 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 141.

²⁰⁵ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 13 March 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 190.

²⁰⁶ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 12 April 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 230-31.

²⁰⁷ Burke to William Elliot, 21 June 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 267-68.

coast of Brittany at the end of June. This army was escorted by a British squadron commanded by Sir John Borlase Warren. The troops landed on 27 June and rapidly secured control of the Quiberon peninsula.²⁰⁸ This plan most resembled Burke's strategy outlined in *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, written nearly two years earlier in October 1793. Quiberon was a magnificent failure, "a record of misunderstanding and dispute, particularly between the two émigré commanders, Puisaye and d'Hervilly."²⁰⁹ Six thousand troops were taken prisoner by the Republican forces, and 748 were executed, "intended in part as a warning to other émigrés of the consequences of such adventures."²¹⁰ Burke's involvement with British foreign policy effectively came to an end with the defeat at Quiberon.

²⁰⁸ *Correspondence*, VIII, 299.

²⁰⁹ Roberts, 49.

²¹⁰ Roberts, 64.

Following the dramatic defeat at Quiberon, Burke withdrew from British foreign policy. He was sixty-six years old and retired, admittedly “buried in the anticipated grave of a feeble old age, forgetting and forgotten in an obscure and melancholy retreat.”²¹¹ However, Burke was unable to remain withdrawn for long. Two great efforts consumed the last two years of Burke’s life with regards to the British response to the French Revolution. First, he was concerned at the prospects of the British government making peace with the Jacobin Republic. Second, he dedicated the other half of his time towards the founding of a school for the French émigré boys who had lost their fathers at Quiberon.

Letters on a Regicide Peace

Burke’s final literary contribution to the British response to the French Revolution was *Letters on a Regicide Peace*. He had become increasingly alarmed towards the end of 1795, because the British government seemed to be making overtures of peace towards revolutionary France. Burke also noticed that the British public seemed to be tiring of the war. F.P. Lock states that “in October 1795, Burke’s main worry was waning public support for the war against revolutionary France.”²¹² As mentioned earlier, peace proposals had been made as early as March 1793. In late October 1795, Lord Auckland wrote to Burke, announcing his intention of publishing *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October 1795*.²¹³ A prominent Tory politician, William Eden, later Lord Auckland, was an MP and Under-Secretary of State. Auckland and Burke had frequently sparred over their political

²¹¹ Burke to Lord Auckland, 30 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 334.

²¹² F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke, Volume II, 1784-1797*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, 508.

²¹³ Lord Auckland to Burke, 28 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 333.

careers, and Lock refers to Auckland as Burke's "antitype."²¹⁴ However, Auckland respected Burke as an intellectual, and, out of this respect, mailed Burke a copy of his pamphlet before it was published.

The overarching theme of Auckland's pamphlet was the argument that the time had come for Great Britain to consider making peace with Jacobin France. Auckland based this reasoning upon the notion that British supremacy at sea would guarantee fair terms. Lock argues that Auckland wrote a "moderate and intelligently argued pamphlet, by no means meriting the ridicule Burke heaped upon it."²¹⁵ However, Burke was all too aware of its potential to sway the narrative in favor of those proposing peace. In his response to Auckland two days later, Burke stated that "I find it but too necessary to call to my aid an oblivion of most of the circumstances of my life; to think as little, and indeed to know as little, as I can, of everything about me."²¹⁶ Later, conversely, Burke announced to Auckland that "your address to the public obliges me to break in upon that plan, and to look a little on what is behind, and very much on what is before me. It creates in my mind a variety of thoughts, and all of them unpleasant."²¹⁷ In strong language he informed Auckland that:

if the plan of politics there recommended should be adopted by the King's councils, and by the good people of this kingdom, nothing can be the consequence but utter and irretrievable ruin to the Ministry, to the Crown, to the Succession, to the importance, to the independence, to the very existence of this country. This my feeble, perhaps, but clear, positive, decided, long and maturely reflected, and frequently declared opinion, from which all the events which have lately come to pass, so far from turning me, have tended to confirm beyond the power of alteration.²¹⁸

An important aspect of this letter was Burke's affirmation that his opinion was unbiased by "sanguine hopes, vehement desires, inordinate ambition, implacable animosity, party

²¹⁴ Lock, 130.

²¹⁵ Lock, 509.

²¹⁶ Burke to Lord Auckland, 30 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 334.

²¹⁷ Burke to Lord Auckland, 30 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 334.

²¹⁸ Burke to Lord Auckland, 30 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 335.

attachments, or party interests.” Burke proffered that he was “attached by principle, inclination, and gratitude, to the King, and to the present Ministry.”²¹⁹ Burke was hoping to separate himself from conniving politicians and further establish himself as the moral authority of opposition against Jacobinism. He also was apprehensive of the upcoming Parliamentary session, set to open on 29 October 1795, if Auckland’s pamphlet were any indication of what would transpire in the session. His suspicions were confirmed, as amendments in favor of peace were offered by several members of the House of Commons.

The result of the letter from Auckland was that it once more thrust Burke into the discussion on British war policy. While Burke was composing his response to Auckland, he again became active in writing to Pitt and his ministers. He wrote to Dundas on 4 November 1795, telling the Home Secretary of his hope that “God send that by one step apparently dictated by precaution you may not do first the rashest thing in the world and in a peace find infinitely more perils than even in a disastrous war.”²²⁰ Soon after receiving Auckland’s letter, Burke began composing a letter of his own, in which he rejected Auckland’s premise that peace with France might guarantee British security.

Letters on a Regicide Peace was Burke’s final effort to convince Britain of the moral imperative assigned to the destruction of Jacobinism. It was nominally addressed to Earl Fitzwilliam, one of Burke’s closest allies in Parliament, and also a man who was firmly in opposition to any premature peace with the French republic.²²¹ There is no doubt, however, that Burke directed his letter to Pitt, whose support of the war was necessary to ensure its continuance. Unlike Burke’s other polemics against the French Revolution, he relied on satire to

²¹⁹ Burke to Lord Auckland, 30 October 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 335.

²²⁰ Burke to Dundas, 4 November 1795, in *Correspondence VIII*, 337.

²²¹ Lock, 510.

convey his points. In mocking fashion, he reiterated many themes which he had espoused throughout his opposition to the British prosecution of the war against Jacobin France. Burke lamented that the British government continued to treat the present war as though it was a classic Franco-British struggle, as in the days of Louis XIV.

Burke developed his theory of Jacobinism more succinctly. He repeated the notion that Jacobin leaders were usurpers and robbers of France, and that they did not represent the French nation. Burke took this one step further, and asserted that the Jacobins true loyalty was to a tyrannical despotism bent on the subversion and subjugation of lawful governments in Europe and around the world. He claimed that the Jacobins would not stop until they had toppled these governments. To make peace with such a government as the one presently in France would merely give it a respite, from which it could regroup and assail world order at a more convenient time. Auckland proposed that Jacobinism was incongruent with a prosperous France, and that ultimately it would cause its own collapse. Burke warned against this notion, claiming that “the republic of regicide with an annihilated revenue, defaced manufactures, and a ruined commerce, has actually conquered the finest parts of Europe, has distressed, disunited, deranged, and broken to pieces all the rest.”²²²

Another theme was Burke’s insistence that the British government had not done enough to convince the British public of the importance of continuing the war. Many in Britain were growing weary of a war that was well into its second year, and appeared to have no end in sight. Though Britain had seized much of the French overseas empire, the French continental empire was expanding daily. British public opinion was turning decisively against the war, and one of

²²² Edmund Burke. *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (Accessed 10 February 2010 from http://books.google.com/books?id=OHOjQgAACAAJ&dq=letters+on+a+regicide+peace&hl=en&ei=wOCwS7SEJ8H68AbKzt22Dw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAA), 302.

Burke's primary goals in composing his letter was to convince the British government of its responsibility to help stem this tide. He stated that "we are not at an end of our struggle, nor near it. Let us not deceive ourselves: we are at the beginning of great troubles."²²³ Burke felt that the British government was bowing down to the will of the Jacobins if it submitted for peace. He thought that this submission would lead to a Jacobin perception of British weakness, but that "power and eminence" were "the instrumental means of this nation towards the maintenance of her dignity, and the assertion of her rights."²²⁴

Burke also cautioned against making peace because of commercial reasons. As a result of the seizure of French colonies, Britain had increased the size of her own empire; therefore, many were arguing that the time had come to make peace with France so that Britain could consolidate its conquests. Burke argued against this notion that "honor is to be sacrificed to the conservation of riches," and that "if we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free: if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed."²²⁵ For those who saw British wealth as a deterrent to the Jacobins, Burke claimed that they were "more tempted with our wealth as booty, than terrified with it as power."²²⁶ In spite of Burke's objections, commercial interests combined with growing isolationism in Britain dictated the further development of peace talks.

This isolationist sentiment, ever-present in British public opinion, was growing at the end of 1795. Burke sought to convince those in power that isolationism at this time in European history would be catastrophic for Britain. It was a tough argument to make because Britain, geographically separated from the Continent, was not suffering from the ills of war. As

²²³ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 304.

²²⁴ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 305.

²²⁵ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 305.

²²⁶ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 306.

previously stated, British commerce was thriving; no battles had taken place on British soil, and the loss of life had been relatively small. Britons were beginning to view the war as inconsequential, and this sentiment was echoed in the halls of Parliament. Burke agreed that “if we look to nothing but our domestic condition, the state of the nation is full even to plethora; but if we imagine that this country can long maintain its blood and its food, disjoined from the community of mankind, such an opinion does not deserve refutation as absurd, but as insane.”²²⁷ He maintained that British material gains would be temporary if Jacobinism was left intact.

Burke grounded his argument against British isolationism in history. He harkened back to the days of Louis XIV, when English public opinion had forced Charles II to oppose French aggression. Burke affirmed that during these wars “the great resource of Europe was in England: not in a sort of England detached from the rest of the world, but in that sort of England who considered herself as embodied with Europe.”²²⁸ British isolationism was the chief cause of the fragmentation of the European alliance which Burke argued must be maintained for the destruction of Jacobinism. If the alliance broke apart, the Jacobins would be able to defeat each of its former members at its leisure, and plunge Europe, and Britain, into dark days.

Burke also thought that if peace were made with Jacobin France, British Jacobins would become energized. In a direct warning to the British government, Burke said that “they who bow to the enemy abroad will not be of power to subdue the conspirator at home.”²²⁹ The Revolutionary Societies in Britain were growing in numbers daily, and Burke feared that upon the conclusion of peace, these numbers would proliferate. He exclaimed that “we must have

²²⁷ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 306.

²²⁸ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 307.

²²⁹ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 310.

leaders. If none will undertake to lead us right, we shall find guides who will contrive to conduct us to shame and ruin.”²³⁰

According to Burke, peace was not possible with Jacobin France. He reiterated the notion that “we are in a war of a peculiar nature; at war with a system, which, by its essence, is inimical to all other governments, and which makes peace or war, as peace and war may best contribute to their subversion. It is with an *armed doctrine*, that we are at war.”²³¹ For Burke there was no compromise with such a system other than its total destruction.

The *Second Letter on a Regicide Peace* was written in tandem with the first letter. Its subtitle was “On the Genius and Character of the French Revolution as it regards other Nations.” Burke expounded upon his idea that the negotiations with France were a farce, because they were not being conducted with the true state of France. Accordingly, Burke claims that France at present was not “a state, but a faction.”²³² He was more conciliatory towards his opponents in this letter: “there was a period in which we agreed better in the danger of a Jacobin existence in France.”²³³

Though he initially was against it, Burke was encouraged to publish his writings. He acknowledged in March 1796 that in a proposed meeting with Windham, the Secretary of War, the latter’s “purpose is to urge the speedy publication of the *Regicide Peace*.”²³⁴ Burke timed the publication to coincide with the departure of Lord Malmesbury, Pitt’s peace negotiator, who arrived in Paris on 22 October 1796. Burke had allies in both houses of Parliament who opposed the solicitations for peace. Before publication of the *Letters*, on 6 October 1796, Earl

²³⁰ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 311.

²³¹ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 311.

²³² *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 381.

²³³ *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 380.

²³⁴ French Laurence to Burke, 26 March 1796, in *Correspondence VIII*, 447.

Fitzwilliam gave an impassioned speech in the House of Lords against the peace proposals.²³⁵ French Laurence wrote to Burke on 13 October 1796, informing him that “Lord Fitzwilliam’s speech and protest are preparing your way with admirable effect.”²³⁶ Burke, therefore, was guaranteed of support from his allies in Parliament.

Two Letters on a Regicide Peace was published on 20 October 1796. As with most of his publications concerning the French Revolution, Burke requested that copies be sent to several prominent émigrés, including Artois, the Comte de la Tour du Pin, and “one (very fine) to the King of France.”²³⁷ Burke even called on his friend the Abbé de La Bintinaye to translate the work into French.²³⁸ Burke was anxious about its reception, but was no doubt pleased that “the circulation of it is considerable,” and insisted that “I shall go on with the rest as I find any good done by what has come out.”²³⁹ By 31 October, *Two Letters on a Regicide Peace* was in its eighth edition, and at Burke’s death was in its eleventh edition. Apparently, Burke was satisfied with the reception the two letters received, and started composing his third letter directed at the prospects of a peace with Jacobin France soon after the former’s publication.

The *Two Letters* attracted intense interest from across the political spectrum in Britain and in intellectual circles across Europe. As with most of Burke’s publications on the French Revolution, its influence extended beyond its immediate scope. Burke was aware that he was losing his battle with unknown illness, and he wanted to ensure peace was never made with France as long as it was held hostage by the Jacobins before he died. Further, its publication

²³⁵ *Correspondence*, IX, 89.

²³⁶ Laurence to Burke, 13, 14 October 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 95.

²³⁷ Burke to King, 24 October 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 99.

²³⁸ *Correspondence*, IX, 131.

²³⁹ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 October 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 102.

served as a rallying point for those in Parliament who were opposed to the peace overtures, and especially for his allies in Pitt's ministry.

Towards the close of 1796, the war started to turn against the British. Spain's entry into the war, combined with Austrian defeats in Germany and Italy, forced the British to evacuate its naval forces from the Mediterranean.²⁴⁰ Burke was incensed at these actions and wrote that "the more I think of it the more I feel astonished that the Ministry can think of putting the whole affairs of Europe blindfold into the hands of Lord Malmesbury."²⁴¹ However, towards the end of 1796, Lord Malmesbury's negotiations with the Directory failed. The basis for the peace talks had resolved around Britain compensating France for the restitution of its continental conquests by restoring the French colonies. French negotiators were unwilling to cede control of the Austrian Netherlands, which had been annexed to France in 1795. At the end of December, the Directory broke off negotiations and ordered Malmesbury to leave Paris within forty-eight hours. Burke was jubilated by the news, and he wrote to Windham on 25 December 1796 that "this will be a great triumph of ministry of opposition, and of the nation at large."²⁴² However, Burke was still suspicious of the peace-mongering faction in Britain, and, after hearing that Malmesbury was headed back to London, he stated that "I suppose Lord Auckland will be next to try his hand."²⁴³ Burke tried to remain loyal to Pitt, and though he thought it was "impossible to attack Pitt for want of sincerity in this negotiation," he believed that Pitt's "wisdom cannot be defended."²⁴⁴ The failure of Pitt's peace mission prompted Burke to return to his pen.

²⁴⁰ Corsica was evacuated in October 1796, and the Mediterranean Fleet reached Gibraltar in December.

²⁴¹ Burke to Windham, 1 November 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 103.

²⁴² Burke to Windham, 25 December 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 205.

²⁴³ Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, 27 December 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 209.

²⁴⁴ Burke to Laurence, 28 December 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 212.

On 18 December Burke had started to compose his new address. By 30 December 1796, Burke was ready to “advertise in the press a third letter on the *prospect* of a peace.”²⁴⁵ The *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace* was a direct assault on the negotiations of Lords Malmesbury. Burke admitted also that he wrote the third letter as a response to Pitt’s request for further clarification on the former’s designs for the execution of his plan.²⁴⁶ This announcement came at a time when a furious debate was raging in the House of Lords as to Britain’s objectives in the war against France. Burke’s influence on Earl Fitzwilliam was apparent in the parliamentary proceedings. Fitzwilliam spoke at length in Parliament concerning the peace proposals, and proclaimed that the French had not retracted “the offensive decree of 1792, encouraging the people of other countries to rise up against their established governments,” and that “there could be no safety in fraternizing with such people.”²⁴⁷ Fitzwilliam wrote to Burke on 1 January 1797, agreeing that “the destruction of the system in France was the principle of action three years ago,” and “the basis of coalition.”²⁴⁸ Burke replied despondently three days later: “as to our old friends, there is no mutual affection, communication or concert between them; they totally forget on what terms, or with what views they came into their present places.”²⁴⁹

Burke’s *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace* reaffirmed Burke’s suspicion, laid out in detail in the second letter that the Jacobins were not in earnest concerning the peace negotiations. It contained a scathing attack on the opposition leaders, and labeled their behavior as tantamount to treason. It also showed Burke departing from his avowed loyalty to Pitt, whom he blamed for the unsuccessful prosecution of the war. Thus, Burke called for a reenergized leadership.

²⁴⁵ Burke to King, 30 December 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 217.

²⁴⁶ Lock, 563.

²⁴⁷ Fitzwilliam to Burke, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence IX*, 218.

²⁴⁸ Fitzwilliam to Burke, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence IX*, 218.

²⁴⁹ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 4 January 1797, in *Correspondence IX*, 220.

Unfortunately for Burke, his health took a turn for the worse while he was composing the *Third Letter*.

Burke's *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace* reiterated his earlier notion that peace could securely be concluded with revolutionary France. He continued to emphasize the importance of a war dedicated to the extirpation of Jacobinism and a restoration of the *ancien Régime*. Burke excoriated the Directory, and claimed that they were merely a continuation of the Committee of Public Safety. He affirmed his belief that the French Revolution remained unpopular within France, and that renewed British efforts to defeat the revolutionaries via counterrevolution would prove successful. Burke's utilized Biblical and ancient historical references to illustrate the dangers of Jacobinism, and to accentuate the dire consequences of British peace overtures towards the French Republic.

The *Letters on a Regicide Peace* represented the culmination of Edmund Burke's response to the French Revolution. They incorporated all of Burke's previous political and moral views of the French Revolution. The first two letters were published before his death. The third and fourth letters were published posthumously, though they reached influential circles before Burke died. The *Letters* contributed to the defeat of the peace talks, and rallied support for the continuation of war with revolutionary France.

The Émigré School at Penn

Burke's last great mission to the émigré cause was his founding of an émigré school. The idea for this school originated following the debacle at Quiberon in July 1795. Not only did 748 noble émigrés lose their lives, but 6000 of them were taken prisoner. Almost all of these men left behind young sons. Burke had recently lost his only son, and although he continued in his work, the loss of Richard left a great void in his life. He had raised Richard to live a noble life,

and he continued to advise his son until he died at thirty-six. Burke realized that these orphaned sons needed a father figure in order to raise them to be gentlemen. His fatherly instinct ignited his passion to found a school which would ensure that these boys received a gentlemanly education. Burke dedicated the remaining years of his life to this endeavor.

In early 1796 Burke began in earnest to found this school. He used his political connections to his advantage. The Marquess of Buckingham proved to be one of the greatest supporters of Burke's school. George Nugent Temple Grenville, the 1st Marquess of Buckingham, was a prominent British statesman. He had held many powerful offices in the British government throughout the 1780s, including Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1787-1789), and Foreign Secretary (1783). It is also noteworthy that the Marquess was a Catholic. His religious affiliation no doubt played a role in his support of the émigrés. Though his political career had been waning since the start of the Revolution, he was still an influential member of the aristocracy, and, as a cousin of Pitt, had close ties to the government.

On 26 February he wrote a proposal for the school, and entrusted the Marquess of Buckingham to deliver it to Pitt. The proposal detailed what Burke hoped to accomplish by founding such an establishment:

The circumstance, the most unpleasant in the expulsion of the Gentlemen of France, is the situation of their children; particularly the children of those who are now serving in the emigrant corps, or who have been engaged in military service many of whom have perished while in the British Service.

They are growing up in poverty and wretchedness; inevitably mixed with the children of the lowest of the people, in the miserable lanes and alleys of London, in which the poverty of their parents obliges them to reside. From wretchedness and bad company, the transition is easy to desperate vice and wretchedness. In this bad society they grow up without any sort of education.

If providence should restore them to their country they will be utterly incapable of filling their place in society—so small calamity to all Nations to have France the receptacle of Noble or Ignoble Barbarians.

If they are to remain in perpetual exile, they are nothing less than trained to Botany Bay or the Gallows—An horrible reflection to Gentlemen, who will naturally feel for the children of unfortunate Gentlemen.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ *Correspondence, VIII*, "Burke's Proposal for a School at Penn", 396.

Burke was concerned for these “little nobles,” as one day they would return to France; he was worried that they would return to their home country with no knowledge of what it was to be noble. Thus, Burke’s designs for this school were in keeping with his thoughts on the restoration of the French nobility: after Jacobinism was destroyed, the boys at his school would resume their proper place as the leaders of this nobility. William Young commented on Burke’s desire to found this school, claiming that the “forlorn situation of these friendless children, in a country with whose language they were unacquainted, attracted the notice of Mr. Burke, with whom the project originated, and who applied to government for assistance to enable him to carry out his charitable design.”²⁵¹ The proposal also emphasized Burke’s consideration that it would be a horrible reflection on the state of English gentlemen to allow these children to go to waste. He highlighted this sentiment when he applied to the British government for assistance in his endeavor.

Although initially timid, eventually the British government fully cooperated with Burke’s proposal. Buckingham delivered Burke’s proposal to Pitt on 11 March 1796, and attached a letter in which he promised his own cooperation in carrying out the plan if it should be approved.²⁵² In the proposal, Burke identified Buckingham, the Duke of Portland, and Lord Grenville as his choice for “trustees for the whole establishment on the following terms.”²⁵³ Burke, ever impatient, wrote to Mrs. John Crewe on 3 March, anxious that he had so far heard no reply to his proposal.²⁵⁴ Mrs. Crewe was a close friend of Burke’s, and her husband was an influential member of the House of Commons. Burke expressed to Crewe his worry that the

²⁵¹ *Correspondence IX*, 48.

²⁵² *Correspondence, VIII*, 396: Buckingham began his letter “I enclose you the outlines of the very benevolent and excellent plan of Mr. Burke.”

²⁵³ Burke to Crewe, 3 March 1796, in *Correspondence, IX*, 397.

²⁵⁴ Burke to Crewe, 3 March 1796, in *Correspondence, IX*, 399-401.

funding would have to come directly from government, and not from private subscriptions. Obviously Burke was skeptical that the British government would commit itself financially. He wrote again to Mrs. Crewe on 17 March, stating that “the progress made in the academy is slow. Pitt is the whole—and Pitt is not got.”²⁵⁵ Burke’s worry was for naught; his political maneuvering had paid off, and on 24 March Pitt finally accepted Burke’s proposal. Buckingham told Burke of this news in a letter dated the day Pitt accepted, informing him that Pitt saw “no difficulty respecting the issue proposed for Mr. Burke’s school, and I do not see why it may not originate at the Treasury without his having the trouble of making any further Application.”²⁵⁶ Having been assured the support of the British government, Burke began to make the necessary preparations to launch his émigré school.

Burke worked out the arrangements for the school, such as securing a building, buying furniture, linens and clothing, and sequestering the necessary funds to pay the teachers. He secured an unused government building in Penn Parish; thereafter, the school was known as the Penn School. In order to express their gratitude for Burke’s undertaking, the French Committee in London wrote to Burke on 13 June, thanking him for his benevolence to their countrymen in distress. Burke made it clear that in the émigré French clergy would have a prominent role in the administration of the Penn School. In a statement concerning admissions to the school, Burke was cited as having

been long of opinion, that the French have not had importance in their own affairs which he desired. He has always thought that a standing French Committee, of the weightiest people of that nation alone communicating with government would be of great use to them and the public cause.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Burke to Crewe, 17 March 1796, in *Correspondence*, IX, 442.

²⁵⁶ Buckingham to Burke, 24 March 1796, in *Correspondence* VIII, 444.

²⁵⁷ *Correspondence*, IX, “Statement Concerning Admissions to the French School at Penn,” 38.

Burke's pervading notion that "Frenchmen are best for French affairs" would be a cornerstone of his leadership at the Penn School. He called himself the "Solicitor and Undertaker" of the Penn School, but he never regarded this title as anything more than the founder of the project. Burke, however, hoped to leave the day-to-day running of the school in the hands of prominent clerical émigrés.

The man Burke chose as the administrator was the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon. Burke regarded this as the logical choice, as the Bishop had been the de facto leader of the clerical emigration since 1791. St. Pol de Léon had done a remarkable job in his capacity as the administrator of the relief fund for the émigré clergy; Burke now looked to him in a similar capacity for the Penn School. Also, Burke and the Bishop had a cordial relationship. Initially, Burke allowed the Bishop freedom in the latter's selection of masters for the school. St. Pol de Léon chose the Abbé Maraine as the headmaster, and the two men arrived at Penn at the end of March 1796. The boys began arriving at the Penn School towards the end of April. For the next two months, however, Burke was embroiled in a series of disputes over finance, the appointment of masters, and the selection of candidates for admission.

Burke ran into a number of financial problems trying to open the Penn School. First, he found it difficult to secure the supplies necessary to operate the school. Burke reached out to Dr. Walker King, an English churchman (later the Bishop of Rochester, 1809), and a devoted disciple of Burke.²⁵⁸ He was also a member of Wilmot's Committee, and therefore had an influence of the requisitioning of its funds. In a letter to King, Burke requests "pray get me as soon as you can a couple of pair of common school compasses and a scale of wood or brass; if you could get a case of the common instruments for mathematics it would be very useful; pray

²⁵⁸ King was one of the editors of Burke's *Works*.

let us have both, at least the compasses, as soon as possible.”²⁵⁹ Second, Burke was anxious over his reimbursement of the school by the British government. In agreeing to Burke’s Proposal for a school at Penn, the government had agreed to reimburse the £1000 grant Burke would give to the school upon its inception. Yet by April he had neither heard nor received anything from governmental quarters. On 20 April 1796, he sent the Marquess an account of his expenditures at Penn. Burke had expected that Buckingham would relay his costs to the government, and that payment would follow promptly.²⁶⁰ A month later, having heard nothing from Buckingham, Burke wrote a letter to the man reminding him of Burke’s financial sacrifice. The Marquess acknowledged Burke’s hardship in a response a few days later,²⁶¹ and sent a bunch of school supplies with his letter. This reply did not ease Burke’s worry, or the strain on his pocketbook. He wrote to King on 28 May, claiming that “if Government does not favor me as much as possible I shall be ruined by my enterprise. Pray represent this strongly at the Treasury.”²⁶² Burke continued to write of his dire financial straits, telling King on 4 June that “my expenses begin to overpower me; for God’s sake represent to the Treasury the condition I am in.”²⁶³ After hearing nothing for three more weeks, Burke (along with his wife Jane, who coauthored the letter) made one last plea to King. In a frank manner Burke asked King to “settle the Committee before you leave town my regular payment.”²⁶⁴ Finally, in early July 1796, the Joint Secretary to the Treasury, Charles Long, acknowledged that the government was indebted to Burke, and he

²⁵⁹ Burke to King, 14 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 10-11.

²⁶⁰ *Correspondence, IX*, 16. Burke’s expenditures totaled £271.8.9.1/2.

²⁶¹ Buckingham to Burke, 26, 29 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 29-33.

²⁶² Burke to King, 28 May 1796, in *Correspondence, IX*, 33.

²⁶³ Burke to King, 4 June 1796, in *Correspondence, IX*, 44.

²⁶⁴ Edmund and Jane Burke to King, 26 June 1796, in *Correspondence, IX*, 51.

assured him that “you shall receive it by sending to me at any time.”²⁶⁵ Burke does not mention financial problems associated with the Penn School after this date.

Burke had a major disagreement with the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon and the Abbé Maraine concerning the appointment of masters. One of Burke’s most adamant propositions was that the students would be exposed to the English language. Burke expressed his fear of masters who spoke little or no English, and added that “the boys will not respect those masters.”²⁶⁶ He was excited that all of the students were “pretty strong in English,”²⁶⁷ and thought that if English masters were not employed in their service, that “instead of improving, they will go back in this School, and be ruined in consequence.”²⁶⁸ Maraine was opposed to this premise and thought that in the vein of a proper French education, the masters who were to teach English should be strictly French. Burke expressed his concerns of Maraine to King: “I do not think that the chief of our institution possesses one of the qualities proper for his situation. He is a perfect clown, and nothing more nor less; he neither understands nor speaks English, so well by an hundredth part as the boy that speaks it worst.”²⁶⁹ Burke wrote the Abbé on 3 May 1796, detailing his opposition to the Abbé’s request that only French masters be allowed to teach. He felt that “a mere French education, according to the routine of a French College, will never answer for [the students]...they would be ruined by it.”²⁷⁰ Burke therefore made it clear to Maraine that he was in charge of the Penn School.²⁷¹ Also, in reference to himself, Burke implored the Abbé “to be a little partial to the ideas of those English, who cordially and actively invest themselves in [the

²⁶⁵ *Correspondence, IX, 52.*

²⁶⁶ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII, 461.*

²⁶⁷ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII, 460.*

²⁶⁸ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII, 460.*

²⁶⁹ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII, 460.*

²⁷⁰ Burke to the Abbe Maraine, 2 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX, 5.*

²⁷¹ *Correspondence, IX, 5:* The house at which Penn School was located had been rented for three years by the British government, and had been administered through the War Office, which had turned it over to Burke on 29 March 1796.

boys'] welfare."²⁷² In a slight to the Abbé, he affirmed that "I was sorry to find none of this indulgence from you."²⁷³ Burke's relationship with the headmaster was off to a rough start.

Relations were not much better between Burke and St. Pol de Leon. Though the two had been friendly since the Bishop's arrival in Britain in 1791, they had grave disagreements over the administration of the school. Like the Abbé Maraine, the Bishop believed that the English influence Burke was pressing was unnecessary, even harmful. Burke thought it vital for the students to preserve, and expand upon the English they had thus far learned, but he thought "the Bishop is no more sensible of this than a post."²⁷⁴ In spite of Burke's move towards assuming greater control of the school at the expense of the Bishop, the latter continued to interfere in school affairs.²⁷⁵ Burke's opinion of the Abbé Maraine, however, had improved since the rough start to their partnership. In the same letter to King in which Burke complained about the Bishop, he claimed that "the obstinacy of Abbé Maraine is softened down."²⁷⁶ Eventually Burke and Maraine forged a solid partnership which contributed to the success of the Penn School.

The result of this disagreement was that Burke assumed a greater supervisory role in the administration of the school. In regards to the appointment of future masters at the school, he told King that "the next batch, which I understand are all taken according to the Bishop's method, *must* not come till I know something better of their qualifications."²⁷⁷ Overall, by May Burke was pleased at the progress the school was making. He invited the Marquess and his wife to visit Penn to see this progress firsthand. In his invitation, Burke stated that

²⁷² Burke to the Abbe Maraine, 2 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 6.

²⁷³ Burke to Maraine, 2 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 6.

²⁷⁴ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII*, 460.

²⁷⁵ Burke to Laurence, 11 June 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 48. "The Bishop has been intolerable in this respect."

²⁷⁶ Burke to King, 14 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 10.

²⁷⁷ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII*, 461.

an old bad stable is converted into an excellent school room. The chapel is decent, in place, and in furniture. The eating room is reasonably good. The masters are pleased with their pupils; and the pupils are pleased with their preceptors. I have never seen finer boys, or more fit for the plan of education, I mean to follow for them as long as it pleases Government to continue that charge in my hands. I am responsible, that if they are left to me for six months, a set of finer lads, for their age, and standing, will not be seen in Europe.²⁷⁸

Though Burke was pleased at the progress, he was not content. In the same letter to the Marquess, Burke continued that “the only unfortunate part of the business is that some of them speak not a word of English. There must be a person who [converses with them daily in] English; I should prefer a Clergyman of their own persuasion, and of our country.”²⁷⁹ Therefore, Burke reached out to Reverend Thomas Hussey, President of the Roman Catholic College at Maynooth. Burke asked Hussey if the reverend could find him an “English Catholic clergyman, a scholar as to Latin, who can read English, in prose and verse, in a firm, many, natural manner—a clergyman of an excellent character if possible—if not a layman equally unexceptionable.”²⁸⁰ Burke continued on this course, and also applied for an English Catholic clergyman to Dr. John Douglass, the Vicar-apostolic of the London District. Douglass responded on 21 June, proposing the Rev. William Coombes for the position. However before Coombes left for Penn, his superiors withdrew his nomination. Burke was reduced to despair, writing to Hussey that “I see all the purposes of the institution, worse if possible, than defeated, if I cannot get an English teacher,” and exclaimed that “the boys have indeed, most of them, already lost the little English they brought with them.”²⁸¹ Unfortunately, Burke never found the English teacher he was looking for. No more mention of it is contained in his *Correspondence*.

These tribulations which Burke faced in organizing the Penn School tarnished his opinion of the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon. The two men had worked admirably together for five years up

²⁷⁸ Burke to the Marquess of Buckingham, 24 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 17.

²⁷⁹ Burke to Buckingham, 24 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 17.

²⁸⁰ Burke to the Rev. Thomas Hussey, 25 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 21.

²⁸¹ Burke to Hussey, 26 July 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 60.

until this point. However their partnership in forging the Penn School started off badly. Elaborating on his private thoughts to King, Burke wrote that “I am horribly vexed that I delegated my judgment to the Bishop, who has not one right idea on the subject...”²⁸² His disagreements with the Bishop led to Burke assuming a larger role in the administration of the Penn School. In May 1796 he refused two of St. Pol de Leon’s nominees for positions as masters.²⁸³ He also appointed a master of his own, the Baron du Pac Bellegarde, around the same time.²⁸⁴ The two men continued to disagree on school policy. Burke kept insisting on the boys receiving instruction in English, whereas the Bishop insisted on “*French priests* as essential to the morals and religion of the boys...things I am afraid are again coming to an unpleasant issue between the Bishop of Leon and me.”²⁸⁵ Burke felt that the Bishop was taking too long to place boys in the school when applications were “not less than fourscore, and if that set of boys was not in readiness nothing ought to hinder their places being filled up” since admission was highly selective.²⁸⁶ Burke also worried that the Bishop “keeps back the boys” by not providing them with masters for certain subjects.²⁸⁷ Lastly, Burke was worried that if the Bishop kept insisting on his views of how to run the school, Burke would be ousted by the British government, and the latter would assume control of the school. Though this takeover never happened, Burke always remained suspicious of St. Pol de Leon.

Burke also had disagreements with the French clerics over student admissions. He worried that St. Pol de Leon was being naïve about the political sensitivity of allowing admission

²⁸² Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII*, 461.

²⁸³ *Correspondence, IX*, 9. Burke told Thomas Hussey of this refusal on 25 May.

²⁸⁴ *Correspondence, IX*, 9. Du Pac Bellegarde was a military master, who arrived on 9 May 1796 and remained at the Penn School until 1802.

²⁸⁵ Burke to King, 14 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 9.

²⁸⁶ Burke to King, 14 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 9.

²⁸⁷ Burke to King, 14 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 10.

to certain well-connected students. Windham had requested that two sons of a French noble family he knew be admitted into the Penn School. Burke learned that the Bishop initially had denied entrance to these two boys. Windham was an important ally to Burke, and he knew it would be unwise to offend him. Burke wrote to Walker King in April 1796, outlining his complaints about Pol de Leon regarding this point and others. In the letter, Burke states that “the request *must* be complied with for the two boys; and it must be done instantly, as being at the recommendation of the best, and indeed almost only friend, that the cause possesses.”²⁸⁸ He was also anxious over the relationship of the British trustees (Buckingham, Grenville and Portland) and St. Pol de Leon. The rules for applications for admission to the Penn School had dictated that the French Committee in London²⁸⁹ would send the applications to the trustees, and the latter would have final say as to admission. However, the Committee had been sending applications directly to Buckingham, who would make the selections. Although the Marquess explained that he considered the final decision rested with Burke, the latter felt that he was being left out.²⁹⁰ The Marquess responded on 26 May, affectionately referring to the students as “your boys,” and assuring Burke that “the entire list always was directed to be submitted to your control, direction, and choice; to admit and to reject entirely as you may think proper: and the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon clearly understands that.”²⁹¹ As a result of the confusion, and in keeping with his policy to assert greater control over school policy, Burke drew up the “Statement Concerning Admissions to the French School at Penn.”²⁹² Clearly directed at the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon, Burke affirmed his authority as the “Solicitor and Undertaker,” and he stated that applications to the

²⁸⁸ Burke to King, April 1796, in *Correspondence VIII*, 460. The friend Burke mentions is Windham.

²⁸⁹ The French Committee in London was led by a handful of prominent noble and clerical French émigrés.

²⁹⁰ *Correspondence, IX*, 13.

²⁹¹ Buckingham to Burke, 26, 29 May 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 31.

²⁹² *Correspondence, IX*, “Statement Concerning Admissions to the French School at Penn,” 37.

school were no longer being received, due to capacity. In a deft and compromising manner, Burke asserted his control over the Penn School.

From July to September 1796, there is no correspondence from Burke regarding the Penn School. Therefore, one can assume that all the major problems had been resolved. However, on 14 September Burke wrote to an unknown doctor concerning a student at the school who “has been for these nine days or thereabouts ill of a fever of a bad appearance.”²⁹³ After this minor hiccup, there exists another gap from mid-September until late November. In a letter dated 23 November to the Marchioness of Buckingham, Burke reported of “the more adult state” of the school, due to “the skill and indefatigable pains of the four excellent persons in charge. There is no praise that they do not merit; nor rewards indeed, if it lay with us to reward them.”²⁹⁴ Thus, Burke was content with the instructors at the Penn School. He also explained to the Marchioness the positive state of his finances: “I hope in a few days to make up my half years accounts. I shall have exceeded the estimates but very little.”²⁹⁵ Burke had resolved all the problems associated with the school, and his diligence was paramount to its success. The Penn School remained open for nearly twenty-five years, finally closing in 1820.

The Penn School represented Burke’s greatest achievement in his aid of the French emigration. James Prior describes Burke’s extraordinary devotion to the welfare of the Penn School: “Instances of his personal kindness and attention towards the members of the establishment were shown in a variety of ways.”²⁹⁶ Often, gifts in the form of venison and other types of exquisite game were donated to Burke and his cadre. In anecdotal fashion, Prior recounts a story in which the school’s housekeeper, Mrs. Webster, would try and make sure that

²⁹³ Burke to Unknown Doctor, 14 September 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 85.

²⁹⁴ Burke to the Marchioness of Buckingham, 23 November 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 128.

²⁹⁵ Burke to the Marchioness of Buckingham, 23 November 1796, in *Correspondence IX*, 128.

²⁹⁶ *Correspondence IX*, 41.

these gifts were reserved for Burke's prominent guests who would often visit the school. Burke tried his hardest to make sure that this food made its way to the boys and their masters, but he was usually thwarted by Mrs. Webster, who felt "obliged to keep watch over the dainty, lest it should be silyly dispatched off to the 'French people'."²⁹⁷ Yet it was these French people who concerned Burke most, and this story is an example of his devotion to their cause. Through his political wrangling and constant attention to detail, Burke had constructed a proper French school for sixty Royalist orphans. He believed that one day they would return to France better men because of his efforts. Burke even made a provision for the management of the school in his will. When he died in July 1797 he was no doubt convinced that his little school would help to ensure the continuance of the French nobility.

²⁹⁷ *Correspondence, IX*, 41.

“It has always been with me a test of the sense and candour of any one belonging to the opposite party, whether he allowed Burke to be a great man. Of all the persons of this description that I have ever known, I never met with above one or two who would make this concession ; whether it was that party feelings ran too high to admit of any real candour, or whether it was owing to an essential vulgarity in their habits of thinking, they all seemed to be of opinion that he was a wild enthusiast, or a hollow sophist, who was to be answered by bits of facts, by smart logic, by shrewd questions, and idle songs. They looked upon him as a man of disordered intellects, because he reasoned in a style to which they had not been used, and which confounded their dim preceptions.”

-William Hazlitt, in *The Eloquence of the British Senate : Being a Selection of the Best Speeches of the Most Distinguished English, Irish, and Scotch Parliamentary Speakers, from the Beginning of the Reign of Charles I to the Present Time* (1810), p. 210.

Edmund Burke had a greater influence on the British government's response to the French Revolution than previously has been argued. Though he is most remembered for his groundbreaking invective, the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke repeatedly inserted himself into British politics until his death in 1797. His primary goal was the destruction of Jacobinism; Burke feared that its success in France would ensure its expansion across the Continent, and ultimately into Britain. Therefore, in a series of writings following the publications of the *Reflections* in late 1790, he advocated British military intervention into France. In addition, Burke wrote consistently to the British ministry, notable Pitt, Grenville and Dundas, hoping to persuade these men of the necessity to defeat the Revolution. He also was a major contributor to both the political and social cause of the French émigrés. Burke identified with the Royalist émigrés, or *purs*, in the hopes that this group would play a role in the

restoration of the *ancien Régime*. The destitute condition of the noble, and especially the clerical émigrés prompted Burke to action. His collaboration with John Wilmot and the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon was a major reason for the successful maintenance of the French exiles into Britain. His involvement with the emigration endeared him to the nobles and clergymen who called Britain their home for most of the 1790s.

From the publication of the *Reflections* until the outbreak of war between Britain and France in February 1793, Burke continued to assert that the primary goal of the British government should be the extirpation of Jacobinism. In several writings, he established a cogent argument which highlighted the moral imperative of abstaining from a war of aggrandizement. Burke argued that the primary focus of British war policy should be upon counterrevolution. In late 1793, the Royalist insurrection in the Vendée region of France represented to Burke the best opportunity for Britain to defeat the French Revolution. However, Pitt was unwilling to commit to the Vendéan cause, in part because he was untrusting of the Bourbon Princes. When the British government finally agreed to Burke's plan of cooperating with the Royalist insurgents in western France, it was too late. The result was a spectacular failure at the Battle of Quiberon Bay in July 1795.

Domestic politics also played a significant role in Burke's response to the French Revolution. He had been a member of the Whig Party for over thirty years prior to the start of the Revolution. However, he was convinced that the only way for Britain to defeat the French Republic was for his party to rally behind the Tory Party, who were currently in power under Pitt. From 1791 to 1794, Burke attempted to divide the Whigs and to isolate his former friend and ally Fox, who was a firm supporter of Jacobinism. He encouraged several prominent Whigs, including the Duke of Portland and Earl Fitzwilliam, to split with Fox and accept the overtures

from Pitt to join the British ministry during these three years. In July 1794, Burke was successful in splitting the Whigs, and Portland, Fitzwilliam, and William Windham, all political allies of Burke, joined Pitt in a Tory-Whig coalition. He was able to exert the greatest amount of influence upon British war policy after this alliance, and explains why his plan for an Anglo-French expedition was eventually agreed to.

Burke temporarily withdrew from British foreign policy following the failure at Quiberon in July 1795. However, proposals of peace with Jacobin France from the halls of Parliament impelled Burke to write again. In a series of pamphlets known as *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, he elucidated the notion that making peace with the Jacobins was tantamount to madness. Burke defended the war as a necessary and just war, and he reiterated the importance of Britain as the natural head of the European alliance. The *Letters* were Burke's last effort to convince the British government of the insanity of peace proposals with revolutionary France.

Burke succumbed to his illness on 18 July 1797. One could assume that had he lived longer, he would have continued his struggle against Jacobinism. While he has been highly recognized for the *Reflections* and its impact on reactionary ideology, Burke has not been credited with his other publications, which served to promote his ideology within the British government. His support and assistance to the plight of the émigrés have been equally overlooked. It is not too late to recognize this man's contributions to the British political and social response to the French Revolution. Burke's lesser-known writings and correspondence have been preserved but underrepresented in historical analysis. Perhaps his passionate, unorthodox persona, and controversial views have deprived him of his true recognition.

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Vita

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